

Medical Board of Australia proposed regulations for Integrative Medicine

Australians enjoy some of the best medical care in the world, with Medicare paying most of the fees of high-quality doctors and the PBS subsidising prescribed medicines when they get sick.

Medicare is, however, far from perfect. Amazingly, it does not pay for prevention (except in a few specific areas), even though at least three quarters of all common chronic diseases can be prevented, which would be cheaper and better for everyone.

The conventional 10 minute bulk-billed consultation does not work well for Australians suffering complex and chronic illnesses such as obesity, diabetes, chronic fatigue syndrome, Alzheimer's, mental health disorders and many more common health problems.

Conventional medicine is both powerful and dangerous, and doctors need to be well trained to practise safely. Even so, tens of thousands of Australians are hospitalised, and thousands die each year from the use and misuse of prescription drugs alone.

The Medical Board of Australia (MBA) was established by COAG to ensure that doctors practice safely and ethically, and has established good practice guidelines to achieve this. If doctors do not follow those guidelines, they risk sanctions and deregistration. We all currently enjoy that protection.

Thousands of Australian doctors want to do better, and undergo training in addition to their conventional medical training to become Integrative Medicine doctors.

They typically embrace prevention as a first principle of healthcare, provide longer and deeper consultations to understand causes of illness, and are trained in lifestyle, nutritional and other safe and sustainable modalities to expand their conventional medical options. They combine quality conventional medicine with safe and effective complementary options to restore health and reduce unnecessary medical treatments.

Integrative Medicine doctors are doctors first and foremost, and subject to all the regulations and obligations of every doctor in Australia. Their additional skills allow them to pick up where conventional medical care is unable to help patients, where medicine has caused harm, or where patients choose to move to medical care beyond the conventional Medicare-funded options.

New regulations proposed by the MBA would segregate integrative medicine doctors. This is a first step that threatens the existence of Integrative Medicine in Australia and sets the stage for draconian and unwarranted restrictions on these doctors in the care of their patients. Not because it is unsafe, but simply because it is not "conventional".

If these regulations are passed unchanged, your family's access to Integrative Medicine doctors may be lost. Forever. A million Australian families could lose the doctors of their choice.

The true goal of the MBA is to protect Australians by catching and sanctioning unsafe and harmful doctors. Integrative Medicine has been dragged into this without any justification or evidence of harm. Simply because the Board believes it is not "conventional".

The Board did not even talk with the Integrative Medicine community and their patients before releasing this ill-conceived mishmash to the public for feedback. Option one is no change. Option two is segregating integrative medical doctors and imposing a different set of guidelines for them. Integrative medical doctors think that there should only be ONE set of guidelines for ALL doctors..

Let the Medical Board of Australia know what you think. Choose option one and tell them why they should leave your doctors to practise as they already do. Oppose the introduction of regulations that could decimate Integrative Medicine and remove your own choice of your doctor.

Respond to the MBA at www.medicalboard.gov.au, and search for "complementary medicine". Find out more at www.integrativemedicinefreedomofchoice.com.

The closing date for feedback is 12 May, 2019.