




Pharmaceutical
Society of Australia



PSA 2024 Strategic Projects Impact Report



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Acknowledgement of Country

In the spirit of reconciliation, the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

We recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and cultures are inseparable from Australia's collective history and culture, and are something to be proud of and celebrate. This is reflected in the recognition of the diversity of cultures, and the richness, strengths and resilience of the world's oldest living cultures. We recognise that this includes the continuation of cultural practices, including the use of bush medicines, languages and connection to Country. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were our first pharmacists.

We are proud that we live in the country with the world's oldest continuous living cultures, and we are playing our part to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to keep these cultures alive and vibrant.

Executive summary



These changes and transformation within the pharmacy sector bring challenges, but also open up great opportunities. Opportunities for innovation, expanding scope, and developing new professional pathways.

Adj. A/Prof Steve Morris, PSA CEO

What do General Practice pharmacists, the Aged Care On-site Pharmacist (ACOP) program, and Deadly Pharmacist Foundation Training have in common? Well, they all started as PSA projects.

PSA has a proud history of leading innovation within the pharmacy profession, not only by creating new career pathways but also advancing Quality Use of Medicines and setting the standard for safe and effective use of medicines. PSA plays an increasingly important role in achieving these goals through the delivery of projects.

From humble beginnings in 2017, PSA now operates a dedicated PSA Projects unit concurrently delivering over 40 projects with approximately 30 partners. These partnerships include government, Primary Health Networks (PHNs), and other health sector stakeholders.

The projects often start with a simple idea: 'Wouldn't it be good to have a pharmacist in aged care?' or 'Having a minimum supply of palliative care medicines could make end-of-life care so much more dignified'. Our project team then works to secure partners and external funding.

PSA projects allow innovative ideas to be trialled, validated and improved. But most importantly, they generate the evidence that is needed to enable widescale implementation and translation into everyday practice.

In this inaugural impact report, we look at some of our key projects, and explore how they are driving opportunities to:

- develop and sustain new pharmacy services,
- enhance access to care,
- expand scope of practice of pharmacists, and
- advance Quality Use of Medicines (QUM) through collaborative partnerships.

By addressing key health areas, these projects equip pharmacists with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate the evolving healthcare landscape and make meaningful impact in their communities. Each project serves as a vital resource, contributing to the ongoing growth and adaptability of the pharmacy profession.

As we look to the future, PSA's projects team continues its growth trajectory, playing our part in driving a healthier and safer future for all Australians. We encourage new and existing partners to join us along this journey, working together to strengthen our collective efforts and continue to set the standard for safe and effective use of medicines.

Enhancing projects and partnerships - PSA projects



“We are so proud of the role we play in supporting pharmacists around Australia to be the best pharmacist they can be. PSA’s projects are critical to achieving this.

A/Prof Fei Sim FPS, PSA National President

The PSA project team is a dedicated group within PSA that collaborates with partners to deliver projects focused on shaping both new and existing career pathways for pharmacists, while promoting the safe and effective use of medicines. This team has internal expertise in project management, with subject matter experts and senior pharmacists working across a variety of settings.

With extensive experience in managing large-scale projects, the PSA project team is committed to implementing impactful initiatives through diverse funding opportunities and collaborative partnerships.



Our vision:

To design and deliver projects that ensure every Australian has access to safe, quality and effective healthcare through optimising the role of pharmacists in the Australian healthcare system.

Our mission:

To design and deliver projects that identify, unlock, and advance opportunities for pharmacists to realise their full potential, to be appropriately recognised and remunerated.

Thank you!



Collaboration and partnerships are key to improving patient care and outcomes, given the challenges we face in our health system today. This is as critical to Pharmacists on the frontline as it is to the PSA in all the work we do to facilitate pharmacists being the best they can be.

Adj. A/Prof Steve Morris, PSA CEO



Thank you!

This report is a testament to the power of collaboration, and we are grateful for the opportunity to work alongside such dedicated and innovative organisations and individuals. The PSA has worked with over 30 different partners and collaborators on various projects within the 2023-24 financial year. We express our heartfelt thanks to those partners for their invaluable contributions to the success of PSA's innovative projects. Your expertise, dedication, and unwavering support has helped deliver on our mission to optimise the provision of pharmacist care.

