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Doctors call for the reversal of pharmacy prescribing expansion over safety fears

Doctors are calling on the Carroll Labor Government to reverse the latest expansion of Chemist Care Now, citing major concerns about patient safety, fragmented health care, and inherent conflicts of interest.

The call follows the addition of reflux treatment and menopausal hormone therapy resupply to the program, and the Pharmacy Guild's renewed push for political parties to support autonomous pharmacist prescribing across Victoria.

AMA Victoria President Dr Simon Judkins said the Government was extending a fundamentally flawed model that put patient healthcare at risk.

"We have now created a situation in Victoria where the same business that decides whether a patient needs a specific medication is the same business that profits from supplying it.

"That's an obvious direct conflict of interest that puts profits first and patient welfare second.

"So-called clinical protocols that have been put in place do not remove that inherent conflict of interest."

Dr Judkins said that the ongoing extension of the program expanded the risks posed to patients.

"Each expansion places more medical decisions in that retail setting rather than a medical one, and risks further fragmenting patients' care, which needs to be considered holistically.

"Reflux care involves assessing symptoms, reviewing treatment, and deciding whether further investigation is needed. The provision of medication is only one part of that care.

"Menopausal hormone therapy likewise requires individual assessment and ongoing medical review. Even a one-month resupply involves a decision about whether treatment remains safe and appropriate.

"Women's healthcare should be supported by a continuing relationship with a doctor who understands their broader health needs."

Dr Judkins said AMA Victoria remained firmly opposed to pharmacist prescribing in retail pharmacies.

“The Government should reverse this expansion, abolish Chemist Care Now and strengthen access to GP-led care, ensuring patients receive the ongoing medical care they need to protect and maintain their health.

“We call on the Carroll Labor Government to put patients first and act now.”

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