

AUSTRALIAN COMMISSION ON SAFETY AND QUALITY IN HEALTH CARE

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OECD report finds variation in common procedures across Australia

The management of common health conditions varies considerably depending upon where people live, according to an OECD Report released today.

The report, *Geographic Variations in Health Care: What do we know and what can be done to improve health system performance?*, examines regional variation in the rates of several common hospital interventions both within and between 13 participating countries.

The Australian results were provided by the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (the Commission) and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). Variation in Australia was measured according to where patients lived.

The OECD report compares results from the 13 participating countries. Australia was observed to have a high knee replacement rate (more than 200 per 100,000 population), a high rate of caesarean section (more than 300 per 1,000 live births) and a relatively high hysterectomy rate (330 per 100,000 females) compared to other OECD countries in the report.

According to Professor Anne Duggan, Chair of the Commission's advisory group on healthcare variation, variation may mean that some patients are missing out on effective care, or that others are having tests or interventions that are unnecessary or where risks outweigh any potential benefits.

Professor Duggan adds "Less care is not necessarily worse than more care, and vice versa. What these findings really bring home is the importance of patients being fully informed about all options when making decisions about their health care".

Professor Duggan encourages patients to ask for clear information in ways that would enable them to easily weigh up potential benefits and risks of different options when making healthcare decisions.

The Commission is developing an *Australian Atlas of Healthcare Variation* which will examine regional variation in a broad range of healthcare interventions, tests and prescribing patterns. The findings will be used to improve quality and appropriateness of care at service delivery level, and to achieve better value for the healthcare dollar.

More information

Geographic Variations in Health Care: What do we know and what can be done to improve health system performance? is available from the OECD web site

www.oecd.org/health/health-systems/medical-practice-variations.htm

Exploring Healthcare Variation in Australia is available from the Commission's web site

www.safetyandquality.gov.au/publications/exploring-healthcare-variation-in-australia/

Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care

The Commission is a government agency that leads and coordinates national improvements in safety and quality in health care across Australia. The Commission aims to support health care professionals, organisations and policy makers who work with patients and carers.

Media inquiries

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