

MEDIA RELEASE

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Canberrans benefit from Pharmacists located in general practice

A successful two-year pilot has shown the benefits of having a non-dispensing Pharmacist in general practice, as part of the health care team. The pilot, held in Isabella Plains Medical Centre, YourGP@Crace and National Health Co-op, was evaluated by the University of Canberra which concluded that having a Pharmacist on board has increased the quality of prescribing, increased support to GPs, saved GPs time and reduced costs to patients.

Following the success of the pilot conducted by Capital Health Network (CHN), through the ACT PHN program, CHN has launched a new program to provide support to another four general practices to employ a part-time Pharmacist at Althea Wellness Centre, Conder Surgery, Gungahlin Medical Practice and Health Plus General Practice.

Proving the success of the pilot Isabella Plains Medical Centre and YourGP@Crace have both continued to employ a Pharmacist following the end of pilot funding. Dr Mel Deery, YourGP@Crace Practice Principal, said that their GPs were so committed to having the Pharmacist continue that the GPs have co-invested in continuing to employ Pharmacist Katja Naunton-Boom.

“Our Pharmacist Katja is a great support for questions that GPs ask and helps save us time. For example, I currently see a patient developing renal failure who is on 15 medications. Katja has worked out which medications to adjust which is improving the outcomes for our patient,” said Dr Deery.

YourGP@Crace Pharmacist Katja Naunton-Boom said she is a key part of the care team.

“When a patient is getting a health assessment or care plan completed, the patient meets with the nurse, then I review their medication and then we all come together with the GP to discuss findings at a case conference with the patient. Patients appreciate this wrap-around care. I have also seen that GPs now have a better relationship with community pharmacies as I’m often a communication point between community or hospital pharmacies,” said Ms Naunton-Boom.

Dr Divya Sharma, Isabella Plains Medical Centre Practice Principal, has also continued to employ a Pharmacist and said that she would highly recommend to other general practices to get a Pharmacist on board. The evaluation report found that 100% of patients surveyed wanted Pharmacist employment in general practice to continue.

“Our Pharmacist Brendon Wheatley has been conducting clinical audits for patients with conditions such as diabetes, arthritis, Crohn’s disease and hypertension. His assistance in this area is unlimited and his advice has resulted in improved medication management. Our patients really like seeing Brendon as he provides them with extra time, value and ultimately improved patient care,” said Dr Sharma.



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Capital Health Network Chief Executive Adj Prof Gaylene Coulton said that Capital Health Network's role is to advance the way health care is delivered in Canberra.

"The success of this pilot and subsequent new program is a good example of how CHN designs services that fill gaps and deliver lasting improvements. This demonstrates how we can use our local knowledge to design solutions to meet community need, which are timely, effective and high worth," said Adj Prof Gaylene Coulton.

The Pharmacist in General Practice Program is supported by funding from the ACT PHN through the Australian Government's PHN Program. The ACT PHN Pharmacist in General Practice Pilot report can be found here: [**chnact.org.au/evaluations**](http://chnact.org.au/evaluations)