

Caring for the whole patient

BY GERALDINE KURUKCHI

DR Aymn Shenouda had a vision of providing more integrated and holistic care to his patients when he established the Glenrock Country Practice with his wife, Dr Samiha Azab, two years ago.

Today their practice in Wagga Wagga, NSW, boasts various integrative services — from exercise physiologists and weight-loss programs to patient education sessions on how to manage chronic illness.

The 43-year-old GP's determination to put his vision into action was recognised last month when the practice was awarded the RACGP NSW/ACT Practice of the Year. For Dr Shenouda, who moved to Australia from Egypt with Dr Azab 13 years ago, the award acknowledges his belief in the future of Australian general practice as providing a broader range of primary care services to patients.

"I think we're pretty on the ball with where general practice is going ... where all services are available in one practice to deal with issues such as chronic disease, diet and asthma," Dr

Shenouda says. "Our fundamental concern is with patient care, to make sure we can continuously provide patients with these services."

The monthly information evenings held at the practice have been popular with patients, with about 120 people attending a recent session on mental illness. Dr Shenouda says the event addressed important issues within the local community, particularly with drought in the region putting local farmers at higher risk of depression.

While the RACGP award is an important achievement for the husband and wife team, they say positive feedback from patients has been their most rewarding experience in general practice.

"My wife said we had already won the award when we listened to patients' comments in a video on the practice ... For us it was about hearing patients' satisfaction," he says. "When we matched what they said with best practice guidelines we could see we were doing the right thing."

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Dr Shenouda and his wife, Dr Azab, at the Glenrock Country Practice.