

Media release

Monday 21 December 2020

Clinical unity and patient care drive new cancer care guidelines

The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) has comprehensively revised leading pharmacist guidelines on the provision of cancer care at a time of rapidly increasing and broadening use of oncology and haematology medications in Australia. Most Section 100 Efficient Funding of Chemotherapy PBS medicines across Australia are dispensed and supplied by the hospital sector, and in four jurisdictions the majority are supplied specifically by public hospitals.

Covering adult and paediatric oncology practices and published yesterday in the latest issue of the [Journal of Pharmacy Practice and Research](#) (JPPR), the [Standard of Practice in Oncology and Haematology for Pharmacy Services](#) includes a comprehensive overview of the range and scope of oncology and haematology services with direct and indirect benefits to patient care, and for the first time incorporates oral cancer therapy.

In his supporting editorial, COSA President Associate Professor Nick Pavlakis says the establishment of protocols, and adherence to them, is crucial in enabling the safe delivery of oncology therapy.

'Medication errors in oncology have the potential for serious patient risk due to the nature of the drugs involved, particularly in chemotherapy; pharmacy services within oncology units and community practices thus need to maintain a high standard of care.

'The role of the oncology pharmacist has expanded enormously since the evolution of oncology therapy, and with roles in inpatient care, outpatient care, clinical trials and community prescribing.

'As a fundamental member of the oncology multidisciplinary care team, the oncology pharmacist's role will continue to expand as the breadth of medical therapies continues to grow, and we welcome this timely update of these important professional standards.'

John Coutsouvelis, SHPA Oncology and Haematology Chair, says the Standard is cognisant of the innovative practice settings for cancer pharmacists, with the revised Standard now including recommended staffing ratios and activities for inpatient care, as well as outpatients and ambulatory settings.

'To ensure optimal clinical care and patient safety, the working group – comprising members of SHPA's Oncology and Haematology Leadership Committee and Practice Group – has included advice on managing variation from locally approved protocols.

'For the first time, the Standard incorporates guidance for managing oral cancer therapies, highlighting the increasing importance of this treatment modality, and the pharmacist's role in its management.'

The Standard of Practice also includes enhanced recommendations on staffing and resourcing, as well as guidance on the optimal knowledge, skills and experiential learning of pharmacists working in oncology and haematology care teams.

SHPA Chief Executive Kristin Michaels says the Standard reflects rapidly diversifying care settings.

‘This year has provided a stark reminder of the value of teleservices and consultations in protecting the health and safety of Australians, while improving medicines safety at the critical transition of care juncture between hospital and home.

‘We’ve ensured the standards are applicable for both hospital pharmacy and broader oncology and haematology pharmacy services, including community or domiciliary based services such as home cancer therapy services and teleoncology.’

The Standard is further supported in JPPR by a [systematic review](#) by Mia Percival *et al.* JPPR is [available free](#) to SHPA members.

– ends –

For more information contact:

Susie Brown, Communications Advisor
sbrown@shpa.org.au | 0437 119 286

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 |   