

Media release

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Pharmacists talking pain as opioid education program launches

The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) and the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) have joined forces to empower 21,000 pharmacist members across the country with information on recent opioid regulatory changes to encourage safer medicines use, supported by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) in the Department of Health.

Launched today and accessible through the [SHPA](#) and [PSA](#) websites, **Talking pain: Opioid options and alternatives** initially comprises four online learning modules, distilling tailored advice to pharmacists on increasing awareness and understanding of appropriate opioid use and alternative treatments for pain, and how to effectively communicate with patients and consumers experiencing pain.

PSA National President Associate Professor Chris Freeman said the challenges posed by the inappropriate use of opioid medicines are clear.

‘We are all aware of the compelling evidence surrounding the harm associated with inappropriate use of opioids, which make up an important component of the 250,000 Australians admitted to hospital each year because of their medicines, as outlined in PSA’s [Medicine Safety: Take Care](#) report,’ he said.

‘Acute and chronic pain can be challenging to effectively manage, often requiring an individualised approach, which is why pharmacists have a crucial role in guiding safer use of medicines to manage pain, across both the community and hospital settings.’

SHPA President Peter Fowler says the emphasis on clear conversations and behaviour change is important in this complex area.

‘Recent regulatory changes in Australia reflect recommendations made in our landmark 2018 [Reducing Opioid-related Harm](#) report, and SHPA is vocal in support of educating doctors and non-medical prescribers regarding appropriate opioid prescribing for patients pre-operatively, during admission and at discharge.

‘Through this program, we believe pharmacists and prescribers’ attitudes and behaviours will soon align with the changes being made to opioid products, encouraging more transparent conversations and ensuring safer medicines use for all Australians experiencing pain.’

Over the two years of the program, **Talking pain** will also see the distribution of new opioid Cautionary and Advisory Labels (CAL) and supporting information to every community pharmacy, and public and private hospital in the country.

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About PSA

The Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) is the only Australian Government-recognised peak national professional pharmacy organisation representing all of Australia’s 31,000 pharmacists working in all sectors and across all locations. PSA is committed to improving Australia’s health through excellence in pharmacist

care and works to identify, unlock and advance opportunities for pharmacists to realise their full potential, to be appropriately recognised and fairly remunerated.

PSA leads and supports innovative and evidence-based healthcare service delivery by pharmacists. PSA provides high-quality practitioner development and practice support to pharmacists and is the custodian of the professional practice standards and guidelines to ensure quality and integrity in the practice of pharmacy.

psa.org.au

About SHPA

The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) is the national, professional, for-purpose organisation for leading pharmacists and pharmacy technicians working across Australia's health system, advocating for their pivotal role improving the safety and quality of medicines use. Embedded in multidisciplinary medical teams and equipped with exceptional medicines management expertise, SHPA members are progressive advocates for clinical excellence, committed to evidence-based practice and passionate about patient care.

shpa.org.au |   