



HAVING YOUR OWN GP

Around 60% of doctors don't have their own GP, even fewer see their GP on a regular basis. There is a tendency to self-diagnosis and self-prescribe amongst medical professionals and their families. We don't always follow advice and recommendations we would offer patients in similar situations.

BARRIERS

There is a myriad of barriers and excuses given when doctors are audited about the reasons for not having or seeing a GP. These are succinctly summarised in a document by the Welfare special interest group of ANZCA <http://www.anzca.edu.au/documents/fa-wel-sig-rd-09-why-don-t-you-have-your-own-gp-20.pdf>

In this document, and also in audits, barriers frequently mentioned are:

- A reluctance of placing oneself into a submissive "patient role"
- Concerns regarding trust and confidentiality
- Concerns of being seen as incapable of making a correct diagnosis or overreacting
- Specialists' concerns regarding a lack of knowledge of general practitioners
- Fear of implications on registration status in case of certain diagnosis

RISKS

There are a myriad of risks associated with not having a GP, including;

- Loss of access to an impartial, objective opinion
- Lack of a partner in health
- Access to qualified specialists and allied health providers becomes more difficult when needed
- Documentation and therefore continuity of care is often inadequate (with associated ethical concerns)

BENEFITS

It has clearly been demonstrated that patients with a GP generally have better health.

A GP can provide an objective and impartial opinion, and helps to put symptoms and concerns into perspective. If required, access to suited specialists, allied health professionals or hospitals will be organised. A GP can keep track of important aspects of preventive medicine, be it in relation to immunisations or indicated screening tests. Most importantly, though, a GP who follows us over years will become a partner in health who will be able to detect risk factors in regards to physical and psychological welfare and intervene early.

The MCNZ and AMA as well as many colleges recommend having a GP. Self-diagnosis and treatment is strongly discouraged, because of possible negative implications.