

Media release

Friday 20 March 2020

Call to green light pharmacist teleconsults to aid isolated Australians, and hospitals, amid COVID-19 crisis

As COVID-19 cases continue to climb, the Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) has called for an immediate amendment to regulations around Home Medication Review (HMR), Residential Medication Management Review (RMMR) and MedsCheck programs to allow consultant pharmacists to check-in on vulnerable Australians without face-to-face visits.

Allowing these critical programs to utilise telehealth technology as an emergency measure will ensure their continuation – essential to supporting effective hospital patient flow and discharge – while removing risk of asymptomatic COVID-19 transmission between health practitioners and Australians managing their medicines at home.

SHPA Chief Executive Kristin Michaels says as Australia's COVID-19 caseload increases, the importance of HMRs, RMMRs and MedsCheck will only grow.

'Face-to-face consultations play an important role in reducing hospital readmissions by identifying and mitigating medicine-related issues as early as possible. As the rate of hospital admission and discharge in Australia climbs in the coming weeks, these consultations must continue, but they must continue safely.'

'With hospitals ramping up and re-prioritising operations, HMRs and RMMRs will also support increased patient flow by providing reassurance that post-discharge medicines checks will be conducted.'

'Dedicated discharge liaison hospital pharmacy roles will also broaden this safety net, particularly for older patients and those with complex conditions.'

Ms Michaels says as self-isolation measures escalate across Australia, the safety of both pharmacists and residents is paramount.

'Ordinarily, the strict criteria around face-to-face pharmacists consultations is absolutely warranted to ensure optimal outcomes for some of the more vulnerable in the community – but we are living in extraordinary circumstances.'

'On behalf of our members, we call for the Australian Government to allow accredited pharmacists to conduct HMRs and RMMRs remotely, for the safety of all involved.'

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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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