

Media release

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SHPA members leading the 'Medicines without harm' mission

The safe use of medicines is again in the global spotlight as the World Health Organization (WHO)'s annual World Patient Safety Day focuses on 'Medication without Harm', with some of Australia's leading hospital pharmacists marking this year's theme via a special opinion series detailing strategy, advice and inspiration to minimise risks of avoidable patient harm from medications.

Released ahead of [World Patient Safety Day 2022](#) tomorrow and authored by members of the Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA)'s Medication Safety Leadership Committee, the [special issue](#) of the Medication Safety series provides seven angles on this central tenet of pharmacy practice, which is also Australia's Tenth National Health Priority Area.

Toni Howell, SHPA Medication Safety Leadership Committee Chair, says the compilation explores a range of established or emerging Medication Safety issues at a critical time, after two and a half years of prioritising the COVID-19 pandemic and associated workforce challenges.

'The special series spans issues pharmacists across Australia and beyond face every day, and a range of diverse medication management environments in which we work.

'The pandemic isn't over yet, and we welcome WHO's recognition that it's time to prioritise Medication Safety again, wherever our pharmacy work takes us, and whatever our concerns are, so we can reduce patient harm and enhance patient safety.'

In the [series](#), available freely online:

- [Bonnie Tai](#) (QLD) provides a practical list of actions to help ensure medication safety gains of recent decades aren't lost amid the mass burnout and resource reallocation forced by the pandemic.
- [Toni Howell](#) (Chair, VIC) warns that despite increasing digitisation, the vast amount of information in healthcare remains free text with a high risk of ambiguity and misinterpretation;
- [Nam-Anh Nguyen](#) (WA) highlights how the 'why' of taking medicine is just as important as the 'what', 'when' and 'how', increasing understanding and encouraging adherence;
- [Wendy Ewing](#) (VIC) encourages the sharing of stories from patients, carers, and families to powerfully convey and embed medication safety messages;
- [Linda Gaudins](#) (VIC) explains how medication review and timely recognition of adverse medication reactions can reduce medication harm;
- [Kerry Fitzsimons](#) (WA) urges consideration for the 'second victims' of medication errors, the health care providers who are involved and may become victimised or traumatised and can often feel personally responsible for the patient outcome; and
- [Chris Giles](#) (QLD) emphasises why systems and process changes necessitated by COVID-19 must not erode the critical functions that underpin safe and effective medication management;

Chief Executive Kristin Michaels says SHPA strongly supports the annual call for solidarity and united action by all countries and international partners to reduce patient harm.

'On 2022 World Patient Safety Day, SHPA reiterates support for the third WHO Global Patient Safety Challenge: [Medication Without Harm](#), aims to reduce severe avoidable medication-related harm by 50%, globally.

'Equipped with unique medicines management knowledge and embedded in interdisciplinary care teams looking after Australia's most acutely unwell, hospital pharmacists have a crucial role to play in achieving this important goal here at home.'

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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.

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