

The role of osteopathy in chronic disease management

Osteopathy and other allied health professionals can play a crucial role in improving chronic disease outcomes for Australians across all ages and demographics, however, there are considerable policy and funding barriers that inhibit its full potential.

Currently, our healthcare system defaults toward medical, surgical and pharmaceutical intervention instead of utilising high-quality allied health assessment and care, despite decades of published high-quality clinical evidence. Increased funding should be invested in enabling multidisciplinary team care for chronic disease management to help produce better health outcomes that utilises the large, qualified allied health workforce.

What is Osteopathy Australia advocating for?

Osteopathy Australia is advocating for more Medicare eligible services under the GP Chronic Condition Management Plan (GPCCMP) program. The currently available five Medicare rebated sessions are deeply inadequate, especially for people with ongoing chronic conditions that require frequent care or care across multiple allied health professions.

The expansion of this scheme to allow more funded sessions will enable a non-pharmaceutical preventative approach that helps to improve health consumer outcomes. These changes will also decrease the burden on general practice, promote multidisciplinary team-based care and help to address the growing national chronic disease burden. The enhancement of the GPCCMP program and expansion of allied health professional (AHP) direct referral and diagnostic imaging referral rights together would further help to reduce time and financial costs to health consumers, Medicare and the overall healthcare system.

Why this benefits Australians

- Increases access to multidisciplinary allied health and osteopathy care for all Australians, which will help to reduce the need for pharmaceutical and surgical intervention.
- Reduces out of pocket costs for Australians who need allied health care.
- Reduces overall costs to the Medicare Benefits Schemes (MBS) as earlier intervention can reduce overall healthcare interactions and downstream acute care.

Policy issues and barriers

- Limited rebates available under the MBS that are shared across all allied health professions.
- Poor understanding of the scope of practice and the role of allied health professionals and osteopaths in preventative healthcare and chronic disease management.
- Inconsistent recognition and utilisation of allied health professionals between states and territories and funding bodies.
- Lack of governmental commitment to fund or implement any recommendations made through the review of the MBS allied health chronic disease management services being conducted by the MBS Review Advisory Committee (MRAC).

Review

This statement will be reviewed as often as required to align with legislative, regulatory, policy and/or practice change. Last review: January 2026.

Need more information or help?

For further information, a suggestion or to discuss this topic, please:

- Email your enquiry to info@osteopathy.org.au
- Call Osteopathy Australia on 1800 467 836
- Access further information via www.osteopathy.org.au