

Media release

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Hospital leadership can power Australian pharmacy and improve patient care

Harnessing the acute care expertise of hospital pharmacists to shape medicines policy, embed much-needed medicines experts in residential aged care and a national plan to reduce the risk of opioid-related harm in Australian hospitals are central to improving outcomes for Australian patients, the Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) has reiterated today.

Over five key recommendations in its [submission to the 2020-21 Federal Budget](#), SHPA highlighted how boosting pharmacist workforce development and establishing a Medicines Leadership Advisory Council will enable hospital pharmacists to make the strongest positive impact on the future goals of Medication Safety and Quality Use of Medicines as Australia's latest National Health Priority Area.

SHPA Chief Executive Kristin Michaels says hospital pharmacy is booming and should be recognised for its unique and powerful potential in the pharmacy landscape.

'In recent years, almost 50% of new pharmacy roles have been in the hospital sector, and SHPA members oversee 22% of the Federal Government's Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) expenditure each year.

'In caring for Australia's most unwell, embedded in multidisciplinary medical teams, hospital pharmacists can meet the increasing demand for expert medicine advice and policy development related to high cost and complex medicines in the acute setting, if led and represented by SHPA as a recognised peak body.'

Ms Michaels says medicines mismanagement in aged care and opioid-related harm are two current and ongoing public health crises that can be mitigated through smarter use of the hospital pharmacy workforce.

'Despite 2018-19 Federal Government funding of residential aged care packages for over 216,000 Australians, approximately two-thirds of all residential aged care residents do not receive a medication review, an alarming discrepancy with real implications as revealed in alarming Aged Care Royal Commission testimony. SHPA has long advocated for a removal of the cap to Home Medicines Reviews (HMRs) and Residential Medication Management Reviews (RMMRs).

'Allocating \$100 million annually for an expert aged care pharmacist workforce will significantly reduce the overrepresentation of older Australians in the 250,000 medicine-related hospital admissions we see each year in Australia, which cost \$1.4 billion to the healthcare system.

'Australia saw a 62% increase in the rate of opioid deaths in the ten years to 2016 and we know surgery is a key precursor to the potentially harmful use of opioids. Commitment to a National Opioid Stewardship Support Liaison program will support practice revisions and contribute to reducing the risk of harm for the more than 2.2 million Australians undergoing surgery each year.'

Ms Michaels says the benefits for patients care in SHPA's recommendations are complemented by benefits to the budget bottom line.

'Clinical pharmacy services in hospitals are extremely cost-effective, returning more than \$22 value per \$1 investment in hospital pharmacy through a combination of increased medicine optimisation, reduced prescribing, shorter length of stay and increased adherence.

'Through our recommendations, the full potential of the hospital pharmacy sector can be unleashed to address our most pressing public health crises and help realise the full benefits of the stronger national focus Medication Safety and Quality Use of Medicines.'

SHPA's 2020-21 Federal Budget recommendations:

1. Provide peak body funding for SHPA's ongoing activities to ensure the Federal Government has ongoing access to impartial advice contributing to improved health outcomes for Australians
2. Embed clinical pharmacists in aged care to improve safe and effective use of medicines and reduce inappropriate chemical restraint
3. Fund a pharmacy workforce study to ensure the pharmacist workforce development is suited to meet the challenges of Medication Safety and Quality Use of Medicines
4. Fund a National Opioid Stewardship Support Liaison program to work with SHPA to reduce the risk of opioid-related harm for patients in Australian hospitals
5. Establish a Medicines Leadership Advisory Council to advise Federal Government on Medication Safety and Quality Use of Medicines activities

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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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