

Media release

Monday 1 March 2021

Expert pharmacists embedded in aged care will strengthen patient safety

The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) welcomes proposed patient safety measures supporting the inclusion of pharmacists in aged care settings, underpinned by a new Aged Care Act and immediate review of Aged Care Quality Standards, included in the [Final Report: Care, Dignity and Respect](#) to the [Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety](#).

SHPA welcomes recommendations to provide pharmacy services in all residential aged care facilities, and embed them in hospital-led multidisciplinary outreach services – as detailed in SHPA's [Standard of practice in geriatric medicine for pharmacy services](#) released in [February 2020](#) – to improve the transition between care settings and to support all people receiving residential care or personal care at home, based on their clinical need.

SHPA Chief Executive Kristin Michaels says the supported presence of a pharmacist in the residential aged care setting will help ensure the safe, quality care of this vulnerable cohort.

'Research released by the Office of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety this month found that between 2014 and 2019, hospital admissions from aged care residents increased by 20%, while emergency department (ED) admissions increased by 27%; more than one-third of all aged care residents present to EDs at least once a year.

'The evidence makes clear that investment in embedding a dedicated Geriatric Medicine Pharmacist as part of minimum allied health care, supported by capped-base payments per resident and activity-based payments for the direct care provided, will be a strong step toward reduced medicines misuse and medication-related hospitalisations and injuries among older Australians.

'We have called for this expert pharmacist presence for some time and look forward to partnering with government to ensure safe and effective implementation.'

Ms Michaels also welcomed the decision to allow and fund pharmacists to conduct medication reviews on entry to residential care from 1 January 2022 and annually thereafter.

'SHPA strongly supports enhanced Residential Medication Management Review (RMMR) service delivery, given that publicly available data indicates in 2018-19, only 30% of Australia's 243,000 aged care residents were able to access a RMMR service. Dedicated pharmacist presence will ensure the optimal efficacy of RMMRs for aged care residents, and we welcome the amendment of the eligibility criteria to include people in residential respite and transition care.

'The crucial role of pharmacy in aged care is undeniable, with Australian research indicating 91% of aged care residents take at least five regular medicines, and 65% take more than 10, every day.

'SHPA will continue to advocate for investment in embedding clinical pharmacy services for aged care residents – including 1:200 pharmacist-to-resident ratios – so pharmacists can identify and manage medication-related issues before they lead to avoidable harm and admission to hospital.

'When present in the right place at the right time, pharmacists can identify deprescribing opportunities and foster high quality clinical handover as patients move between care settings, which is vital for their wellbeing and quality of life.'

– ends –

For more information contact:

Nick Sharp-Paul, Head of Strategy and Communication
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.

shpa.org.au |   