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MEDIA RELEASE

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AHIA Challenges AMA on Opposition to Transparency and Accountability

The Australian Private Health Fund Industry's peak body says the Australian Medical Association should back plans to publish data on hospital and Doctor performance, including matters such as hospital-acquired infections, readmission and mortality rates.

Speaking at the 4th Annual E-Health Research Colloquim in Brisbane today, the CEO of the AHIA, Hon. Dr Michael Armitage said the AMA's argument against the publication of hospital mortality rates was seriously flawed.

"To suggest that the publication of this information (mortality rates) would prevent practitioners from tackling the hard cases is ill-considered," Dr Armitage said.

"Of course practitioners doing the most difficult cases would be likely to have higher mortality rates and all health stakeholders understand that information on hospitals and doctors must be clinically risk-adjusted to ensure reporting is fair and accurate.

"There is no doubt that provider performance can be clinically risk-adjusted. Rather than looking for reasons not to change, it is time all health stakeholders – medical professionals, hospitals, Governments and the Private Health Industry – formed a partnership to improve quality, safety, cost and service, to achieve successful reform to Australia's health sector.

Dr Armitage said Australia's health system needed to improve the availability and transparency of correct and appropriate medical information for the good of all stakeholders, especially Consumers.

"The Australian health system needs unified standards of reporting with consistent approaches across the public and private sectors (e.g. hospitals scorecards including publication of infection and readmission rates and success rates of medical procedures).

"Australians with personal contact with the health industry frequently access information prior to undergoing a medical procedure. All Australians should be able to do likewise. This will enable consumers to make better, more informed decisions on where and to whom they go for treatment, and ultimately it will lead to improved health outcomes for all Australians."

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