



# MedsAware

Deprescribing Action Week  
18–24 March 2024

ASK BECAUSE YOU CARE



SUPPORTED BY:



## MedsAware 2024 targets inappropriate use of psychotropics in aged and disability care

MEDIA RELEASE | MONDAY 18<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2024

Following the success of its inaugural year in 2023, [MedsAware 2024: Deprescribing Action Week](#) is kicking off today across Australia to drive conversations around discontinuing medicines that are no longer required, or for which the risk of harm outweighs the benefits in the individual.

With this year's theme 'Ask because you care', MedsAware 2024 seeks to empower older Australians, Australians living with a disability, and their carers, to ask health professionals: "Could any of these medicines be doing more harm than good?"

Running until Sunday 24 March and led by the Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) with support from the Australian Deprescribing Network (ADeN), Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP), the Australian Medical Association (AMA), COTA Australia, the Registry of Senior Australians (ROSA) Research Team, the Council of Australian Therapeutic Advisory Groups (CATAG) and the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) – MedsAware will this year highlight the inappropriate use of psychotropic medicine that are often overused to control challenging behaviours in older people and those living with a disability.

**SHPA President Tom Simpson** says 'polypharmacy' and 'inappropriate medicine use' is a barrier to ensuring the safe and quality use of medicines in aged care and disability settings.

'Several studies have demonstrated that challenging behaviours, particularly those seen in patients with dementia, are too often addressed by starting psychotropic medicines without first attempting to use evidence-based non-pharmacological interventions.

'It has been estimated that only 10% of antipsychotic medications and benzodiazepines – a class of psychotropic medicines – used in residential aged care are clinically justified, while an Australian study of adults with intellectual disability showed 82% were inappropriately prescribed psychotropic medicines.

'And we know that every year, 250,000 Australians are admitted to hospital due to medication-related issues, many of which are preventable.



‘As medicines experts, pharmacists are well placed to detect and help prevent inappropriate use of high-risk medicines such as psychotropics that are widespread in aged care and disability facilities.

‘We are proud to continue lead the MedsAware campaign and work with our partners to embed deprescribing as a central principle of safe health care, to reduce the risks associated with polypharmacy, hyperpolypharmacy and inappropriate medicine use to ensure more Australians stay out of hospital.

‘With the world’s first published use of ‘deprescribing’ used in our flagship Journal of *Pharmacy Practice and Research (JPPR)* more than 20 years ago, deprescribing is very much in the DNA of SHPA.’

**ADeN Acting Chair Dr Lisa Kouladjian O’Donnell** says as people age, their priorities and life values change, and their medicine regimen should reflect their goals of care.

‘Medicines that were once beneficial, but no longer appropriate or interferes with a person’s current goals of care, may need to be deprescribed.

‘Deprescribing can reduce medicine-related harms, and the burden to individuals, to optimise outcomes for Australians.’

**RACGP President Dr Nicole Higgins**, says it is a complex area of medicine that required careful management.

‘The goal of deprescribing is to improve a person’s quality of life by reducing the amounts and types of medicines to reduce the risks of complications such as falls and cognitive impairment.

‘There are many other strategies that we have to assist people with behavioural challenges before we reach for the prescription pad. This is a complex area and there is no single solution.’

**AMA President Professor Steve Robson** says upholding the quality use of medicines is the responsibility of all doctors.

‘Our most vulnerable patients, including those with a disability and older Australians are at risk if regular reviews of their medicines aren’t undertaken by those responsible for their care.’

**COTA Chief Executive Officer Pat Sparrow** says a national focus on deprescribing which centres the needs of patients is important.

‘It’s crucial that older Australians are supported to have conversations about reviewing, reducing or discontinuing their medicines.

‘This isn’t about stopping medication, it’s about encouraging conversations and making sure older people are getting the right medications they need to live life the way they want and deserve to.

‘We need a system that places patients at the centre of the conversation through safer, shared decision making and sees patients, pharmacists, doctors and nurses all working together in the best interests of the patient.’



**FIP CEO Dr Catherine Duggan** says it’s never been a more important time to promote the significance of deprescribing and polypharmacy.

‘An important aspect of medication safety is ensuring that patients do not continue to take medicines after they’re no longer required and that the benefits of taking any medicine outweighs the risks. This is a fundamental role of pharmacists as the experts in medicines.

FIP fully supports the SHPA MedsAware campaign to raise awareness of the benefits of appropriate deprescribing, particularly in cases of polypharmacy. As our older populations grow, this facet of pharmaceutical care will become even more significant.’

