

Doctors, patients must speak out

Politicians, health bureaucrats and medical managers sit in comfortable offices doing deals about the future funding arrangements for our health care system. Meanwhile practitioners are forced to manage patients' blood, sputum and vomit with fewer and fewer resources.

In the debate about the future of medicare, there is a noticeable absence of health care practitioners and consumers. It seems decisions are made about us without us.

With our current obsession with the free market, health care bureaucrats have gained power over practitioners and consumers. We now talk about health as an "industry" and the dollar, not patient care, has become the bottom line.

Health care practitioners have been effectively silenced from public debate. In addition, consumers are treated as merely numbers. Both health care practitioners and consumers need to insert ourselves and our non-economic values back into the debate.

Without our contribution, practitioners and consumers will be treated as merely economic units and health care policies will remain focussed on dollars rather than health care.

Letters to The Age, 12th March 2004