

HAP president replies to AMA

Today the president of the Health Australia Party (HAP) hit back at claims from the NSW AMA President that HAP was irrelevant to the healthcare debate in Australia. “I am sure that the majority of Australians who visit and have been helped by natural therapists would be disappointed to learn of the regressive approach of the AMA towards this significant part of their health agenda”

Bone went on to say that the AMA position smacks of an overreaction. “They are trying to paint the Health Australia Party as an irrelevant lunatic fringe movement in order to stifle healthy debate. Australians want to see a more open and less prejudicial attitude towards all the therapies that they choose. On this matter the AMA comes across as a group whose interests are threatened by natural therapies.”

The AMA story mentions that treating diabetes (presumably type 2) with “alternative” remedies is “outright dangerous” and that doctors are better placed at “encouraging people to be healthy”. “It is just ludicrous to suggest that a doctor in a five minute consultation can be a more effective adviser than a qualified natural therapist who often spends hours with each patient,” Bone countered. “Many natural therapists these days position themselves as health coaches and work closely with patients to motivate them to change. They are in fact doing the heavy lifting in lifestyle counselling; five or ten minutes would be a token effort. What is the point of telling patients they must lose weight if you don’t then give them detailed and specific advice about how to do it? And in the case of type 2 diabetes, none of the current drug treatments have been shown to significantly impact the risk of developing diabetic retinopathy, yet there is clinical trial evidence some harmless natural products might help with this. The poor patient is missing out on the full story.”

The AMA article claimed the HAP should leave healthcare policy to the “experts”. “This is especially patronising, and also ignorant of the calibre of our expert advisers,” Bone stated. “For example, I have been in clinical practice for more than 30 years, been on an expert advisory committee to the government in Canberra, held a senior academic post (Associate Professor) at UNE and I read the biomedical literature on a daily basis. We are well qualified to comment.”

Professor Kerry Bone

President – Health Australia Party

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