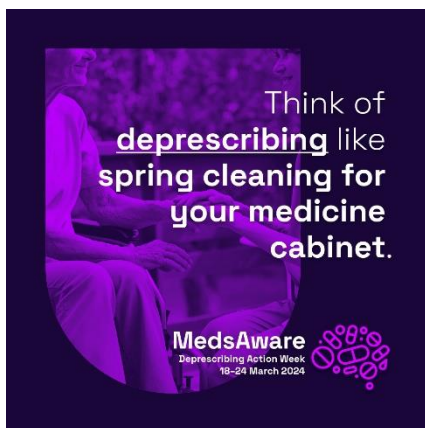
**CATAG Chair Anita Shutt** says to ensure quality use of medicines is maintained, it is important to have embedded a structured, medicines stewardship-based approach to medicine review and deprescribing.

‘Research suggests that one-quarter of people on multiple medicines have adverse effects directly attributable to the additive effects of those medicines.<sup>1</sup> Medicine reviews and deprescribing should be collaborative, actively involving the patient in the decision-making process with an aim to optimise treatment and minimise potential risks.’

**MedsAware Deprescribing Action Week** will run 18–24 March 2024.

To find out more, visit [shpa.org.au/news-advocacy/MedsAware](https://shpa.org.au/news-advocacy/MedsAware).

To support SHPA and its partners in raising awareness around deprescribing, you can access the campaign resources at [shpa.org.au/news-advocacy/MedsAware/campaign-resources](https://shpa.org.au/news-advocacy/MedsAware/campaign-resources)



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### **About SHPA**

The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) is the national, professional organisation for the 6,100+ Hospital Pharmacists, and their Hospital Pharmacist Intern and Hospital Pharmacy Technician colleagues 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](https://shpa.org.au) |   

### **About Australian Deprescribing Network (ADeN)**

The Australian Deprescribing Network (ADeN) involves clinicians, academic researchers, policy makers, students and consumers working together to develop the evidence-base, clinical guidance and knowledge translation to facilitate deprescribing of medicines that are no longer providing benefit or are causing harm. ADeN aims to promote research, awareness, practice and policy for the safe and appropriate use of medicines for all Australians.

[australiandeprescribingnetwork.com.au](https://australiandeprescribingnetwork.com.au)

### **About Council on the Ageing (COTA)**

COTA Australia is the leading advocacy organisation for older people.

[cota.org.au](https://cota.org.au)

### **About the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP)**

The [Royal Australian College of General Practitioners](https://www.racgp.org.au) (RACGP) is the peak representative organisation for general practice, the backbone of Australia's health system. We set the standards for general practice, facilitate lifelong learning for GPs, connect the general practice community, and advocate for better health and wellbeing for all Australians.

[racgp.org.au](https://racgp.org.au)

### **About the Australian Medical Association (AMA)**

The Australian Medical Association (AMA) is the peak professional body for doctors in Australia. The AMA promotes and protects the professional interests of doctors and the healthcare needs of patients and communities. Representing doctors, the AMA works with governments to develop and influence health policy to provide the best outcomes for doctors, their patients, and the community. The AMA represents and supports all Australian doctors and medical students. They are member-run and led, fighting for fairness and equality, and lobby and campaign on the issues affecting the medical profession.

[ama.com.au](https://ama.com.au)





### **About the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP)**

The **International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP)** is the global body for pharmacy, pharmaceutical sciences and pharmaceutical education. Through our [156 national organisations](#), academic institutional members and individual members, we represent over four million **pharmacists, pharmaceutical scientists** and **pharmaceutical educators** around the world. Click [here](#) for the history of FIP.

[fip.org](http://fip.org)

### **About the Registry of Senior Australians (ROSA)**

The Registry of Senior Australians (ROSA) is a national multisectoral integrated data platform designed to monitor and evaluate the health, service use, social welfare, medication use, mortality, and other outcomes of >3.5 million people who received or are receiving aged care services nationally.

[rosaresearch.org](http://rosaresearch.org)

### **About the Council of Australian Therapeutic Advisory Groups (CATAG)**

CATAG is a collaborative incorporating all Australian State and Territory Therapeutic or Medicines Advisory Groups. CATAG is an expert and consensus-based collaboration that influences clinical governance so that a quality use of medicines approach is considered in both policy and practice. CATAG is dedicated to optimising medicines use and promoting the safe, effective, equitable and sustainable use of medicines. CATAG facilitates information and knowledge exchange, provides guidance, and advocates for best practices in therapeutic decision-making.

[catag.org.au](http://catag.org.au)