

MEDICATION SAFETY

World Patient Safety Day 2022: Medication without Harm

Series introduction: World Patient Safety Day, 17 September 2022



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This year, Medication Safety has been selected as the theme for World Patient Safety Day, with the slogan **Medication Without Harm.**

The SHPA Medication Safety Specialty Practice Leadership Committee debated possible topics for an article to mark World Patient Safety Day this year, to be held on 17 September 2022. We knew that a single article wouldn't do justice to the issues pharmacists across Australia and beyond come across every day or to the diverse medication management environments in which we work: public or private; metropolitan or regional; patient-facing, administration or dispensary; surgical, medical, critical care, residential. We considered whether to focus on a risk that people aren't sufficiently worried about, or something that everyone worries about but may feel like it is only a local concern.

In the end we decided that each member of the Medication Safety Leadership Committee will select an established or emerging issue that speaks to them professionally or personally. We hope each opinion piece is thought-provoking for you, the reader.

Prior to the pandemic, we were justifiably worried about the risks of avoidable patient harm from medications. This risk has not diminished after two and a half years of prioritising the pandemic and associated workforce challenges. The World Health Organization notes: "medication errors occur when weak medication systems and human factors such as fatigue, poor environmental conditions or staff shortages affect the safety of the medication use process. This can result in severe patient harm, disability and even death. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has significantly exacerbated the risk of medication errors and associated medication-related harm".¹

The pandemic isn't over yet- but the WHO recognises it's time to prioritise Medication Safety again, wherever our pharmacy work takes us, and whatever our concerns are, so we can reduce patient harm and enhance patient safety.

References

1. World Health Organization (WHO). World Patient Safety Day 2022. WHO; 2022. Available from <<https://www.who.int/news-room/events/detail/2022/09/17/default-calendar/world-patient-safety-day-2022>>.