

Media release

Thursday 24 June 2021

SHPA welcomes vaccine, digital and palliative support in \$4b NSW Health Budget

The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) welcomes the NSW Government's \$4 billion commitment to increase healthcare system capacity in Australia's most populous state, ensuring it is well placed to manage the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic as it battles the current outbreak.

[This week's 2021-22 NSW Budget](#) commits \$261.3 million for the COVID-19 vaccine rollout, just as NSW is set to pass two million COVID-19 vaccination doses administered today, an area in which the state's hospital pharmacists and technicians have played a central role since the first vaccine candidates arrived in Australia in February. This is in addition to \$141.0 million to commence implementing a Single Digital Patient Record to enhance care coordination across hospital and other settings.

SHPA Chief Executive Kristin Michaels says the increased investment in digital health initiatives over the coming four years will help maximise the potential of electronic medical records.

'Our members understand that, when robustly and securely supported, digital records effectively aid medication management and improve the quality of care in high-risk situations such as transitions of care, identified as a key priority in the global strategy to reduce preventable medication-related harm.'

Ms Michaels also welcomed a further \$82.8 million over four years to continue strengthening palliative care services, including improving community-based care, enhanced palliative care services, and enhancements to the specialist palliative care workforce in regional and rural NSW.

'We are pleased to see this funding which supports our recommendation in our submission to the *Health outcomes and access to health and hospital services in rural, regional and remote New South Wales*. Palliative care pharmacists are crucial to ensuring the safe and quality care of this vulnerable cohort of patients across all care settings, especially with respect to management of their medicines.

'Palliative care patients have complex health needs and medication regimens, so missed doses and incorrect medicines place them at risk of serious complications, lack of symptom relief and re-hospitalisation.

'To ensure optimal care, we will continue to advocate for embedded clinical palliative care pharmacy services delivered at a ratio of one pharmacist for every 20 acute patients and one pharmacist for every 30 stable patients, across regional, rural and remote NSW health services, in line with SHPA's *Standard of Practice for Palliative Care Services*.'

The 2021-22 NSW Budget will also see an additional \$37.3 million invested in Real Time Prescription Monitoring (RTPM) to track medicines associated with a high risk of causing harm, dependence, or misuse.

'In recent years, SHPA has led policy change to reduce opioid-related harm, and supporting RTPM to improve safety and quality of care was Recommendation 3 of our [Reducing Opioid-Related Harm: A hospital pharmacy landscape paper](#). Hospital pharmacists care for patients who have opioid dependence issues or are at risk of abuse and misuse of controlled medicines, such as opioids, and SHPA strongly supports the implementation of a nationally consistent RTPM system', Ms Michaels says.

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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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