Collaborative initiatives

The PSA supports Australia's Primary Health Care 10 Year Plan 2022-2032 (the 10 Year Plan) in recognising a greater focus on allied health as a key foundation for reform. We understand that a greater focus on the role of allied health professionals, including pharmacists, is necessary to improve patient access, health outcomes and integration of services, as well as safety, quality and cost-efficiency.

We recognise that the pharmacy landscape is changing rapidly, and it is crucial for pharmacists to be at the forefront of practice to meet the diverse needs of patients and healthcare systems.



Change is constant, and as the scope of pharmacy practice expands, so does the training, support and advocacy needed to ensure pharmacists are prepared for their roles. PSA is here for its members, the workforce, and the Australian population.

Adj. A/Prof Steve Morris, CEO, PSA, July 2024

Enhancing access to care, medicines safety and Quality Use of Medicines

Embedding pharmacists as medicines experts wherever medicines are used to improve the quality use of medicines

Pharmacist in General Practice



- Enhance chronic disease management
- Improve collaboration, capability and capacity
- Strengthen primary care

Pharmacist in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Services



- Enhance chronic disease management
- Improve collaboration, capability and capacity
- Strengthen primary care

Pharmacist Common Ailments



- Facilitate timely access to essential, cost effective care
- Reduce unnecessary ED presentations.

Pharmacist in Aged Care



- Improve medication management and resident safety
- Reduce avoidable hospitalisations
- Address polypharmacy and reduce drug related issues

Pharmacist supported Palliative Care



- Improve access to appropriate core medicines
- Enhance collaboration and coordination between practitioners supporting palliative care

Transitions of Care



- Implement team-based, person-centred care delivery
- Improve practitioner communication and accountability.

Enhancing access to care – pharmacists supporting palliative care



Upskill and equip pharmacist in all practice settings to provide palliative care support

Pharmacists can better enable timely access to medicines

Pharmacists are highly accessible to patients and carers

Pharmacists are an essential role in interdisciplinary healthcare teams

Bridging the gap for enhanced patient care and stronger connections in palliative care

In recent years, PSA has successfully developed, co-designed, collaborated and project managed multiple palliative care projects alongside Primary Health Networks (PHNs) and state governments across Australia. These projects support palliative care in the community with a primary focus on end-of-life care, through enhanced planning and access to essential medicines in aid of people who wish to die at home.

A local Core Medicine List (CML) is agreed upon or established through consultation with palliative care providers, informed by evidence and experience, together with palliative care training, education and resources to increase awareness and to complement these palliative care initiatives.

In 2023, the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care supported caring@home to build on these initiatives and lead the development of a core medicines list applicable across all Australian states and territories.

The core medicines list is a vital tool that will support

standardised, quality palliative care by improving access to medicines in the community. PSA along with many other palliative medicine specialists, rural generalists, general practitioners, nurse practitioners, pharmacists, and nurses were part of the working party that developed the National Core Community Palliative Care Medicines List.¹

The National Core Community Palliative Care Medicines List identifies four medicines for use by home-based palliative patients in the terminal phase who require urgent symptom relief. The most common terminal phase symptoms in uncomplicated palliative care patients can be optimally managed using medicines from the list. This list can be used as is or as the basis for a localised CML after consultation with local palliative care providers.

National Impact

Recognising the impact of these projects at local levels led PSA to apply for a National Palliative Care Program (NPCP) grant through the Department of Health and Aged Care in 2023.

This application was successful, and the National Palliative Care Foundation Training for Pharmacists Project began development in July 2023.

This training program is not intended to prepare pharmacists to specialise in palliative care, but rather to broadly upskill and equip pharmacists with the foundation knowledge, skills and compassion needed to provide palliative care support to patients through quality use of medicines.

It has been co-designed with subject matter experts, partner organisations and consumers. The 8-module course will be launched during National Palliative Care Week in May 2025 and will be available free of charge to pharmacists in all practice settings by means of online, self-directed learning.

