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New research shows personal health coaches can help chronically ill Australians

New research published in one of the world's leading medical journals clearly shows the benefits personal health coaching delivers for people with chronic disease – and with the launch of Bupa Health Dialog Australians will start to receive telephone health coaching based on the expertise of one of the world's leading healthcare organisations.

From today, Australians living with chronic disease will benefit from Bupa Health Dialog coaching that aims to combat the escalation of chronic disease, which affects four in five Australians and represents almost 70% of the nation's health expenditure¹.

Research recently published in the highly respected *New England Journal of Medicine*, which followed 174,000 individuals for a year - making it the largest randomised controlled trial study of chronic care management ever published - showed:

- A 10.1% reduction in annual hospital admissions as a result of Health Dialog (HD) services.
- Average monthly medical and pharmacy costs were lower for those supported and coached by HD.
- The cost of delivering personal health coaches was considerably less than the savings it generated.

Bupa Health Dialog's services will initially be offered to eligible Bupa Australia members through the company's private health insurance brands MBF, HBA and Mutual Community – before being made available to the not-for-profit, private and public sectors.

Up to 40,000 Bupa Australia members will have the opportunity – at no additional cost to them – to benefit from the telephonic coaching service before the end of 2011. Importantly, these services are personalised to meet the needs of each individual and will be provided by dedicated 'health coaches', who are experienced, highly trained nurses.

HD's international experience demonstrates that personal health coaching is particularly effective in helping people that have been chronically ill, enriching both their quality of life, and life expectancy, by providing them with information that supports their established patient-doctor relationship.

Speaking on the launch of the service, Bupa Health Dialog General Manager, Brett Comer, said: "We look forward to delivering holistic health coaching that enables Australians to take control of their health and wellbeing – particularly those with chronic conditions such as diabetes, chronic heart disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary (airways) disease, asthma and lower back pain.

"Bupa Health Dialog will help people better manage their health condition whilst also aiming to reduce medical costs for both the individual and the healthcare system."

Dr Christine Bennett, Chief Medical Officer of Bupa Health Dialog, also spoke proudly of the service: "Governments and professional bodies have consistently highlighted the tidal wave of chronic disease facing Australians and our health care system.

¹ *Chronic diseases and associated risk factors in Australia*, 2006. Canberra: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare



“Bupa Health Dialog is a clear demonstration of an innovative and tangible reform that will help deliver better health outcomes and an improved patient experience,” she said.

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Further information on Bupa Health Dialog can be found at: <http://www.bupahealthdialog.com.au>

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About Health Dialog

Health Dialog is a world leader in healthcare decision support programs and has been part of the Bupa Group since 2008. It is one of the largest health coaching firms in the USA, a market leader in Spain, and has a significant presence in the UK and France. Established in the United States in the late 1990s, Health Dialog has today grown into a company that offers programs to over 20 million people around the world.

About Bupa Australia

Bupa Australia Pty Ltd (“Bupa Australia”) is a leading health and care company. With a presence in every Australian state and territory, the company operates under the brands, MBF, HBA, and Mutual Community, proudly covering more than three million Australians.

Bupa Australia is focused on providing sustainable health insurance that represents real value to customers, and on leading the industry in the promotion of preventive health and wellness.

Bupa Australia’s products and services include cover for hospital, medical, ancillary and ambulance services, as well as travel, life, car and home insurance, and access to life insurance products.

As part of the international Bupa Group, Bupa Australia draws on the strength and expertise of an international healthcare leader. The Bupa Group covers more than 10 million people in approximately 190 countries and provides services to many more millions of customers around the globe.