Establishing a
New General Practice

When establishing a new general practice or taking over the ownership of an existing practice, there are many things to consider. There are planning stages as for any new business and additional considerations when operating a medical practice.

The following provides a guideline for consideration. Please note this list is not exhaustive.

Business planning

- Business structure or legal entity (sole trader, medical company, discretionary trust, service business)
- Development of business objectives (financial, strategic and operational)
- Establishment of your team of external advisors (accountant, financier and legal)
- Identification of stakeholders and assistance organisations (Rural Health West, WAPHA, Practice Assist, Shire/Local Government Authority)
- Risk analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats)

Building

- Consulting rooms, nursing station, treatment room, reception and waiting room fit out
- Council approval
- Design, layout and parking
- Disability access
- Land, purchase, lease
- Location
- Medical and office equipment

- Security
- Temperature control

Finance

- Australian Taxation Office requirements (Australian Business Number, Business Activity Statements)
- Banking (bank accounts, EFTPOS)
- Establishment of billing practices and a chart of fees
- Establishment of business budget/s
- Establishment of Medicare Australia/Department of Health operations (ECLIPSE, Easy Claim, Online Claiming, My Health Record, PBS)
- Financial planning, cash flow
- Payroll systems
- Purchasing procedures
- Reconciliation of accounts

Operational

- Filing systems
- Hours of operation
- Identification of suppliers (stock, stationery, consumables)
- Insurance (medico, business, public liability)
- Management of hazardous waste
- Marketing, promotion and signage
- Pathology services/companies
- Patient feedback, complaints management
- Patient registration
- Quality improvement practices

- Scheduling appointments
- Services offered

Policies and procedures

- Accreditation against the RACGP Standards
- Business interruption procedures (emergency)
- Codes of practice, compliance
- Confidentiality, privacy and intellectual property control
- Destruction and/or archiving of medical records
- Occupational Health and Safety (OHS)
- Sterilisation and infection control
- Vaccination and drug management – storage and security, cold chain, legislative requirements

Information and communications technology

- Disaster recovery plan
- Hardware (computers, printers, scanners, fax machine, shredder)
- Software (finance, practice management, clinical records)
- Source a provider or IT support
- Telehealth and e-health
- Telephone systems
- Website development

Clinical management

- Continuity of care (handover, after-hours, etc)
- Legislative requirements for the acquisition, use, storage and disposal of Schedule 4 and Schedule 8 medicines
- Management of personal health records
- Procedures and management of results, follow up, registers and recalls
- Purchase of medical stock and supplies

Human resources

- Annual reviews
- Contracts and agreements
- Payroll operation
- Performance management
- Position descriptions
- Staffing
- Clinical (medical practitioner/s, nursing)
- Non-clinical (practice manager, receptionist/s, administrative, cleaning)

- Superannuation
- Taxation
- Training and induction

Medical practitioner requirements

- Clinical supervision (if required)
- Medical Board registration
- Medical Indemnity
- Medicare provider number/s
- Overseas trained doctor restrictions
- Area of Need
- District of Workforce Shortage
- Immigration and visa obligations
- Ten Year Moratorium

Practice nurse(s)

- Clinical supervision of enrolled nurses
- Endorsement of registration (additional qualifications and expertise)
- Professional boundaries, competencies and guidelines
- Professional indemnity insurance

Further reading

- RACGP General Practice Management Toolkit www.racgp.org.au/your-practice/business/managementtoolkit
- *Successful Practice Management: Exceeding Patient Expectations.* Colleen Sullivan and Geoffrey Meredith; Edited by Ellie Gleeson; October 2012

Professional education

- Australian Association of Practice Management (AAPM)
  www.aapm.org.au
- Medical Administration Training www.medtrain.com.au
- The Private Practice www.theprivatepractice.com.au
- UNE Partnerships Pty Ltd www.unep.edu.au

Resources

- Australian General Practice Accreditation Limited (AGPAL) www.agpal.com.au
- Australian Association of Practice Management (AAPM) www.aapm.org.au
- Australian Digital Health Agency www.digitalhealth.gov.au
- Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Authority (AHPRA) www.ahpra.gov.au
- Australian Medical Association ama.com.au
- Australian Medical Council www.amc.org.au
- Australian Primary Health Care Nurses Association www.apna.asn.au
- Australian Taxation Office www.ato.gov.au
- Business Enterprise Centre www.becaustralia.org.au
- Business.gov.au www.business.gov.au
- Chamber of Commerce and Industry www.cciwa.com
- Doctor Connect www.doctorconnect.gov.au

- Fair Work Ombudsman www.fairwork.gov.au
- Quality Practice Accreditation www.qpa.net.au
- Medicare Australia www.medicareaustralia.gov.au/provider
- RACGP Practice Standards (various) www.racgp.org.au/your-practice/standards
- Rural Health West www.ruralhealthwest.com.au
- Rural and Regional Health Australia www.ruralhealthaustralia.gov.au
- Small Business Development Corporation www.smallbusiness.wa.gov.au
- The Department of Commerce www.commerce.wa.gov.au
- The Doctors Reference Site www.drsref.com.au/business.html
- Wageline www.commerce.wa.gov.au/labour-relations/wageline
- WA Primary Health Alliance www.wapha.org.au
- WorkSafe www.commerce.wa.gov.au/WorkSafe