In addition to the foundation training, PSA will pilot over a 12-month period, 6 new models of community palliative care pharmacist roles in 2025/2026. The vision for the pilot program is to revolutionise the quality of palliative care in a diverse range of settings, especially for underserved populations who currently face additional barriers accessing palliative care.

By advocating for and implementing projects at local, state and federal levels, PSA has created nation-wide opportunities for collaboration, partnerships, training, resources and increasing awareness of the role pharmacists have in Palliative Care.



In the final phase of life, those with palliative care needs and their caregivers are at risk of medication-related problems due to factors such as decline in function and polypharmacy. As medication experts, pharmacists play a crucial role in supporting them. Indeed, these Commonwealth-funded projects provide an opportunity to understand the evolving role of community-based pharmacists in caring for people with palliative care needs and their caregivers.

Paul Tait PhD, Senior Program Manager, Southern Adelaide Local Health Network, SA Health.

Leah's story.

Recognising the need, promoting advocacy, and encouraging innovation.

Losing her mother to glioblastoma (GBM) brain cancer in 2020, Leah identified a tremendous unmet need for pharmacists in community palliative care. Following her passion and growing her knowledge and network, Leah developed and operationalised the TerryWhite Chemmart initiative for palliative care in 2021 “Pledge to Palliate” calling for community pharmacists to ensure palliative care patients have timely access to anticipatory medicines and to help raise awareness of palliative care.

This initiative led Leah to take on a project management role with PSA in 2022, where she could further advocate and contribute to palliative care. Leah knew she was in the right place when aligning with previous work PSA had done and the PSA team working with the same passion for the pharmacy profession to increase awareness and support in Palliative Care.

The impact of working with PSA and focusing on palliative care has been huge, being surrounded by a good team and strong supportive leadership significantly enhanced projects, partnerships and collaboration for palliative care growth.



Presenting personally and professionally at the Oceanic Palliative Care Conference, Parliamentary Friends of Palliative Care, Local Health Districts, Primary Health Networks, working with other National Palliative Care Grant recipients and peak bodies has helped shift the awareness and momentum. Meeting, discussing and motivating hundreds of pharmacists, interns, students to engage with and support palliative care – Leah couldn't have dreamt of the impact her mother's legacy would one day have.

Natasha's story.

A pharmacists' impact in rural community palliative care.

Natasha was an established GP integrated pharmacist and was recruited for the PSA project for the Palliative Care 2022 Grants Program, an initiative of the South Australian Government. This PSA project developed a model to support healthcare professionals and their palliative patients within community and home care settings in regional South Australia.

Natasha quickly became a valuable resource for all involved and demonstrated the value and need for this role now and into the future. Natasha brought education and support for medication and symptom management to healthcare professionals, patients and their carers. She helped patients navigate the system and accelerate their access to medicines, giving them more choice and the ability to remain at home for end of life whilst supported by the highest level of care and support.

Natasha's role impacted the palliative care community and healthcare team so significantly that it inspired the Yorke and Northern Local Health Network executive committee to approve a permanent part time position for a newly created position "Palliative Care pharmacist" in the Specialist Palliative Care team commencing at the finalisation of the PSA project.

On completion of PSA's project, the University of South Australia supported a further 6-month research project. Natasha's research paper "*A qualitative exploration of the role of a Palliative Care Pharmacist providing home-based care in the rural setting, from the perspective of other members of the treating team*"² was published in the Australian Journal of Rural Health in March 2024.



Below is a case study of a rural palliative care patient and the impact Natasha had as the pharmacist for John's end of life care.

John* is an 89-year-old male with chronic renal failure, recent history of pneumonia, ureteric calculus, GORD, CCF, macular degeneration (limited vision), OA, IHD, limited mobility & on home oxygen.

Tash is a pharmacist in a regional general practice, working with regional palliative care teams.

Following his recent discharge from hospital, John was referred to Tash.

Reasons for the referral included the significant decline in his health and concerns about his medication compliance.

To optimise John's care, Tash liaised with the multi-disciplinary team which consisted of GPs, allied health professionals and community health workers, as well as carers and family members.

