

The cost of living is affecting the health of Australians, with many delaying care due to rising healthcare costs.

‘This has had a particularly devastating effect on those who are least likely to be able to afford out-of-pocket healthcare costs, many of whom have complex healthcare needs and chronic health conditions,’ says Australian Health Review Editor-in-Chief Dr Sonj Hall.

Released today, the latest issue of the [Australian Health Review](#), the Australian Healthcare and Hospital Association’s peer-reviewed journal, focuses on healthcare financing and the costs associated with delivering healthcare in Australia.

‘In this issue, Policy Reflections authored by Jane Hall and Stephen Duckett reflect on Australia’s healthcare system and the growing and changing health needs of Australia. The authors question the system’s resilience and whether it is able to cope with future shocks, such as environmental catastrophes and financial crises.’

Stephen Duckett reflects on the release of the Strengthening Medicare Taskforce Report, and work to be done in ensuring Medicare is fit for purpose and supports Australia’s future healthcare needs.

Also touched on in this issue, is the growing call to integrate oral healthcare into Australia’s universal healthcare coverage. A Perspectives Brief from Deakin University examines the current state of oral healthcare and the effects of preventable conditions emanating from poor oral health.

‘Poor oral health not only leads to serious long-term health conditions but imposes financial stress, even for patients that qualify for publicly funded dental services. There is also concern that existing government-funded services may not effectively target our most at-risk groups, such as people in rural and remote areas, and that most dental services provided are for non-preventive procedures like restorative services.’

As well as people potentially delaying essential health care due to cost, affordability is a barrier when it comes to medications. In a study from Griffith University, researchers analysed the use and cost of Medicare Benefits Schedule and Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme services for patients who acquired a brain or spinal cord injury.

‘They found that there was a potential for financial hardship associated with these conditions but also concerning are the high patient costs, which this population might have difficulty absorbing. While access to care might be easier now without pandemic lockdowns and travel restrictions, factors like financial hardship, play a key role in decisions to delay care and forego medications altogether.’

Other topics covered in this issue of the Australian Health Review include healthcare workforce and models of care.

The online version of this [media release](#) and links to the [Australian Health Review](#) can be found on the AHHA website. **The Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association (AHHA) is the independent peak membership body and advocate for the Australian healthcare system and a national voice for universally accessible, high-quality healthcare in Australia.**

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