



SHPA submission to Allied Health Mental Health Early Career Program Requirements for Smaller and Emerging Disciplines (VIC), August 2022

Introduction

The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia is the national professional organisation for more than 6,100 pharmacists, pharmacists in training, pharmacy technicians and associates working across Australia's health system. SHPA convenes a Mental Health Specialty Practice Group for over 800 mental health pharmacists providing high quality mental health care in a variety of hospital and other care settings. Mental health pharmacists undertake a range of clinical activities on a regular basis, which are outlined in the *SHPA Standards of Practice for Clinical Pharmacy Services*¹ and are applicable to mental health pharmacy practice as outlined in the *SHPA Standards of Practice for Mental Health Pharmacy*², which is currently due for review.

This submission is made in consultation with SHPA's Mental Health Leadership Committee.

Following the Department of Health's draft *National Mental Health Workforce Strategy 2021- 2031* consultation, SHPA commends the Victorian government for its development of a workforce reform strategy which recognises clinical pharmacists as key participants of Victoria's mental health service workforce.

The National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing conducted in 2007 found that an estimated 20% of Australians aged 16–85 experienced a mental disorder in the previous 12 months.³ According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's (AIHW) Mental health services in Australia report, 17.2% of the Australian population filled a prescription for a mental health-related medication in 2019- 20, with an average of 9.2 prescriptions per patient.⁴ It is therefore clear that the vast majority of people with mental health conditions are treated with mental health-related medications. Medications are an important treatment modality for many mental illnesses and the specialised management of them is provided by hospital pharmacists.

The need for pharmacists trained in mental health care

The nature of mental health treatment is often complex, specialised and complicated by the unique problems inherent in the management of mental illness, e.g., paranoia and suspicion about treatment, hallucinations, lack of insight, 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.⁴

Medication management activities performed by hospital pharmacists working in mental health settings align with the principles outlined in *Victoria's Mental Health and Wellbeing Bill 2022* and include:

- Supporting consumers in contributing to decisions about their medication by providing information about benefits, risks and medicines optimisation.
- Supporting consumers, carers and clinicians in obtaining complete and accurate medication histories upon admission to optimise treatment, especially in the context of acute presentations to mental health services
- Providing specialised information about medicines across the lifespan, including information about the use of psychotropic medicines in pregnancy and breastfeeding to optimise the safety and quality of treatment, care and support.
- Providing medicines information for culturally and linguistically diverse communities to promote cultural safety and wellbeing



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- Medication titration and monitoring requirements for highly specialised medicines such as clozapine and lithium
- Monitoring and optimising medicines used in acute agitation, to reduce the use of medicines as a restrictive intervention
- Expert advice on treatment and monitoring considerations given in ward rounds and case conferences, as an integral member of the multidisciplinary care team
- Advice to nursing staff around administration of injections (e.g., injection site of depot, olanzapine long-acting injection monitoring requirements)
- Supporting consumers, carers and families in their recovery by supporting the transfer of care to different settings, supporting the review of medication in response to the variation in consumer's needs.
- Supporting consumers across transitions of care, empowering and promoting the rights of consumers and carers in their treatment to reduce the risk of relapse and readmission.

The AIHW Mental health services in Australia report states that in 2018-19 there were 59,888 same day admitted and 271,040 overnight admitted mental health-related separations from public hospitals.⁵ The majority of these admissions would have required a mental health pharmacist to review their medications and ensure treatment is safe and efficient. Patients receiving mental health-related medications are at risk of adverse drug reactions (ADRs) and medication-related problems, and pharmacists are pivotal in preventing, detecting and managing these unwanted effects.^{5,6,7,8} Mental health pharmacists aim to ensure that treatment is rational, safe, cost-effective and acceptable to patients. It is therefore essential that pharmacists become integral members of the multidisciplinary mental healthcare teams.

SHPA's Foundation Residency and Advanced Training Residency programs

In 2017, SHPA's launched its two-year Foundation Residency Program, designed to develop an early career hospital pharmacist's competence and practice performance to *Advancing – Stage I (Transition Level)* of the *National Competency Standards Framework for Pharmacists in Australia 2016*.⁹ SHPA's Foundation Residency Program is Australia's first and only structured, formalised, supported and accredited national pharmacy residency program. *Please see attached SHPA Foundation Residency Framework 2022.*

A residency is a formal, structured experiential learning program for pharmacists. Formal experiential training, like that provided by a residency program, consolidates initial education and training and progresses the early career practitioner towards advanced practice. Theoretical knowledge gained without application in practice is unlikely to develop a competent, flexible pharmacy workforce that can adapt to the changing future needs of patients and the health system. Through the flexible nature of the Foundation Residency Program, pharmacists rotate across different specialities depending on what services the hospital provides.

Thus far, over 300 early career pharmacists have completed SHPA's Foundation Residency program, and there are currently another 200 pharmacists undertaking Foundation Residency across accredited hospital sites around Australia.

Integrating a Mental Health Rotation into Existing Early Career Programs for Pharmacists

As part of the Foundation Residency Program, **SHPA proposes that the Victorian government provides funding for a six-month rotation in a mental health setting** which could develop and inspire early career hospital pharmacists into pursuing a career in the mental health workforce.

