

Media release

Friday 27 March 2020

SHPA welcomes emergency measures in three states to support medicines supply during COVID-19

The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) has welcomed the leadership of New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia in enabling supply of up to a months' worth of prescribed or charted medicines without a prescription, as an emergency measure to support safe and efficient care of Australians ahead of COVID-19 related pressure on our hospitals and health system.

This week several states announced extensions of measurements first put in place during last summer's widespread bushfires, permitting emergency supply of Schedule 4 (S4) medicines (unless in Appendix D of the Poisons Standard) without prescription for eligible patients.

SHPA Chief Executive Kristin Michaels welcomed the announcements, which align with SHPA's advocacy supporting hospital safety and efficiency ahead of expected increases in COVID-19 admissions.

'As Australia prepares for what is expected to be a period of unprecedented demand on our hospitals, it is fantastic to see NSW, Victoria and WA leading the way by allowing patients to receive ongoing supply of S4 medication to continue essential treatment without a new prescription, where pharmacists are satisfied there is immediate need.

'We call on other states and territories to follow the lead, and for these medicines to be eligible for Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme subsidy when supplied in the hospital setting, to expedite safe treatment such that patients do not miss out on key medicines, and to aid the efficient flow of patients through the hospital system during the ongoing COVID-19 crisis.'

Ms Michaels says regulatory agility is needed to help ensure Australia's hospital system is as effective and efficient as possible.

'Emergency measures such as these help support treatment for patients who do not have COVID-19, relieving pressure on prescribers and freeing up physicians and specialists to focus on the expected steep increase in COVID-19 admissions.

'Ultimately, we all need to play our part to help ensure every Australian who needs a hospital bed has access to one.'

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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.

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