

# Media release

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## Interim report strengthens call for embedded aged care pharmacists

The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety interim report has identified over-reliance on chemical restraint in aged care, as one of three areas of action, strengthening calls from the Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) to embed high quality clinical pharmacy services for aged care residents.

Released today, the [Interim Report: Neglect](#) also noted an urgent need for aged care residents to receive more frequent medicines reviews from a pharmacist.

SHPA Chief Executive Kristin Michaels says the report marks an important milestone in improving medicines safety for some of Australia's most vulnerable.

'In evidence, the Royal Commission heard the boundary between treatment for an illness and for restraint can become blurred, which can have heartbreaking consequences.

'As referenced by SHPA member Dr Juanita Breen in hearings, specialty geriatric pharmacists are uniquely positioned to determine if antipsychotic medicines prescribing is appropriate and in accordance with professional or government guidelines, and thus determine if they are being used therapeutically, or for chemical restraint.'

Ms Michaels says medication management reviews are crucial to aged care, given 91% of aged care residents take at least five regular medicines and 65% take more than ten regular medicines, every day.

'Through other recent research we know only 29% of aged care residents have access to medication management review, regardless of frequency, so this is a timely reminder of the challenge ahead of us.

'The interim report considers mechanisms to support pharmacists to be involved in the implementation and monitoring of recommendations made during the review process. This is best achieved through embedding pharmacists directly into the aged care setting to ensure their expertise is most effectively harnessed to implement recommendations and reduce medication-related harm.'

Ms Michaels says embedding pharmacist roles in aged care requires funding and investment both within and beyond existing pharmacy remuneration programs, such as Community Pharmacy Agreements.

'Trialling embedding pharmacists into aged care settings is supported by Commonwealth Chief Medical Officer Professor Brendan Murphy given the benefits demonstrated, and SHPA commends the \$3.7 million investment by the Federal government to trial this in the ACT.

'Further, preliminary Victorian evidence on a clinical pharmacy model in a home nursing service indicated a return on investment of \$1.54 for every \$1 spent on embedding pharmacists to improve medication management.

'Ultimately, of course, this is all about identifying and managing medication-related issues as early as possible, to improve the quality of life for our older Australians.'

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**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.

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