



SHPA Queensland Branch Committee response to the Queensland Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy, May 2024

About you

Are you responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation?

Not-for-profit organisation

What is your main role or reason for interest in the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy?

Other – Our members include hospital pharmacists who deliver mental health services.

Queensland Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy Feedback

Do you see yourself, your organisation and/or your community reflected in the Strategy overall?

Yes

Do you see yourself, your organisation and/or your community in the Strategy's Vision statement?

Yes

The current Strategy Vision is "Queenslanders thrive through positive wellbeing", which has been informed in consultation so far. There are several other options that have been suggested. Please select the option you agree with most, or, suggest your own option.

- Queenslanders thrive through positive wellbeing
- Wellbeing is valued and enjoyed by all Queenslanders
- Wellbeing is understood and prioritised
- Wellbeing is within reach and accessible to everyone
- Other, please specify

To what extent do you agree with the Strategy FOCUS AREA 1 – Collective Wellbeing?

Strongly agree.

To what extent do you agree with the Strategy FOCUS AREA 2 – Community Wellbeing?

Agree.

To what extent do you agree with the Strategy FOCUS AREA 3 – Individual Wellbeing?

Strongly agree.

Would you like to provide additional feedback about any of these Focus Areas?

Focus Area 1, Objective 1.2 - Develop workforce capability and capacity across systems and sectors

As identified in this objective, workforce capability is an essential element in promoting, preventing, and providing early intervention in response to the mental health care needs of the community.

Medications are an important treatment modality for many mental illnesses. According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), in the December quarter 2023, over 12 million PBS-listed [mental health-related medications](#) were dispensed.¹ The nature of treatment is often complex, specialised and complicated by the unique problems inherent in the management of mental illness, e.g., paranoia and



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suspicion about treatment, hallucinatory distractions, lack of insight and understanding, confusion or cognitive impairment. Pharmacists are well positioned to apply their knowledge and expertise to help ensure that patients with mental illness receive optimum treatment.

Mental health pharmacists are pharmacists who provide clinical care in mental health units, and in any inpatient, outpatient, ambulatory or primary care setting to patients of any age with mental health conditions. Mental health pharmacists undertake a range of medication management activities on a regular basis, including medication reconciliation; assessment of current medication management; clinical review; participation in ward rounds, case conferences and other relevant meetings; and continuity of pharmaceutical care, particularly at points of transition throughout the health system.

Mental health pharmacists play an essential role, particularly due to the high-risk nature of medications used in treating mental health conditions, which often have complex adverse event profiles, necessitating meticulous monitoring and dosage adjustments. For instance, clozapine, which is used to treat schizophrenia, requires stringent monitoring due to its potential for serious adverse effects, therefore mental health pharmacists play a critical role in clozapine dose monitoring based on blood levels. Additionally, mental health pharmacists have a role in evaluating the suitability of patients to receive depot injections, a form of long-acting medication administered via intramuscular injection, by assessing adherence.

Structured programs to develop and train pharmacists in mental health are required to ensure mental health patients receive safe, quality, and specialised mental health medication management and clinical pharmacy services. SHPA offers Resident and Registrar Training Programs (previously known as the Foundation Residency and Advanced Training Residency Programs) which are structured, formalised, supported and accredited national pharmacy training programs.

The Resident Training Program equips early career pharmacists with foundation clinical skills whilst the Registrar Training Program offers a pathway for speciality development for pharmacists with three to five years of foundation hospital experience, seeking to advance their practice towards [ANZCAP Registrar](#) status. SHPA's Registrar Training Program offers a range of speciality Practice Area Pathways including a Mental Health pathway for pharmacists keen to expand their scope in this field of practice. SHPA would welcome investment from government to support the delivery of these programs to pharmacists in Queensland, to strengthen workforce capability and produce highly skilled mental health pharmacists.

To what extent do you agree with the DRIVING PRINCIPLES of the Strategy?

Strongly agree.

Would you like to provide additional feedback about the Driving Principles?

The *Collaborative* Driving Principle should include collaboration with and between healthcare professionals who play a fundamental role in supporting the mental health of their patients.

The Strategy is focusing on population-wide mental health and wellbeing. It takes a system view with a focus on promotion, prevention, and early intervention. Do you think this approach will be beneficial for improving the mental health and wellbeing of Queenslanders?

Agree.

Please provide any other comments or additional information you have on this early draft strategy that are not already captured above.

The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) is the national, professional organisation for the 6,100+ Hospital Pharmacists, and their Hospital Pharmacist Intern and Hospital Pharmacy Technician colleagues working across Australia's health system, advocating for their pivotal role improving the safety and quality of medicines use. The SHPA Queensland Branch welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy.



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SHPA convenes a Mental Health Specialty Practice group of mental health pharmacists providing high quality mental health care in a variety of hospital and other care settings. SHPA also produces the Standards of Practice for Clinical Pharmacy Services² and the Standards of Practice for Mental Health in Pharmacy Services³ which outline the entitlement of patients with mental illness to levels of pharmacy care aligned with other key patient groups.

As we shape our Strategy, we want to involve a wide range of voices. We aim to engage with all relevant groups and sectors to contribute. Who do you think we need to hear from in the development of the Strategy and Action Plan?

The wide range of healthcare professionals delivering mental health services to Queenslanders, including mental health pharmacists in order to understand their contributions, gaps in service delivery, and to better develop strategies that address them.

References

¹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (n.d.). Mental health services in Australia. Retrieved from <https://www.aihw.gov.au/mental-health/overview/mental-health-services>

² SHPA Committee of Specialty Practice in Clinical Pharmacy. SHPA Standards of Practice for Clinical Pharmacy Services. J Pharm Pract Res 2013; 43 (2 suppl): S2-S69.

³ Lowy H, Borja V, Bailey S, Bjorksten C, Kochman A, Longworth J, Meldrum A, Sieff A, Smith L, Wisdom A, Mellor Y. Standard of practice in mental health for pharmacy services. J Pharm Pract Res 2023; 53(4): 204-25 . <https://doi.org/10.1002/jppr.1874>



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