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AMA: ACCESS TO MEDICAL CARE SHOULD BE ASSESSED IN ACCREDITING AGED CARE FACILITIES

AMA President Dr Rosanna Capolingua today said the Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency should introduce a new accreditation requirement to ensure that residents of aged care facilities have appropriate access to medical care by doctors.

“Access to appropriate medical and nursing assessment, care and management is essential to the appropriate care of older people, particularly the frail aged,” Dr Capolingua said today.

“It’s time that facilitating access to medical care by elderly residents becomes a part of the routine assessment of residential aged care facilities.

“In addition, to ensure all residents have access to high quality health care, the Federal Government should introduce proper patient rebates that recognise the comprehensive management and medical care undertaken by doctors.

“The government’s recent incentives to increase the number of GP visits to aged care facilities are a start but they don’t recognise the extensive time spent managing the patient’s care and consulting with staff in the facility and the patient’s family.

“Doctors also need access to general practice nurses so that their outreach to residential aged care can be improved.”

Dr Capolingua said governments also should address the shortage of skilled nurses available to work in aged care.

“More skilled nurses would be attracted to aged care if the Government ensured wage parity with the acute care sector,” she said.

Improved access to treatment facilities, aids and appliances is another area of need identified by doctors who regularly visit patients at residential aged care facilities, Dr Capolingua said.

“People in residential aged care have a right to access the same quality of medical and nursing care, and rehabilitation facilities, as their counterparts living in the community,” she said.

“Governments have a responsibility to ensure that access.”

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