

Media release

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Hospital pharmacists welcome inaugural National Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy for children

The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) has welcomed a \$282 million investment in maintaining and supporting the mental health and wellbeing of Australia's children, as part of the Federal Government's \$2.3 billion for the National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan aimed at transforming Australia's mental health system.

In releasing the world-first [National Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#) today, Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, David Coleman MP said that while half of all adult mental health challenges emerge before the age of 14, few children below the age of 12 receive professional support.

SHPA Chief Executive Kristin Michaels says the mental health and wellbeing of children is paramount as it defines their childhood experience and impacts their ability to live well and contribute to society.

'On behalf of our hospital pharmacy profession, SHPA welcomes the Federal Government's new roadmap of coordinated investment and program development to ensure children under the age of 12 have access to all possible opportunities for growth and development.

'We also welcome the strategy's focus on helping families, as evidence shows the successful treatment of a parent struggling with mental illness benefits not only the parent, but also their children.'

Medicines are a common treatment option for mental health conditions, with the [Medication Safety in Mental Health Report \(2017\)](#) stating that between 25% and 50% of children treated in a mental health unit receive psychotropic medicines as required.

SHPA convenes Specialty Practice streams across Mental Health, Women's and Newborn Health, and Paediatrics and Neonatology, leaders of which are represented on both the Stakeholder Reference Group and Expert Reference Group for NPS MedicineWise's upcoming work program on psychotropic medicines for young people.

Ms Michaels says with medicines management a crucial component of improving children's mental health, hospital pharmacists are uniquely placed to provide essential support.

'Many in our profession work across public and private mental health services and in children's hospitals, caring for paediatric patients at their most unwell.

'In particular we welcome the strategy's focus on having a skilled workforce in the Service System (Focus Area 2), and the acknowledgment of the risks of clinician burn-out and subsequent staff turnover in our public system. These workforce concerns have been heightened due to the demands of the COVID-19 pandemic on Australia's hospitals.

‘SHPA facilitates the training of expert hospital pharmacists through Foundation Residencies and Advanced Training Residencies to ensure professionals with the right skills are in place to provide mental health pharmacy care to Australia’s most vulnerable patients.

‘The new national strategy provides an added boost to ensure optimal medicines management is available to children at their time of greatest need.’

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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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