

2013 Joint Meeting of National Boards, Accreditation Authorities and AHPRA

30 August 2013

Summary

Background

Each year, National Board Chairs and Executive Officers, Accreditation Council Chairs and CEOs and representatives of AHPRA meet to discuss accreditation issues of common interest.

The Accreditation Liaison Group (ALG), comprising representatives of National Boards, Accreditation Councils and AHPRA, is responsible for planning the joint meetings. The 2013 joint meeting was a workshop on accreditation and health workforce reform. The potential for accreditation to contribute to health workforce reform has been recognised by a number of bodies such as the Productivity Commission, Health Workforce Australia and governments. The issue also arose in the 2012 review of accreditation arrangements for the first ten professions to be regulated under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme).

The 2013 joint meeting aimed to explore the issues and opportunities associated with health workforce reform and accreditation, using the draft Health Practitioners' Prescribing Pathway (HPPP) developed by Health Workforce Australia as an example of proposed reform. Although the HPPP had not been finalised at the time¹, the available draft provided a useful starting point for discussions about the role of accreditation in health workforce reform.

The workshop involved brief overview presentations, small group discussions and plenary discussions.

1. Introduction and context

Jo Flynn, Co-chair of the Accreditation Liaison Group and Chair of the Medical Board of Australia, welcomed participants and introduced the workshop. She highlighted:

- the context for the workshop, including the upcoming review of the National Scheme
- the objectives of the National Law relating to workforce sustainability and access to services
- the benefits of exploring how the National Scheme can best support workforce reform, and
- the opportunities of jointly exploring cross-profession approaches.

Nicholas Voudouris, Co-chair of the Accreditation Liaison Group, Chair of the Health Professions Accreditation Councils Forum (the Forum) and CEO of the Australian Psychology Accreditation Council, also welcomed participants and acknowledged the significant change that the National Scheme had brought, particularly for accreditation authorities. He observed that the relationship between the accreditation authorities, national boards and AHPRA had strengthened and matured since the Scheme

¹ Health Ministers subsequently approved the final version of the HPPP in November 2013 - available here: (www.hwa.gov.au/hppp)

commenced, which positioned the organisations well for the future. He noted that all the elements of the National Scheme need to work effectively together to deliver good outcomes.

2. Background presentations

Overview of prescribing competencies and the Health Practitioners' Prescribing Pathway Project

Steve Marty, Chair of the Pharmacy Board of Australia, gave an overview of the *Prescribing competencies framework* developed by NPS Medicineswise (www.nps.org.au/health-professionals/professional-development/prescribing-competencies-framework). The framework describes the competencies that health professionals need to prescribe medicines judiciously, appropriately, safely and effectively in the Australian healthcare system.

Chris Robertson, Director National Board Services and Queensland, AHPRA, provided a brief overview of Health Workforce Australia's draft HPPP (see www.hwa.gov.au/hppp). The HPPP aims to establish a national pathway to prescribing by health professionals other than doctors, that supports safe practice, quality use of medicines and effective healthcare services.

Implementation of a scheduled medicines endorsement

Cathy Loughry, Chair of the Podiatry Board of Australia, provided a practical example of a current approach to prescribing within the National Scheme and explained the Board's approach to a scheduled medicines endorsement for the podiatry profession. She gave an overview of the Board's scheduled medicines registration standard (see www.podiatryboard.gov.au/Registration-Standards.aspx) and the additional continuing professional development requirements for podiatrists with a scheduled medicines endorsement.

Rolf Scharfbillig, Chair, Australia and New Zealand Podiatry Accreditation Council, continued the overview of current approaches and described the role of the council in relation to a scheduled medicines endorsement (see attached presentation). He outlined ANZPAC's work in developing standards for programs of study leading to a scheduled medicines endorsement and explained ANZPAC's approach to integrating prescribing competencies into its entry-level graduate standards.

Forum work on cross-profession mapping

Nicholas Voudouris presented an overview of recent work by the Forum on mapping accreditation standards and requirements across disciplines and exploring the potential for efficiencies, common standards, and/or processes. He described how the Forum has encouraged growing consistency through cross-council collaboration, including actions such as workshops on best practice.

3. Group discussions

The workshop participants discussed in small groups the issues and opportunities associated with health workforce reform and accreditation in the context of the HPPP, which was followed by a plenary discussion.

