Media Release

Vital new patient guide to help Australians in talking to their specialist about costs

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The Council of Presidents of Medical Colleges (CPMC) working in collaboration with the Australian Patient Advocacy Alliance has today released a new consumer guide; ***Talking with your specialist doctor about costs***, a guide to choices and rights, providing patients clear and practical information about what to ask when it comes to specialist fees, out-of-pocket costs and informed financial consent.

The factsheet is a key deliverable to accompany CPMC's sector-wide Professionalism Framework on Ethical Billing and Fee Transparency, which sets clear expectations for specialists on informed financial consent and upfront, honest communication about costs.

To ensure the guide genuinely serves patients in a practical way, CPMC worked with the Australian Patient Advocacy Alliance (APAA) - a national alliance of patient advocacy organisations representing more than 12 million Australians living with complex and chronic disease - which reviewed the resource from a consumer perspective to make sure the information is clear, accessible and genuinely useful. APAA will be distributing the guide through its vast member network to ensure its widespread adoption.

The guide sets out five simple items patients should, consider when talking with their specialist about fees and deciding on treatment, including their right to a second opinion, their right to ask questions about costs, and their right to a written estimate of fees before agreeing to a non-urgent procedure. It also outlines options that may be available to patients concerned about affordability, such as payment plans, staged billing and bulk billing for eligible patients.

CPMC Chair A/Prof Kerin Fielding said the guide reflected the specialist medical sector's genuine commitment to working with patients and consumer organisations to support conversations about the costs of specialist care.

> "Key to good patient care is their right to understand what they will pay for their care, and to feel confident asking their specialist about it," A/Prof Fielding said. "This guide puts patients at the centre - it's about giving people the language and the confidence to have what can be a difficult conversation, especially at a time when they're already dealing with the pressures of a health concern."

"Working with the Australian Patient Advocacy Alliance has been invaluable in making sure this resource speaks to patients in a way that is genuinely useful. Their review has helped us produce a very practical tool that reflects what patients can expect and ask when seeing a specialist.

“Access to healthcare is fundamental to every Australian and particularly vital to people living with chronic and complex disease. Affordability is one crucial aspect of access. The Australian Patient Advocacy Alliance seeks to ensure patients are equipped to participate in all discussions around their healthcare including costs and options associated with that care,” said Deidre Mackechnie, CEO of APAA.

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The factsheet ‘Talking with your specialist doctor about costs’ is available at cpmc.edu.au

About CPMC

The Council of Presidents of Medical Colleges (CPMC) brings together all of Australia's specialist medical colleges, representing 80,000 medical specialists. CPMC's vision is for all Australians to have timely access to high-quality specialist medical care, regardless of where they live.

About APAA

The Australian Patient Advocacy Alliance (APAA) is a national alliance of patient advocacy organisations representing more than 12 million Australians living with complex and chronic disease.

For further information, please contact CPMC on 0405 497 510.