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ATMS' response to the Friends of Science ill-informed comments in the article: "No rebates for unscientific blood tests?"

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Once again, some ill-informed comments have been released by the Friends of Science in Medicine (FSM). The article titled, "No rebates for unscientific blood tests?" which appeared in the Medical Observer on 28 October is ill informed, and out of touch with what natural medicine practitioners actually do in their clinics.

First of all, there are no Government rebates for blood tests unless they are performed by a medical practitioner. Most blood tests such as cholesterol and thyroid measurements are covered by Medicare. Natural medicine practitioners do not have the authority to order blood tests and have them covered by Medicare rebates. Some specialised blood tests ordered by a medical doctor are not covered by Medicare and must be paid for by the patient, such as the important Lipoprotein (a) test.

If a private health insurer provides rebates for certain blood tests or other natural medicine tests, that it is their prerogative to do so. Natural medicine practitioners use a range of tests to determine the health of their clients. Instead, natural health care professionals treat the whole person and as such, blood tests form only a small part of the picture of the patient's health.

Secondly, FSM states that natural medicine practitioners shouldn't be endorsed by the Royal College of Pathologists Australasia. Natural therapists have *never* been endorsed by the Royal College of Pathologists Australasia. This further displays ignorance and demonstrates why FSM shouldn't comment on matters that they are not qualified to comment on.

The article also states: "the distinction between tests that are suitable for medical purposes and those that are not should not be blurred". We are unaware of any blood test performed by a laboratory that would not be medically relevant otherwise the pathology laboratory simply wouldn't run the test in the first place. All blood tests and all results should be considered by an appropriate healthcare professional to determine the health of the patient.

ATMS agrees with Pathologist and University of Adelaide clinical professor Graeme Suthers' statement when he said, "The most important thing we can do is provide people with information." Natural medicine practitioners are highly qualified and highly trained healthcare professionals that provide expert advice to help people live a happy healthy life. Providing information to clients about their health is what we are all about and all information obtained by a natural medicine practitioner shouldn't be vetted by an ill-informed group like FSM.

For further information please contact ATMS by email info@atms.com.au or call 02 8878 1500.