

Media Release

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Complementary Medicines Could Save \$3 Billion from Healthcare Bill

Speaking at the Complementary Medicines Industry's National Conference today in Sydney, Mr Carl Gibson Chief Executive Officer of Complementary Medicines Australia (CMA), welcomed the recently published Frost & Sullivan report *'Targeted Use of Complementary Medicines: Potential Health Outcomes and Cost Savings in Australia'*. The report reiterates findings from previous studies to show robust links between several of the more well-known complementary medicines with reduced risk of a secondary disease event among high-risk groups and with major potential healthcare cost savings.

"This latest report examined the use of six complementary medicines across four chronic disease conditions – cardiovascular disease (CVD), osteoporosis, age-related macular degeneration and depression, all of which contribute heavily to the national burden of illness in Australia. The report found that the net economic benefit of using complementary medicines was over \$3 billion".

"Big gains were identified, especially for the use of calcium and vitamin D by women aged over 50 who had been diagnosed with osteoporosis or osteopenia. The report estimated that between 2015 and 2020 an average annual hospitalisation cost of \$922 million could be potentially saved, along with gains in productivity of \$900 million." said Mr Gibson.

"A 2013 US study *'Smart Prevention – Health Care Cost Savings Resulting from the Targeted Use of Dietary Supplements'*, also conducted by Frost & Sullivan, found the use of key dietary supplements, including omega-3s, B6, B12 and folic acid, could reduce hospitalisation costs by \$US billions per year. And a 2009 Access Economics report, *'Cost effectiveness of complementary medicines'*, commissioned by the National Institute of Complementary Medicine, found that the use of St John's Wort for mild to moderate depression could provide significant cost savings to the Australian health budget."

"This latest report (commissioned by the Australian Self Medication Industry), also finds that significant healthcare and productivity benefits could be realised from the use of these well-known complementary medicines for specific chronic conditions."

"These reports demonstrate the importance of taking complementary medicines as a means to combat unsustainable health care costs, and as a means for high-risk individuals to reduce their chances of having to deal with potentially costly disease-related events."

"Australia faces a big challenge in relation to the growing burden of chronic disease, with preventive measures increasingly seen as essential in reducing this burden. In 2013, over \$140 billion was spent on health care services, which is nearly 9.1% of Australia's total gross domestic product."

"Preventive Health is an essential move towards improving the cost-effectiveness of the Australian healthcare system and alleviating pressure on the Government's health budget. To date, there has been little Government focus on the positive benefits that complementary medicines can bring to the table. The complementary medicines industry can help to deliver preventive health objectives, and industry is keen to work with the Government to achieve this," Mr Gibson said.

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