

# Media release

Thursday 27 February 2020

## Challenging the stigma of ‘invisible’ illnesses to improve care

‘Invisible’ diseases and efforts to challenge stigma and improve care are brought out into the open in the latest issue of the Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA)’s member magazine, which also reflects on a harsh summer defined by bushfires and bushfire risk in many parts of Australia.

The issue of [Pharmacy Growth, Research, Innovation and Training](#) (*Pharmacy GRIT*) examines how healthcare professionals can do more to make the unseen visible within the healthcare system and society more broadly.

SHPA Chief Executive Kristin Michaels says many diseases and illnesses do not have a consistent physical manifestation, which can impact how people living with them see themselves.

‘This “invisibility” also complicates the work of pharmacists to reduce the effects and help patients live their lives with greater comfort.

‘In this issue of *Pharmacy GRIT*, our members share their expertise and unique perspectives on a range of unseen illnesses, both physical and psychological, and how pharmacy practitioners can improve care through long-term engagement and care that is free of judgment.’

Former Chair of SHPA’s Mental Health Leadership Committee, Alice Gilbert explores the very concept of invisible illnesses, focusing on the building epidemic in this specialty area. Kerry Watts and Keti Trajcevski share the experience of a fellow pharmacist suffering from unseen chronic pain, and their journey from managing symptoms in private, to a myriad of ineffective treatments, to remission, to help us better understand what it’s like when your external appearance belies an excruciating reality.

Dr Jacinta Johnson and Sam Keitaanpaa explore the dangers of addiction, looking at both alcohol abuse and the dangers of opioid overdoses, and how health practitioners can best equip patients with information and alternatives in efforts to keep them safe.

Released at the end of the season, Ms Michaels says it is timely for *Pharmacy GRIT* to look back on Summer 2019-20 through the eyes of members most affected by the widespread bushfire crisis.

‘Reprinted with permission, Susan Trevillian’s “Watch and Act: Challenges for pharmacy amid the bushfire emergency” is part article, part diary and part call to action.

‘It is honest and raw reporting on her experiences as a hospital pharmacist – and member of the community – near the fires’ frontlines in North East Victoria; a remarkable perspective to share with our readers.’

The Summer 2019–20 issue of *Pharmacy GRIT* is available [free – as always](#) – to SHPA members.

– ends –

**For more information contact:**

Rachel Sinclair, Marketing Specialist  
[rsinclair@shpa.org.au](mailto:rsinclair@shpa.org.au) | 0424 200 282

**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](http://shpa.org.au) |   