Potential for cross-profession approaches to prescribing

Participants discussed the potential for common accreditation standards and a cross-profession approach to prescribing in accreditation and registration. Key themes of the discussion included:

- common standards could allow a multi-disciplinary team to assess programs of study, or an education provider to use evidence of assessment against the standards in other subsequent assessments
- there may be scope for common registration standards in some areas, taking into account the need to consider profession specific elements where relevant
- common standards could provide opportunities for greater efficiency
- the need for there to be common language and terminology developed to support common standards

- using common language would help to make the distinctions between what needs to be profession-specific and what could be consistent across professions
- there could be a common basic course for prescribing with additional profession-specific aspects as required
- each profession would need to carefully consider the indications and contraindications of a cross-profession approach or elements of it
- there are risks of a one-size-fits-all approach and protection of the public requires consideration of the risks and issues of prescribing in the context of the scope of practice of each profession
- it would be important to carefully identify what can be appropriately developed as a cross-profession approach and what needs to be profession-specific, and
- any cross profession work needs to be consistent with quality use of medicines policy.

Implications for future collaboration health workforce reform

The meeting then considered the implications for future collaboration and involvement in the health workforce reform agenda, including engagement with HWA and governments. Key themes of the discussion included:

- the strengths of potential cross profession approaches include efficiency, consistency, timeliness and reducing the net cost to education providers
- the challenges of establishing cross-profession approaches in relation to prescribing, including:
 - State and Territory Drugs and Poisons legislation
 - the complexity within and across professions, including differences in education, experience and the threshold knowledge of each profession around prescribing
 - the potential for unintended extensions to scope of practice, and
 - system and attitudinal change and the need to take into account the Medical Benefits Scheme and Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme with any common approach
- the potential for learnings from professions with existing approaches to prescribing, including:
 - scheduled medicines endorsements under the National Law
 - the primary health care model particularly in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
 - team approaches in palliative care, and
 - chronic disease and rural and remote models
- common approaches could facilitate communication, trust and effective working relationships across professions
- the importance of any prescribing practitioner having a clear understanding of any other medications the patient may be using, including complementary medicines due to the risks of polypharmacy
- the more practitioners involved in prescribing, the greater potential challenges to safety
- it will be critical to ensure that the public understand the possible scope of prescribing practice of prescribing practitioners
- the importance of good communication between treating practitioners
- cross-professional work could facilitate a team approach to care
- there are important links to interprofessional education and practice
- it will be important to reinforce that self-prescribing is unacceptable and potentially illegal, and
- the role of the pharmacist will be critical as their dispensing work brings them into contact with other prescribing practitioners.

Conclusion and next steps

Nicholas Voudouris noted the complexity of the issues raised and the importance of engaging with education providers about cross-professional work. He commented on the potential that could be generated by more consistent language and the opportunities for further collaboration in this area.

Jo Flynn acknowledged the wide range of perspectives and recognised the work underway by the Forum and the opportunities to further consider collaborative approaches. She advised that the workshop discussions would be written up for the ALG to consider the issues further.

Pre-reading

Participants were asked to read the following references to prepare for the workshop.

NPS Medicinewise *Prescribing competencies framework*

NPS Medicinewise recognises the need for, and value of, a consistent and standard approach to prescribing for all health professionals with prescribing rights. In a bid to promote quality use of medicines across all prescribing professions, they developed the *Prescribing competencies framework*.

The framework describes the competencies that health professionals require to prescribe medicines judiciously, appropriately, safely and effectively in the Australian healthcare system (www.nps.org.au/health-professionals/professional-development/prescribing-competencies-framework).

Draft *health practitioners' prescribing pathway (HPPP)*

The workshop was based on the public consultation draft HPPP from January 2013, as the final HPPP was not yet available.

According to HWA, 'improvements to health workforce productivity and flexibility are vital if the workforce is to meet the growing demand for healthcare across Australia. One strategy to assist with this improvement is the development of a national pathway to prescribing by health professionals other than doctors, that supports safe practice, quality use of medicines and effective healthcare services'.

The *Health professionals prescribing pathway (HPPP)* seeks to deliver:

- a national approach to prescribing by health professionals, other than doctors, that covers important concepts such as prescribing models, competency attainment, registration and endorsement, and safety, quality and practice issues, and
- an implementation strategy for a national prescribing pathway.

(The HPPP is available from: www.hwa.gov.au/hppp)