

Media release

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Freezer farms and ‘pizza boxes’ as hospital pharmacists prepare for crucial vaccination roles

Australia’s hospital pharmacists are preparing for their central role in the safe and secure administration of COVID-19 vaccinations, with less than one month until the first scheduled doses, supported by new resources, education and a member forum from the Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA).

The ramping up of preparations comes ahead of the imminent announcement of 30-50 Vaccine Hubs based at many of Australia’s largest hospitals.

SHPA Chief Executive Kristin Michaels says the scope of practice of Australia’s hospital pharmacists is critical to the Federal Government’s vaccination roll-out.

‘Pharmacists are essential to clinical trials and the administration of novel medicines and medical products, not only to meet regulatory requirements related to storage, dispensing and supply but also to ensure their safe and ethical use.

‘Safety and efficacy are absolutely central to Australia’s COVID-19 vaccination effort, the most important public health initiative in a generation.’

Announced earlier this month, Australia’s [COVID-19 vaccine national roll-out strategy](#) will see healthcare, quarantine and border workers and aged care workers and residents first vaccinated from mid-February 2021 in Phase 1a, before other vulnerable and at-risk populations and the balance of adult population.

Launched this week to support pharmacist and technician preparation in hospital teams, SHPA’s open-access COVID-19 [Vaccine information hub](#) hosts timely hospital pharmacy education and clinical guidance, government and international resources, while the [Vaccine member forum](#) allows SHPA members to share the latest information and discuss vaccine-related insights.

Ms Michaels says a conversation with international colleagues from the leading Cleveland Clinic in the United States provides unparalleled insight into one of the world’s largest national vaccine roll-outs.

‘Last week SHPA member Duncan McKenzie joined his Royal Hobart Hospital colleague Sandra Roberts and hospital pharmacy colleagues Kaitlyn Rivard and Allison Riffle from the Cleveland Clinic in Ohio to discuss their approaches to the end-to-end management of Pfizer and Moderna products.

‘From the complexities of cold supply chains and planning for deliveries to the importance of dry runs and even making temporary “pizza boxes”, Kaitlyn and Allison share their experiences ensuring the secure and safe administration of COVID-19 vaccines by Cleveland Clinic staff, and we’re certain hospital pharmacists across Australia will benefit from this very specific and relevant insight as the mammoth operation gets underway.’

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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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