



[/](#)



[\(/member/47535\)](#)

[Edit profile \(/user/47535/edit\)](#)

[Log out \(/user/logout\)](#)

Menu

medical observer Full access for verified AHPRA users only

[All Updates \(/river-of-news\)](#)

[Professional](#) | ▼

[Medical](#) | ▼

[Read Later \(1\) \(/read-later\)](#)

[Favorite Categories](#) | ▼

Harsh reality: GPs face a future of doing more with less

17 March 2016



0 Likes

1 Comment ([/professional-news/harsh-reality-gps-face-a-future-of-doing-more-with-less#comments](#))

★ [Read Later \(/flag/flag/read_later/24365?destination=node/24365%3Fmkt_tok%3D3RkMMJWWf9wsRohuqnKZKXonjHpfsX%252B7OkuXqWzIMI/0ER3fOvrPUfGjI4GT8VhI%252BSLDwEYgJlv6SgFSLHMMbNn0LgLXhg%253D&token=WjRewLHm3p8Qf8TjZVhb6P1d2A6TzeV5cpo3kacgYqM\)](/flag/flag/read_later/24365?destination=node/24365%3Fmkt_tok%3D3RkMMJWWf9wsRohuqnKZKXonjHpfsX%252B7OkuXqWzIMI/0ER3fOvrPUfGjI4GT8VhI%252BSLDwEYgJlv6SgFSLHMMbNn0LgLXhg%253D&token=WjRewLHm3p8Qf8TjZVhb6P1d2A6TzeV5cpo3kacgYqM)

By Karen Evans, MD, Asia Pacific, Acendre

AMA president Professor Brian Owler recently highlighted that \$57 billion will be missing from the Australian healthcare system over the next 10 years due to funding arrangements that will come into effect from July next year.

While Health Minister Sussan Ley has countered that spending on health under the Turnbull government increases each year, this does not properly address the fact that Australia has an ageing population, which will put not just incremental but also exponential mental pressure on healthcare professionals.

The federal government's Intergenerational Report projects that, over the next 40 years, the proportion of the population older than 65 will almost double to about 25%, and the number of Australians living to 85 and beyond will quadruple.

People over 65 account for a quarter of all general practice consultations in Australia, and consultations with patients older than 65 are significantly longer (15.4 minutes) than those of younger patients (14.9 minutes).

These facts are a reminder that low-level increases in health-care spending are unlikely to be enough to continue to deliver quality GP care across Australia.

This leaves GP practices with the harsh reality of having to do more with less.

We know from other areas of public service and government that making efficiencies when staff resources are under pressure is made possible by streamlining work flows and connecting people via technology.

For example, the Australian Public Service recently survived a

hiring freeze that lasted more than 18 months by pooling resources and offering staff the opportunity to up- and cross-skill to take on new challenges. This was

made possible by using technology platforms that gave department heads insight into which staff wanted to take on new challenges.

Given that GPs' time will be increasingly stretched to meet the needs of the ageing population in years to come, practice managers will need to be smarter about understanding GPs' workloads and capacities. The best way to get this broad overview is using an agile technology platform that automates processes and gives

the practice accurate data on how staff are coping.

With evidence showing that patients over 65 require longer consultations, practice managers should begin gathering data on how this affects GPs' motivations and stress levels. As the proportion of consultations that come from this age bracket increases, employee engagement can suffer.

Similarly, if consultations are consistently running over the allotted time, practice managers should then think about how resources can be reallocated to meet the needs of the community. Unfortunately, hiring new GPs may not always be an option when

budgets are tightened, but having hard data on what is needed in each practice is the first step to solving these problems.

Technology is available to enable practices to rise to the challenge of managing workloads in this testing environment, so as the healthcare begins digitising aspects of care, think about how technology can also improve the management of staff, who deliver this vital service to patients.

Tags: [GP \(/tags/gp\)](/tags/gp), [General Practice \(/tags/general-practice\)](/tags/general-practice)

More from Health Policy

