

educator news march 2013

Department of Health and Aging review of natural therapies

You will recall that, in last year's budget, the Federal Government announced a review of the private health insurance rebate for natural therapies, including massage. The Chief Medical Officer (CMO) put out a call for submissions late last year, specifically in relation to the clinical efficacy, cost effectiveness, safety and quality of the natural therapies within the scope of the review.

AMT lodged its submission with the Chief Medical Officer at the end of January. The AMT submission was circulated freely to RTO educators, as it is a rich resource for teaching the principles of evidence-based reasoning in massage therapy practice. If you have not yet had a chance to look at AMT's submission, it is available for download here:

<http://amt.org.au/SiteContent/Forms/CMO%20Submission%20PHIR.pdf>

The Department of Health and Aging is publishing updates on the natural therapies review process here:

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/phi-natural-therapies>

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) will conduct a comprehensive literature review and assess evidence provided by stakeholders such as AMT.

The NHMRC's findings and stakeholder submissions will be examined by a newly convened Natural Therapy Review Advisory Committee, comprising representatives from the following organisations:

- Australian Traditional Medicine Society
- Australian Natural Therapists Association
- Australian Naturopathic Practitioners Association
- Private Healthcare Australia
- Health Insurance Restricted Membership Association of Australia
- Consumers Health Forum of Australia
- Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency.

The advisory committee met for the first time on March 6. Hopefully, there will be some intelligence on this meeting to report on verbally at the Network meeting on March 13.

Training package review

Consultation on the draft units of competence for massage closed on February 15. Given the incredibly rushed project timelines, the material that was uploaded for comment was very hastily put together. This, combined with the consultation deadline, somewhat stymied the effectiveness of the first round of consultation, with many educators struggling to fully engage with the process due to beginning-of-semester time pressures. This is a shame, as some of the proposed changes have far reaching ramifications.

Bronwyn Walker, the project manager for CAM qualifications, has recently moved on from the CSHISC. The task of managing the review has now been taken over by Nicola Burridge, a consultant to the CSHISC.



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AMT has some big picture concerns in connection with the streamlining process and the de-nesting of qualifications. Chiefly, the concern is that direct-entry Diplomas have the potential to dilute the quality of training at this level and open the door to yet more fast-track delivery of qualifications. In summary, AMT is concerned that the de-nesting of the Cert IV from the Diploma will result in:

- dilution of the content of the Diploma
- unwieldy assessment requirements for the Diploma
- a generation of Diploma graduates who lack the underpinning knowledge and skills currently gained at Certificate IV level
- training that is not firmly evidence-based
- training that is not aligned with evolving health practices and client needs.