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Treat epilepsy as a chronic disease, GPs urged

17 March, 2015 Michael Woodhead 0 comments

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GPs are being encouraged to use MBS chronic disease management items to help them take on a greater role in the long-term management of patients with epilepsy.

A new website called the **eGP website** has been developed as an epilepsy management resource by Dr Rosey Panelli, a former epilepsy researcher-turned GP practice manager in Seymour, Victoria.

The website aims to show GPs the many untapped resources at their disposal to help them provide enhanced care for epilepsy patients, including the ability to claim MBS items for chronic disease management.

"Medicare promotes support for people with chronic disease at the primary health level, but GPs overlook this option for patients with epilepsy," Dr Panelli (pictured) said.

"I hope that the eGP initiative will help to engage GPs in epilepsy management, thereby improving health outcomes and quality of life for people with epilepsy."

Dr Panelli said she discovered that GPs were "the missing link" in epilepsy care when she started working as a practice manager at her husband's practice some years ago.

She found that GPs referred patients to specialists but there were many aspects of epilepsy care, such as ongoing monitoring of seizure frequency, bone health and contraception, that specialists did not have time to address or manage.

"Australians with epilepsy have access to quality specialist referrals, which is a key to successful management. But patients would benefit from the day-to-day monitoring and education for self-management that informed GPs and practice nurses can provide.

"There are many general health issues and comorbidities associated with epilepsy, including mood disorders, reproductive and social issues, that patients need to discuss with their GPs," Dr Panelli said.

"Epilepsy carries a risk of injury, and even death, so regular risk assessment in conjunction with a GP should be an important part of a patient's ongoing epilepsy care," she said.

Dr Panelli said a typical GP might have 5-10 patients with epilepsy whom they could help through using chronic disease management MBS items such as:

- GP Management Plan (item 721)
- Team Care Arrangements (item 723)
- Practice Nurse item 10997 for additional monitoring and support



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"The [chronic disease management] items are useful tools for improving the care of epilepsy, however, many GPs do not think of including epilepsy in their routine CDM activities," her site says.

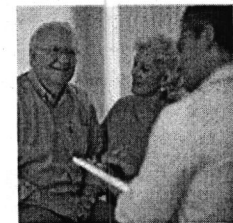
Dr Panelli said the site also offered other practical tips such as ensuring that patients book to see the same GP in the team for each appointment.

Most epilepsy appointments are not urgent and, with planning, continuity of care can be improved, she said.

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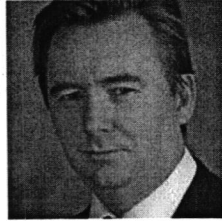
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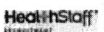
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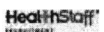
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