The Allied Health Mental Health Early Career Program model addresses how early exposure to mental health could attract and build a highly skilled allied health workforce including mental health pharmacists. Noting that each healthcare professional within the 'allied health' umbrella may need specialised learning requirements, it is important to reflect this tailored approach to early career programs. The program would also need to



account for the number of years of post-registration as there may be significant differences in the learning goals, experience and skill sets developed. Structured and tailored programs to develop and train pharmacists in mental health are required to ensure mental health patients receive the best possible pharmacy care.

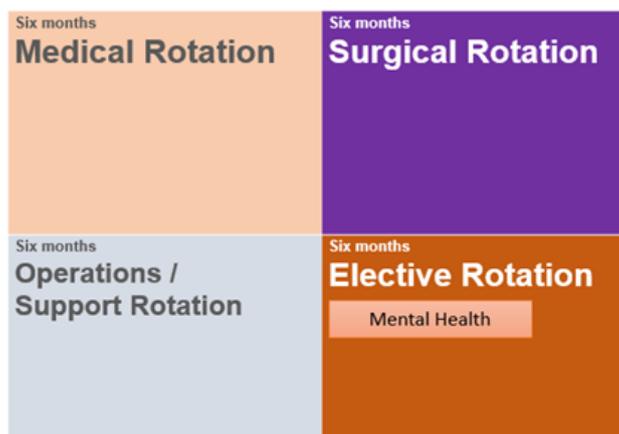


Figure 1: Incorporating a mental health rotation into SHPA's Foundation Residency Program

The Allied Health Mental Health Early Career Program also needs to address the maldistribution of mental health services in regional and remote areas compared to metropolitan areas. In order to address this, SHPA proposes funding is provided for early career pharmacists based in smaller rural and remote hospitals to complete a six-month mental health rotation in larger hospitals with mental health services via secondment. The anticipated cost of investment in Victoria for per early career pharmacist to undertake a six-month mental health rotation under SHPA's Foundation Residency program is estimated to be \$50,000 per Foundation Resident, to provide for:

- Six-month salary costs for Foundation Residents (classified as Grade 1 Pharmacist under the *Victorian Public Health Sector (Medical Scientists, Pharmacists and Psychologists) Enterprise Agreement 2017-2021*)
- SHPA membership to participate in Foundation Residency
- Attendance of SHPA's Extension Seminar in Clinical Medication Management (Five self-paced online learning modules and two-day in-person/virtual seminar, 2022 program attached)
- Attendance of SHPA's Foundation Seminar in Mental Health (Eight self-paced online learning modules and one-day in-person/virtual seminar, 2022 program attached)
- Preceptor support at hospital site by Grade 2 or 3 Hospital Pharmacist
- Secretariat support for Foundation Residents undertaking mental health rotation

SHPA has partnered with the Victorian Department of Health to administer the Victorian Hospital Pharmacy Intern program for over two decades, and now recruits 100 interns annually to Victorian hospitals. SHPA stands ready to facilitate a similar program for Foundation Residents to undertake mental health care pharmacy training in a collaboration with the Allied Health Mental Health Early Career Program and welcomes an opportunity to further our existing partnership with the Victorian Department of Health.

If you have any queries or would like to discuss our submission further, please do not hesitate to contact Kylee Hayward, Head of Workforce Advancement on khayward@shpa.org.au.

Attachments

- SHPA Foundation Residency Framework 2022
- SHPA Extension Seminar in Clinical Medication Management Program
- SHPA Foundation Seminar in Mental Health Program



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References

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- ² The Society of Hospital Pharmacists Australia. Standards of Practice for Mental Health Pharmacy. (2012). Journal of Pharmacy Practice and Research, 42: 142-145. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2055-2335.2012.tb00153.x>
- ³ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics). (2008). National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing: summary of results, 2007. ABS cat. no. 4326.0. Canberra: ABS.
- ⁴ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2021). 1. Mental health services in Australia, Prescriptions. Canberra: AIHW
- ⁵ Bell J.S., Whitehead P., Aslani P., McLachlan A.J., Chen T.F.(2006). Drug-related problems in the community setting: pharmacists' findings and recommendations for people with mental illnesses. Clinical Drug Investigation; 26: 415-25
- ⁶ Gisev N., Bell J.S., O'Reilly C.L., Rosen A., Chen T.F.(2010). An expert panel assessment of comprehensive medication reviews for clients of community mental health teams. Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology; 45: 1071-9.
- ⁷ Bell S., McLachlan A.J., Aslani P., Whitehead P., Chen T.F.(2005). Community pharmacy services to optimise the use of medications for mental illness: a systematic review. Australia New Zealand Health Policy; 2: 29.
- ⁸ Nishtala P.S., McLachlan A.J., Bell J.S., Chen T.F. (2008). Psychotropic prescribing in long-term care facilities: impact of medication reviews and educational interventions. American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry 2008; 16: 621-32.
- ⁹ Pharmaceutical Society of Australia Ltd. (2016). National Competency Standards Framework. Available at: <https://my.psa.org.au/s/article/2016-Competency-Framework>

