

Media release

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Invest in NSW hospital pharmacy expertise to close safety gap

The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) has called on major political parties in New South Wales to prioritise investment in clinical pharmacy services, opioid stewardship and electronic medical records to improve patient care as voters prepare to go to the polls on Saturday 23 March.

Informed by members' experiences at the hospital pharmacy coalface and collated by the NSW Branch, SHPA's [2019 NSW State Election Priorities](#) detail how the expansion of services would help reduce medication-related incidents and opioid-related harm in Australia's most populous state.

SHPA Chief Executive Kristin Michaels says clinical pharmacy investment would bring NSW in line with other states and territories, while providing both optimal patient care and economic return.

'There are an average of 75 medication-related incidents in NSW each day and two serious incidents each week resulting in patient harm.

'International evidence shows regular pharmacist input in a hospital setting results in a reduced length of stay and increased patient satisfaction, and Australian evidence has shown a \$23 return for every \$1 spent on clinical pharmacy services in public hospitals.

'Investing in more hospital pharmacists and extended weekend and after-hours pharmacy services – as is common in other jurisdictions – will improve the quality and safety of patient care.

'NSW's hospital pharmacist to hospital bed ratio is the lowest in the country – it's time for that to change.'

Ms Michaels says NSW has the third highest proportion of deaths involving pharmaceutical opioids in Australia, at 2.1 per 100,000 people.

'While the majority of opioid prescribing occurs in the community, 70% is initiated in hospitals with 17% of patients continuing opioid use long-term, so it is clear that post-surgical prescribing in hospitals is an important point of intervention.

'The next NSW Government should emulate other states that are spearheading pharmacist-led opioid stewardship programs to reduce the risk of opioid harm and optimise patient outcomes by improving opioid prescribing and discharge processes. Hospital pharmacists are well positioned to encourage the appropriate use of opioids by patients to minimise the risk of opioid abuse, addiction and diversion.'

Ms Michaels says partnership with SHPA and agencies will facilitate essential, accessible clinical tools and resources to support transitions of care, a crucial time in medicines management.

'Sixty percent of adverse drug effects are related to incomplete or incorrect transfer of medication information between hospital and community care.

'We call for the next NSW Government to partner with SHPA and agencies to develop clinical tools and resources that support continuity in medication management and quality use of medicines at transitions of care, and fund electronic medical record pharmacists to support their implementation.'

View SHPA's [2019 NSW State Election Priorities](#).

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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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