

Media release

Friday 25 September 2020

Patient safety, research opportunity and global solidarity on World Pharmacists Day

On World Pharmacists Day, the Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) has welcomed the extension of measures supporting the safe supply of PBS medicines, joined a global 'black out' in memory of pharmacists lost in the pandemic, while formally kicking off a busy Spring calendar of membership elections and celebrations.

Today, Health Minister Greg Hunt announced an extension of the *National Health (COVID-19 Supply of Pharmaceutical Benefits) Special Arrangement 2020* to March 2021, which permits the supply of Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) medicines off a digital image or copy of a prescription, as well as dedicated pharmacy research funding in the \$20 billion Medical Research Future Fund for research to improve the quality and safe use of medicines and medicines intervention by pharmacists.

President Peter Fowler says SHPA strongly supports the extension, which supports the safe supply of medicines for the most vulnerable and high-risk hospital patients.

'Hospital pharmacists have taken the lead and restructured their clinical services, operations and departments to allow the supply of PBS medicines off digital image and copies of prescriptions, reducing the risk of potential exposure to COVID-19 in healthcare facilities.

'This is critical to the safety of vulnerable Australians – such as post-transplant or older patients, and those receiving treatment for cancer and a high chronic disease burden – as well as the safety of health professionals themselves.

'We also applaud the establishment of the \$25 million Quality, Safety and Effectiveness of Medicine Use and Medicine Intervention by Pharmacists fund. Hospital pharmacists are leaders in innovation – undertaking the vast majority of pharmacy research, supported by the Society's *Journal of Pharmacy Practice Research* and recently established Research Specialty Practice stream – and SHPA members are ideally positioned to maximise these opportunities to improve safe patient care.

Chief Executive Kristin Michaels says World Pharmacists Day carries a very different tone in 2020.

'In honour of pharmacists from around the world who have died from COVID-19 and in partnership with the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP), SHPA will 'black out' out all social media channels at 11.00am AEST.

'On this day it is important we stand in solidarity with the global profession, while also recognising the outstanding achievements of hospital pharmacists across Australia.

'The next two months demonstrates that support, with elections across our leading practice and jurisdictional committees, recipients announced across our newly expanded [award categories](#), and a series of national events culminating in the special [2020 SHPA Virtual Congress \(VCON\)](#).

'With our peers and partners across health care we look forward to a COVID-19 circuit-breaker, but we are equally determined to ensure high quality hospital care is protected and enhanced and the hard work of Australia's leading community of pharmacists is acknowledged and celebrated at this challenging time.'

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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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