EASING THE BURDEN OF CHRONIC DISEASE

Victorians living with chronic diseases in four locations in the state’s north will be the first to trial a scheme bringing pharmacists and doctors together to better manage patient illnesses.

The Pharmacist Chronic Disease Management Pilot will give eligible patients the freedom to visit their local pharmacy when monitoring and managing their chronic illnesses.

Working under a care plan developed by the GP, pharmacists will provide regular monitoring, dose refinement, earlier intervention and prompt referral back to the GP when necessary.

The program is aimed at easing the current burden on doctors, with more than half of all visits to GPs currently involving the management of at least one chronic condition.

Minister for Health Jill Hennessy today announced the four pilot sites as:

- Alexandra – Alexandra Medical Centre with Alexandra Community Pharmacy
- Kerang – Gannawarra Family Clinic with Terry White Chemist Kerang
- Kilmore – Stepping Stones Medical Centre with Amcal Pharmacy Kilmore
- Whittlesea – Whittlesea Medical Centre with Whittlesea Amcal Pharmacy

Initially only three sites were expected to be named, but this was increased to four based on strong interest from GPs and pharmacies since the expressions of interest period opened in January.

All four sites have demonstrated a strong working relationship between the pharmacies and GP. They are also identified as areas with a high prevalence of chronic disease and would stand to benefit the most from the pilot scheme.

People with chronic conditions such as asthma or high blood pressure will be eligible to take part in the trial.

It will give patients a new convenient option to access the care they need, when they need it, by improving the partnership between pharmacists and doctors.

The Pharmacist Chronic Disease Management Pilot is expected to begin in September.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Jill Hennessy

“Chronic disease is a huge burden on our communities – more than half of patients at a GP are there because of a chronic condition.”

“We want patients to be able to look to their trusted and skilled pharmacists for routine queries, so we can take the pressure off doctors and medical clinics.”

“It makes sense and still gives patients the personalised health care and expertise they deserve at every step of their journey.”