Tash was able to -

- improve John's medication understanding and compliance
- review medication dosages in line with John's current renal function
- identify potential drug interactions
- reduce tablet burden
- discuss potential adverse drug reactions
- discuss appropriate storage and disposal of medications
- undertake medication reconciliation (the medication lists differed between health professionals involved in John's care)
- Improve John's inhaler technique



Palliative Care Pharmacist's impact

- Improve patient access to medications
- Improve patient outcomes
- Educate patients, carers and staff on medications
- Liaise between health care professionals and improve communication between the health care team
- Facilitate patient follow-up

Outcomes & Follow up

Tash's intervention enabled better outcomes for John and his wife. John reported being more comfortable, and he was able to stay at home for longer due to Tash's support.

Tash will continue to follow up with John as his needs change and he progresses through each stage of the palliation process.

Ongoing support will be provided to John's family members during their bereavement.

* Not his real name

Enhancing access to care – pharmacists in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health services



Development of the Deadly Pharmacists Foundation Training Course

A key recommendation arising from the 'Integrating pharmacists within Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services to Improve Chronic Disease Management (IPAC)' trial was the development of training to prepare more Australian pharmacists to work in and with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander primary health care services.

Co-designed by National Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) and PSA, the Deadly Pharmacists Foundation Training Course was released in October 2022 and is available for free to all Australian registered pharmacists.

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people use the term 'deadly', which means fantastic, awesome or great.

The foundation training course, produced on Tubbagah Wiradjuri, Nyangbul Budjalung, Ngarkat, Gubbi Gubbi, Wathaurong, Boon Wurrung, Ngannawal and Whadjuk Noongar countries, equips pharmacists with the skills to work Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander primary health care services, from inner city services to those in remote locations. The course includes seven online modules and covers topics such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and history, communication skills including how pharmacists can use clinical yarning in their practice, and conditions of prevalence in some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

This training helps to build a career pathway for pharmacists to work in ACCHOs. It also complements the Guideline for pharmacists supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with medicines management and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Pharmacy Practice Community of Speciality Interest (CSI).

It also includes practical aspects of the role, such as how services are funded, and important MBS and PBS information pharmacists need to understand to fulfil their role.

The course features interviews with pharmacists who work within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander primary health care services, sharing their knowledge and passion for working in this very rewarding environment.

Since launching in 2022, more than 3,000 pharmacists have enrolled in Deadly Pharmacist training. The significant uptake signifies the enthusiasm of pharmacists to progress their cultural learning.



Artwork created by Lani Balzan for the Deadly Pharmacists Foundation Training Course. Lani is a proud Aboriginal woman from the Wiradjuri people of the three-river tribe.

The development of this training course by PSA and NACCHO represents an excellent example of genuine co-design to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' history and cultures are accurately reflected in the content, and a strengths-based approach taken to models of care.

Impact - project and beyond

As part of this project, a unique line of merchandise was created specifically for pharmacists who successfully complete the course. These shirts, featuring vibrant and intricately designed First Nations artwork, have emerged as eye-catching conversation starters in local communities and healthcare settings. The striking shirts not only capture attention but also drive conversations with healthcare providers and patients alike.

This curiosity often leads to deeper, meaningful discussions about the significance of the artwork, the underlying principles of the program, and the comprehensive training that pharmacists undergo. By wearing these shirts, pharmacists not only showcase their achievement but also promote cultural appreciation and awareness of First Nations art within the healthcare community. These interactions encourage engagement and foster a sense of connection among healthcare professionals, patients, and the wider community,



Creating spaces of belonging is a critical component for reconciliation in this country. Grant opportunities such as this allow us to hold this space for others to come into.

Professor Faye McMillan

ultimately enriching the dialogue around important cultural themes and the role of pharmacists in promoting health and inclusivity.

Proceeds from the purchases support the Faye McMillan Conference Grant, named in honour of Professor Faye McMillan AM FPS, a pioneering Wiradjuri woman and pharmacist. This grant provides Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pharmacists and interns the opportunity to apply for funding to attend key professional development conferences, ensuring a place is made available for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pharmacists and interns to join the conversation.

