

WHAT IS ACCREDITATION?

Accreditation is the longest established and most widely known process for the external evaluation of health care services. The process is implemented to ensure the delivery of safe and high quality health care. Accreditation recognises the achievements of health care teams to meet the requirements of established standards.

Accreditation relies on a set of formal standards that hold a profession accountable. In the primary health care setting, accreditation is based on standards devised by health care professionals for health care services. It is a process by which many industries benchmark their performance. It also guarantees a minimum standard of safety and care – particularly relevant in health care.

Who sets the standards?

In general practice, The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners lead the agenda, set the standards and determine the engagement framework through which accreditation is delivered. Australian General Practice Accreditation Limited (AGPAL) engages external peers trained to assess practice performance against the standards. The process is designed to ensure practices can interpret and understand the standards, identify any areas within the standards they are not currently meeting and access support to make improvements.

What is quality in primary health care?

Continuous quality improvement acknowledges the need for primary health care providers to continually improve, upgrade and monitor services the practice provides including education, practice management, the rights and needs of patients and the physical facilities of the practice.

The aim of continuous quality improvement is to make substantial and sustained changes in the quality of care to ultimately produce better health outcomes for patients.

Who is AGPAL?

AGPAL is the market leader providing quality accreditation for general practices, medical deputising services and Aboriginal medical services. AGPAL guides practices through accreditation against professional standards developed by The RACGP.

Benefits of accreditation

The benefits of accreditation include:

- improved patient safety and overall health outcomes,
- reduced risk in practice,
- improved practice efficiency,
- improved practice environment,
- increased recognition from insurance providers, and
- access to financial incentives for general practice.

Benefits of becoming AGPAL accredited

There are numerous benefits of becoming accredited with AGPAL. AGPAL offers a range of value add products and services that support our practices through the accreditation process and ongoing continuous quality improvement including access to:

- personalised service, dedicated customer support officers and ongoing phone and email support,
- a vast range of educational support material,
- AccreditationPro – our electronic self assessment tool for general practices,
- QbAY - a comprehensive online resource library that houses hundreds of fact sheets, templates, example policies and procedures that are all aligned to the RACGP Standards for general practices 3rd edition,
- and a range of highly informative publications including Quality News – a quarterly magazine and monthly e-bulletins.

AGPAL also holds an international conference biennially and delivers workshop series. These two events cover various topics on accreditation, quality and the standards. In 2009, AGPAL will launch its first online education for general practice. The education is suitable for the entire general practice team and involved training in the standards and accreditation.