***Your freedom to receive private health fund benefits for natural therapies is at***

***serious risk!***

A government review of 17 holistic therapies and health-enhancing practices has been

underway for a while, and is being conducted by the National Health and Medical

Research Council (NHMRC) in collaboration with the Department of Health.

Based on current plans, any policy containing a modality that is classed as

'unproven' is set to have its 10-39% rebate removed on April 1st this year. Health

funds will be pressured to remove natural therapies classed as 'unproven' from their

policies in order to protect rebates on their other coverage areas.

A full list of those covered under the review is:

 a.. Alexander technique

 b.. Aromatherapy

 c.. Ayurveda

 d.. Bowen therapy

 e.. Buteyko

 f.. Feldenkrais

 g.. Herbalism/Western herbalism

 h.. Homeopathy

 i.. Iridology

 j.. Kinesiology

 k.. Massage therapies, including shiatsu

 l.. Naturopathy

 m.. Pilates

 n.. Reflexology

 o.. Rolfing

 p.. Tai Chi

 q.. Yoga

This review is looking for what it describes as 'high-quality' evidence, and has

narrow criteria for what it is prepared to include. It is looking at systematic

reviews rather than randomised controlled trials, thereby bypassing what is known as

'Level 1' evidence, and the time window being examined is a five-year period.

A leaked draft of the report that has been reported in the media indicates that all

are set to fail the test. Alexander technique, massage, tai chi and yoga are

considered to have the best evidence to back them up, but as this is considered low

to moderate quality, they will still fail to meet the stringent requirements.

Click [here](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/phi-natural-therapies) to go to the Department of Health web page.

A parallel review of homeopathy has been underway for a while. When Complementary

Medicines Australia put in a Freedom of Information request, it found that two of

the three experts consulted by the NHMRC expressed numerous concerns about the

methodology and selective use of data, but they were overridden.

Using the NHMRC report, which is still in a draft form, anti-naturopathy forces have

been working to undermine homeopathy by:

 a.. Putting pressure on the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency to

review accreditation of homeopathy in the higher education sector.

 b.. Trying to remove financial support to students via the VET FEE-HELP scheme.

 c.. Criticising pharmacies that sell homeopathic medicines.

Unfortunately, there is a risk that lack of 'high-quality' proof for all the 17

modalities above may be used as leverage in a similar fashion.

Because natural therapies offer preventative health benefits, likely downstream

effects from this backward move would include an increase in GP visits, plus upward

pressure on both Medicare rebates and Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme costs. Other

consequences may include increased health fund premiums due to greater demand on

allopathic medical services.

While demand for natural therapies have been increasing rapidly, upward pressure on

taxpayer-funded health fund rebates is likely to be very slight, and is probably

offset many times over via the preventative health benefits.

**PLEASE TAKE ACTION**

1) Sign the petition at <http://chn.ge/1zdvNQF> (ignore the small number of

signatories, and the fact that the Federal Health Minister is now the Hon. Sussan

Ley.)

2) Sign the Association of Massage Therapists petition here

3) Write to the Hon. Sussan Ley at [Farrer@aph.gov.au](http://everlasting-health.com.au:2095/cpsess787678366/3rdparty/squirrelmail/src/compose.php?send_to=Farrer%40aph.gov.au), if possible giving

testimonials about how one or more of these therapies has helped you, or your

patients and how you/they rely on it to maintain health, and how you/they would be

impacted if regular appointments were no longer affordable.

 Or copy and paste the following message:

I strongly object to the government's plans to remove the private health insurance

rebate on policies that contain at least one 'unproven' therapy, thereby pressuring

health funds to remove these therapies from their coverage. Leaked information

indicates that all 17 therapies under review will be classed as 'unproven.'

I do not accept the validity of this review due to the fact that it involves

systematic reviews and excludes randomised controlled trials, thereby bypassing

Level 1 evidence, and the time window being examined is a narrow five-year period.

As I have strong doubts that this review is being conducted due to upward pressure

on taxpayer-funded rebates, please provide me with a credible justification for this

exercise.

4) If you have experienced benefit from homeopathy, or would like to defend it from

being further undermined, sign up for updates with Friends of Homeopathy Australia

here.

5) Please share this via social media, send it out to your friends, colleagues,

patients and other networks.

Source: Martin Oliver



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*Secretary & Member of Complementary Medicine Association of Australia.*