

MEDIA RELEASE

Medicines are key to preventing poor health

An approach to health care that focuses on using all available methods to prevent disease and poor health is to be welcomed, Medicines Australia said today.

The Chief Executive Officer of Medicines Australia, Kieran Schneemann, was speaking after the launch by Julia Gillard of Labor's discussion paper on a prevention-based health system at the National Press Club today.

"Medicines Australia congratulates Julia Gillard for her speech and release of her discussion paper today. A central theme of the pharmaceutical industry's message about health care is prevention," Mr Schneemann said.

"While many think about medicines as a way of curing illness and achieving better health, much of their real value is in helping people live well and have control over their lives.

"Responsible disease prevention and the long-term management of many chronic diseases can also involve diet, lifestyle changes, psychological therapy, screening, monitoring and education. Each boosts the effect of the other."

"Research is increasingly showing how their timely use can prevent people from becoming far sicker than they otherwise would become.

"For example, five-year survival rates have increased by 25 percent since the 1970s, with the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare finding that medicines were responsible for more than half of the increase.

"It is also a good result for governments, private health insurers and, of course, consumers because it has a flow-on effect to the money spent to treat sick patients.

"Julia Gillard spoke today of prevention being 'the fourth P' after population, participation and productivity in the general national discourse on how Australia's confronts its future.

'Medicines Australia argued at the same venue in August last year that the fourth P could in fact be 'pharmaceuticals'. However, the two things go hand in glove – by considering pharmaceuticals as one important arm of prevention, the health of all Australians will improve,' Mr Schneemann said

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