

**Australian Medical Association Limited**

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**ARTIFICIAL JOINTS – CHEAPEST DOES NOT MEAN BEST**

AMA President, Dr Andrew Pesce, said today that the AMA is concerned by comments from Health Minister, Nicola Roxon, which suggest that pressure may be applied to doctors to choose artificial joints for patients on the basis of price and not on what is best for the individual needs of patients.

Dr Pesce said doctors are trained to think independently and to make decisions in the best interests of their patients.

“Our choice of device is based on the clinical needs of our patients,” Dr Pesce said.

“When doctors plan surgery they consider the most appropriate prosthesis for their patient, based on that patient's individual needs and circumstances.

“These clinical choices are informed by quality data sets, such as those provided by the National Joint Replacement Registry (NJRR).

“Thanks to the tireless efforts of Professor Steven Graves and his team, the NJRR now provides a rich and robust source of data to inform clinical decision making in relation to joint prostheses.

“Choosing the right prosthesis requires careful analysis of the available data by highly trained clinicians who are best placed to apply the data in clinical situations.

“For privately insured patients, the devices we can choose from are those that have been independently assessed and priced by the Prostheses and Devices Committee (PDC) - a Government committee that relies heavily on the medical profession to assess devices for clinical effectiveness.

“What is listed, and at what price, is decided by the Minister's delegate on advice from the PDC.

“Prosthesis choice is not and must not be the domain of Health Department bean counters, Treasury officials, or private health insurers – all of whom are looking for savings, not better health outcomes.

“The AMA would be very concerned if the clinical data that is used to provide better health outcomes, and savings in the long term, are used simply to achieve short term savings,” Dr Pesce said.

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