

More than what we prescribe

Brendon Evans

“Relationships matter: the currency for systemic change [is] trust, and trust comes through forming healthy working relationships. People, not programs, change people.”

– Dr Bruce D Perry¹

In this April issue of *AJGP*, prescribing is addressed from differing perspectives. Quek et al approaches deprescribing in an elderly population,² Aitcheson et al synthesise the efficacy of naltrexone in fibromyalgia,³ Eu et al investigate GP harm reduction in non-prescribed performance-enhancing drugs,⁴ and Ivers and Astell-Burt present the concept of prescribing time in nature to improve mental health.⁵ This variety of approaches is reflective of the breadth and depth of general practice.

However, the value and influence of general practice cannot be measured as a simple sum of prescriptions written and referrals made. The relationship built between a patient and ‘*their doctor*’ – often over years – is deeply impactful and unmatched among the specialties.

Relationships drive health outcomes. Strong patient *engagement* with their GP enhances quality of life, prevents hospital admissions, reduces healthcare costs, and improves mortality.^{6,7} It is the patient’s relationship with ‘*their doctor*’ that creates and perpetuates this engagement.

So, the next time a patient shows pictures of their grandchildren, motorbike or dog, know that this minute of personal connectedness is contributing to the trust and engagement that can be lifesaving.

We matter to our patients. Dr Meldrum shows this in this issue by highlighting

the esteem held of general practice by the public, and our capacity to meet their healthcare needs.⁸ It is also evidenced by the expressions of gratitude received from those whom they have helped.

As GPs, we are more than what we prescribe. Our therapeutic relationship of trust is pivotal to our patient’s life story.

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