

The Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency does not require doctors to practise under the name that they are registered under

IN REPLY: The national online register of practitioners is a vital part of Australia's system of regulating health practitioners to assure patient safety. It makes accessible to the public and employers the names of all health practitioners who are registered to practise. It also provides important information about limits or restrictions placed on the way a registered practitioner is allowed to practise.

The national online register must remain an authoritative source of trusted information on health practitioners, so consumers can rely on it for accurate and up to date information to inform their health care decision making.

Through our work, we have become aware that some health practitioners

practise their profession using an alias rather than their legally recognised name published on the register. The Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) has asked governments to consider an amendment to the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act 2009* to enable a practitioner to nominate one or more aliases to be recorded on the public register. We are pleased that this proposal is now the subject of public consultation.

AHPRA believes that recording additional names or aliases on the register would help inform and protect the public, by making it easier to identify a practitioner who may not be practising under their legal name.

There are some operational and practical issues to consider. A clear definition of an alias is required so health practitioners can readily understand their obligations to inform AHPRA and the national Boards of the use of these names. Consideration would need to be given to the requirements

for practitioners to provide up to date information on the use of aliases in their practice, and whether any verification of this is necessary. The validity of the register could be compromised by information that is unverified or out of date. Finally, there may be risks from unintended consequences, including whether publishing aliases could be used for commercial gain or benefits not related to public information and protection, which is the focus of the National Law.

AHPRA awaits the outcomes of the current public consultation process with interest.

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Competing interests: I am the Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency. ■

doi: 10.5694/mja2.12037

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