

# Media release

Tuesday 8 December 2020

## New guidelines support opioid overdose intervention

The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) has released a practice update to support safe, immediate use of a powerful opioid toxicity antidote, which is now more readily available through the Australian Government's [Take home naloxone pilot](#) program.

SHPA's [Take-home naloxone in Australian hospitals: Hospital pharmacy practice update](#) provides guidance to facilitate the supply of take-home naloxone from hospital settings to individuals who may witness or experience the life-threatening respiratory depressant effect of opioids.

SHPA Chief Executive Kristin Michaels says hospitals are critical to identifying individuals at risk of opioid harm, which continues to increase in prevalence.

'Opioids are known to be high risk medications, recently accounting for almost two thirds of all drug induced deaths in Australia. There has been a nine percent increase in opioid-induced deaths in the past five years, and nearly 150 hospitalisations and 14 emergency department (ED) presentations daily involve opioid-related harm.

'Accordingly, hospital settings are crucial sites for expanding evidence-based interventions to reduce related mortality. This Practice Update outlines priority areas for take-home naloxone in hospitals, including links to a range of resources for consumers and health professionals.'

The Take Home Naloxone pilot currently ensures naloxone is made available, in participating states, free and without a prescription, to people who may either experience or witness, an opioid overdose.

Ms Michaels says the provision of take-home naloxone wherever clinically appropriate is a well-documented life-saving strategy to prevent unintentional opioid-related harm.

'Naloxone has a long history of safe and effective use in the treatment of life-threatening opioid reactions and has been used in Australia in emergency settings for decades.

'The Australian Government's pilot program, coupled with SHPA's Practice Update informed by hospital pharmacist expertise, will ensure the benefits are realised for more people at the time of greatest individual risk.'

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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.

[shpa.org.au](http://shpa.org.au) |   