

# Media release

Saturday 30 May 2020

## Reflecting on palliative care in a challenging year

The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) is sharing the message of [National Palliative Care Week](#), an important time to reflect on the critical role of palliative care teams in the person-centred care of someone with an active, progressive, advanced disease.

SHPA Palliative Care Chair Penny Tuffin says the theme 'Palliative Care: It's more than you think' is particularly pertinent this year, with issues of advanced care planning and self-care being highlighted for health care professionals.

'In 2020, people worldwide have had to consider the possibility of contracting COVID-19, a virus with an uncertain disease trajectory and outcome. Personal goals of care and advance care planning have been forced into people's minds as they realise this highly infectious contagion could result in their death or the death of someone they love.

'Palliative care teams support discussions about preparing for death in order to relieve the decision-making burden on those closest to the person dying. While talking about death is hard, with more conversations we can better support people who are nearing, or at, the end of their life.

'As a pharmacist, having an understanding of a person's priorities and goals of care as they near death is vital in ensuring that medication decisions, choices and plans align with their wishes.'

Ms Tuffin says the rapid spread of coronavirus escalated the frequency and urgency of these important conversations, with practitioners rising to the challenge.

'In recent months, health professionals have been forced to consider the scenario of caring for a large number of people dying of a contagion for which there is no treatment.

'Palliative care professionals understand that to continue to flourish and support others when faced with suffering and dying they need to actively practice self-care; it has been heart-warming to see the energy that healthcare systems and organisations have given to supporting health care professionals and non-clinical staff with tools and facilities to practice self-care.'

SHPA Chief Executive Kristin Michaels says palliative care is more than just care provided in the last days of life.

'As exemplified through the dedicated work of palliative care pharmacists across the country, palliative care gives people the chance to live as well as possible, for as long as possible.

'Pharmacists have an important role in recommending medications for best-evidence symptom management, and assisting people to understand and manage their medications, while not making these the focus of their life.

'On behalf of members I thank the SHPA Palliative Care Leadership Committee – Penny Tuffin (WA), Lorna Chess-Williams (Qld), Pascale Dettwiller (SA), Tony Hall (Qld), Maria Poulter (Qld), Josephine To

(SA), Robert Wojnar (Vic) – for driving awareness and understand of this crucial care area this week, and every week.’

– ends –

**For more information contact:**

Nick Sharp-Paul, Head of Strategy and Communication  
[nsharp-paul@shpa.org.au](mailto:nsharp-paul@shpa.org.au) | 0411 098 838

**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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