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Hospital pharmacists call for cancer care reform on Rare Cancers Awareness Day

Improved access to medicines and programs and better staff resourcing are key to reforms.

This [Rare Cancers Awareness Day](#), Advanced Pharmacy Australia (AdPha) is calling for urgent reforms to better integrate pharmacy expertise into cancer care—particularly for people living with rare and less common cancers.

In its [recent submission to Rare Cancers Australia's consultation on a new Optimal Care Pathway \(OCP\)](#), AdPha called for three key areas for reform: improved access to medicines and support programs, better pharmacy workforce resourcing, and nationally consistent access to PBS-listed therapies.

Shaun O'Connor, Chair of AdPha's Oncology and Haematology Leadership Committee, says pharmacists play a critical yet often overlooked role in delivering care to this highly vulnerable group.

'Rare cancers make up nearly a third of diagnoses—but cause almost half of all cancer deaths.'

'In hospitals, pharmacists are essential to navigating treatment safely, especially when no clinical guidelines exist. They are also key to overcoming supply challenges and ensuring continuity of care for patients.'

'We're supporting some of the most complex therapies, yet pharmacy teams often aren't resourced to best-practice levels. This has to change.'

'When it comes to rare cancers, pharmacy isn't just part of the care team—we're often the bridge to treatment that wouldn't otherwise be possible.'

Mr O'Connor says Australians shouldn't face worse cancer outcomes simply because of where they live.

'No one should have a poorer chance of surviving cancer because of their postcode.'

'But for people with rare and less common cancers in rural and remote areas, that's too often the reality.'

'People in socio-economically disadvantaged and regional communities are disproportionately affected by rare cancers—and once diagnosed, face worse-than-average survival outcomes.'

'We need to close the gap in cancer care by ensuring timely access to specialist-led treatment and novel therapies—no matter where patients live.'

'This is our moment to push for real reform—fairer funding for chemotherapy services, expanded access to life-changing medicines, and national consistency in care.'

AdPha's Oncology and Haematology Specialty Practice Group comprises a network of over 900 pharmacists working across inpatient, outpatient, ambulatory, and primary care settings. These members are committed to advancing best practice in cancer care through leadership in education, research, clinical service delivery, and professional collaboration.

Read AdPha's submission into [Rare Cancer Australia's Optimal Care Pathway for Rare and less Common Cancers](#).

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For more information, contact:

Caroline Barlow

Media & Stakeholder Relations | cbarlow@adpha.au | 0436 009 138

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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