

# New podcast urges stakeholders to speak out on access to new technologies

June 30, 2023

AstraZeneca has supported a new podcast that calls for accelerated access to innovative precision medicines and genomic profiling.

The podcast is the third in the Private Cancer Physicians of Australia's (PCPA's) Cancer Patient Management series.

PCPA, Australia's peak body for private cancer specialists, has joined other oncology and patient groups to advocate for removing the cost and regulatory barriers for patients with cancer accessing up-front molecular profiling.

In the podcast 'Precision Medicine for Australian Patients with Cancer', host and PCPA Treasurer, Professor Desmond Yip, unpacks the future of Comprehensive Genomic Profiling (CGP), the challenges of cost and the shared mission to make it a funded clinical solution for all cancer patients.

Professor Yip, a senior medical oncologist at the Canberra Hospital, is joined by Professor Lorraine Chantrill, medical oncologist at the Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District and area director of clinical trials, and Dr Vivek Rathi, group molecular pathologist at LifeStrands Genomics.

The cancer care experts agree that Australians with cancer should have equitable, timely and affordable access to Precision Medicine or CGP.

Professor Chantrill said progress is slowly happening, with government subsidies for limited mutation profiling of common cancers, such as lung and bowel. However, she says the CGP sequencing on rare cancers is very important and should also be funded.

"To my colleagues, if you find an actionable mutation with an unreimbursed treatment, seek a clinical trial or access program," said Professor Chantrill. "Ask your patient to advocate to Government. Don't stay silent!"

"Fast turnaround times that inform molecular profiling for unwell patients is important to decide treatment options," said Dr Vivek. "CGP is complex but results are now available, from some labs, in under two weeks."

Download the latest PCPA podcast from Apple or Spotify.

## Government formally introduces 'transitional arrangement'

June 30, 2023

The transitional arrangement for non-PBS treatment sites dispensing subsidised medicines for opiate dependence has been formally lodged as a legislative instrument.

The five-month arrangement is designed to minimise disruption for around 5,000 patients currently accessing their treatment for opiate dependence via non-PBS private clinics and treatment sites.

These patients will maintain subsidised access to the treatment but continue to pay uncapped private dispensing fees.

The transitional arrangement gives these 5,000 patients five months to find an official PBS-licensed treatment location and gain the protection of official co-payments and the safety net.

State health departments are already working to find new treatment locations for hundreds of patients.

In recent years, Department of Health and Aged Care officials have denied the need to lodge any legislative instrument for the Opiate Dependence Treatment (ODT) Program. Two have been lodged in the past six days, with one implementing the reformed arrangements, and the other enforcing the current denial of basic patient protections.

The two-year post-market review of the ODT Program identified the important role of non-PBS private clinics with stakeholders using multiple consultation processes, including focus groups, to call for their retention.

However, these private clinics are not licensed to dispense PBS-listed medicines.

Under the ODT Program arrangements that cease at midnight tonight, medicine companies directly supply dispensing sites based on lists of authorised suppliers, including private clinics.

There is no financial transaction with the medicine companies directly invoicing the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care.

This arrangement will remain in place for the transitional arrangement. The reformed arrangements for PBS-licensed treatment locations participating in the ODT Program include the adoption of normal supply arrangements.

Wholesale distributors of ODT medicines face the challenge of reconciling the supply of ODT Program medicines to licensed PBS and non-PBS locations, including the private clinics, while receiving no official remuneration.

## **Roche Australia announces new partnership with Rural Doctors Foundation**

June 30, 2023

Roche Australia has announced a new partnership with Rural Doctors Foundation (RDF).

RDF is a non-profit organisation that aims to improve access to healthcare and outcomes in rural areas.

Under the partnership, Roche and RDF will work on delivering a primary healthcare model to increase access to GPs for healthcare professionals in remote areas.

General manager Stuart Knight said, "At Roche, we are deeply committed to improving healthcare outcomes and ensuring equitable access to healthcare for all Australians. We recognise the significant challenges faced by rural communities in accessing quality healthcare, and through this partnership with Rural Doctors Foundation, we aim to create sustainable solutions that address these barriers effectively. Together, we can make a meaningful impact on the lives of individuals living in remote areas."

RDF works to address the healthcare disparities faced by rural populations. It strives to improve the availability and delivery of medical services, support education and training opportunities for rural health professionals, and advocate for policy changes that positively impact rural healthcare.

CEO Fran Avon said, "We are excited to partner with Roche Australia, a company known for its dedication to improving patient outcomes and driving innovation in healthcare. Together, we have an incredible opportunity to address the unique challenges faced by rural communities, such as limited access to healthcare practitioners.

"As rural doctors, we recognise the dedication and the challenges that come with rural practice, which often results in many rural GPs neglecting their own health and wellbeing. Through our partnership with Roche we aim to increase access to healthcare services and improve health outcomes for our rural health workforce, who play such a vital role in our communities."