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Diabetes management review – self monitored blood glucose testing for people with type 2 diabetes mellitus

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the first stage of the PBAC review of diabetes management, which is focusing on self monitored blood glucose testing for non-insulin dependent people with type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM).

The AMA supports evidence-based medicine.

The AMA notes the recent review of the effect of self monitoring of blood glucose on T2DM patients who are not using insulin that was reported in the online Cochrane Library (<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/14651858.CD005060.pub3/abstract;jsessionid=BC2910102312C2BC400CB1695A336CF0.d04t04>).

The results of this study mirror anecdotal general practice experience where T2DM patients comply well initially, but compliance declines over time. The initial testing helps to educate patients about the effects of diet on their blood sugar levels but this interest wanes.

Nevertheless, the AMA believes that blood glucose test strips should remain on the PBS for the management of T2DM patients for intermittent use when clinically necessary. For example, self monitoring may be necessary when medical practitioners modify medications or need to assess responses to various doses.

In addition, the AMA considers that the significant gains made in diabetes care over recent years is in large part a result of patient education and opportunities for patients to ‘take control’ of their health care through self monitoring.

The use of blood glucose test strips is an important factor in this.

While many T2DM patients may not need to, or may not undertake, daily testing the majority that are well managed will be testing daily, and sometimes more frequently when their diabetes is out of control or soon after diagnosis. Self monitoring allows patients to understand the dynamics of blood sugar level rises and falls and to either self manage or seek appropriate advice.

HbA1c is a proxy for the three month average of blood sugar level and does not assist patients who need to monitor more frequently. It does not help with management of low blood sugar or acute fluctuations of blood sugar, and may only be a late or delayed indicator that diabetic control is slipping.

Please contact Ms Georgia Morris on gmorris@ama.com.au or 02 6270 5466 in the first instance if you have any questions or require further information.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Geoff Dobb', with a horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

Professor Geoff Dobb
Vice-President
Chair, AMA Therapeutics Committee

13 November 2012

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