

Media release | Monday 28 April 2025

New resource helps pharmacists navigate voluntary assisted dying

New AdPha VAD Pharmacy Practice Update provides comprehensive support to Australia's pharmacy workforce in delivering compassionate, compliant end-of-life care.

Advanced Pharmacy Australia (AdPha) has released an update for pharmacist practitioners across the country to assist in conversations around voluntary assisted dying.

Developed by the AdPha VAD Working Group, the [Voluntary Assisted Dying Pharmacy Practice Update](#) includes the latest information, tools and resources to ensure conversations with patients at or approaching end-of life—are handled sensitively, respectfully, legally and in a supportive manner.

Tanya Burgess FANZCAP (VAD), Member of the VAD Working Group says its critical pharmacists understand there are differing legal frameworks and referral pathways across jurisdictions.

'Talking about VAD is never easy – and trying to do so while juggling a patchwork of laws across the country only adds to the challenge.'

'This [new resource](#) emphasises the need for pharmacy professionals to understand the legal criteria in the state or territory they work in, so they confidently engage in these conversations with care and clarity.'

'Ultimately it is about helping pharmacists get comfortable with what can be some of the most uncomfortable but necessary conversations to support patient end of life care.'

Kay Dunkley FANZCAP (Lead&Mgmt), Executive Officer of the Pharmacists' Support Service, says the update goes beyond practical guidance and will be a particularly valuable resource for many of their volunteers.

'This isn't just a toolkit – it's a lifeline for pharmacists navigating emotionally intense situations.'

'It encourages practitioners to reflect on their own views around VAD, and prepares them to have thoughtful, respectful discussions.'

'Just as importantly, it includes resources to support pharmacists' mental health and wellbeing, which is vital in this emotionally complex area of practice.'

AdPha President Tom Simpson FANZCAP (Lead&Mgmt), a credentialled VAD Pharmacist, says the evolving legal landscape and emotional weight of VAD should make it a key focus for the profession.

'As Voluntary Assisted Dying is now legal in most parts of Australia, we have a responsibility to ensure pharmacists are adequately equipped to support patients with compassion and competence.'

'This update is a significant step forward and I want to acknowledge the dedicated members of the AdPha working group for their work.'

'Pharmacists have a unique role in this space, and AdPha is committed to supporting them as they guide patients through one of life's most vulnerable moments.'

- The [AdPha VAD Pharmacy Practice Update is now available](#) for all pharmacists and technicians working across all care settings.
- The AdPha VAD Specialty Practice Group is open to all current AdPha members, join via [AdPha Communities](#).
- The AdPha WA Branch will be hosting [VAD: Getting Comfortable with Uncomfortable Conversations](#) **tomorrow Tuesday 29 April 5.30–7.00pm** both in-person and online for all pharmacy practitioners. [View further information and register](#).

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About Advanced Pharmacy Australia:

Advanced Pharmacy Australia (AdPha) is the progressive voice of Australian pharmacists and technicians, built on more than 80 years of hospital innovation that puts the patient at the centre of everything we do. AdPha supports all pharmacy practitioners, working with interdisciplinary teams across hospitals and health services, to realise their full potential. We are the peak body committed to forging stronger connections in health care by extending advanced pharmacy expertise from hospitals to everywhere medicines are needed.

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