Professor Faye McMillan's story

Professor Faye McMillan AM FPS is recognised as the first Indigenous Australian to hold a western degree in pharmacy in this country. She is a 2023/24 Harkness Fellow, a founding member of Indigenous Allied Health Australia, and has received numerous accolades for her leadership and contributions to population health, education, equity and the community.

Professor McMillan is a strong advocate for improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health care across professions and is driven to help promote the participation and inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within pharmacy.

"As part of our commitment to supporting and helping increase the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in pharmacy, this grant opportunity looks to supporting the existing pharmacist workforce who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people."



After my Deadly Pharmacists Foundation Training, I now have a much broader understanding of how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients view health, the importance of a good yarn, and how to tailor information accordingly. Now that we've received such positive feedback, it has built my confidence – both in terms of wearing the shirt and providing information to First Nations clients about their healthcare.

Zara Gul, Emerton Pharmacy – Australian Pharmacist, March 2024.



The Emerton Amcal Pharmacy team, wearing the Deadly shirts, including Zara Gul (far right).




Over 3,000 pharmacists have enrolled in this learning activity, demonstrating strong engagement and a commitment to professional development within the pharmacy community, as well as a dedication to advancing their cultural knowledge.

This training helps to build a career pathway for pharmacists wanting to work in ACCHOs.



I really enjoyed the course!
The course went beyond my expectations. High quality content with brilliant speakers. Not only have I learnt so much about Indigenous culture, but I also can't wait to put all the principles such as yarning, active listening, strengths-based approaches and moments of silence into practice!
Many thanks for such a great experience.

Deadly Pharmacists Foundation Training Course participant,
2024



NACCHO has worked with PSA for several years on some key medicines projects and policies for our sector. In this time PSA have been responsive and diligent in their work with us – including stewardship of the IPAC project, which is the only pharmacy service to have been supported for funding by MSAC, and the development of the Deadly Pharmacists Foundation Training course. More recently PSA have tangibly supported the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pharmacy workforce through the Faye McMillan Scholarship, which resulted in an unprecedented network of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pharmacists and students coming together face to face. We look forward to continuing our work alongside PSA into the future."

Dr. Dawn Casey, Deputy CEO of NACCHO

Enhancing access to care – mental health

- Early identification
- Identify early warning signs

Mental Health First Aid Training (MHFA) – South Australia

The PSA has been commissioned by the South Australian Government to deliver MHFA training to 1000 community pharmacists and pharmacy staff working across metropolitan and regional South Australia between 2023 until February 2026.

MHFA training upskills pharmacists and pharmacy staff to identify early warning signs of mental ill health. After the training, pharmacists and pharmacy staff are equipped with the skills needed to provide support to the community and referrals to mental health services where necessary.

Objectives of the project:

- Increase mental health support for the community
- Recognise the signs and symptoms of mental health problems in adults
- Improve early identification of mental health issues
- Assist a consumer who is developing a mental health problem or in a mental health crisis
- Use an evidence-based action plan to initiate a MHFA conversation and provide initial support.

Impact: (April 2023-June 2024):

As of 30 September 2024, with 411 pharmacists and pharmacy staff having completed the training, we are approaching the halfway mark toward our goal of training 1,000 South Australian pharmacists.



411

pharmacists and pharmacy staff
having completed the training



97.3%

of participants reported improved ability/
confidence to identify early signs of mental ill
health and offer appropriate support/referral



94.1%

of participants reported MHFA training
positively impacted their professional practice,
enhancing their ability to provide initial support
to individuals experiencing a mental health
problem or mental health crisis.

This training allowed me to have a better appreciation and understanding of the situation and create a safe space for the patient to discuss about their distress and being able to appropriately refer them to community mental health resources that are available.

This vital training equips frontline pharmacists with the necessary skills to better support the community and provide referrals to mental health services when needed.

It was excellent to have a pharmacist running the training as it made the information very relevant.

It has also made me a more compassionate boss and given me scope as a leader to allow staff to take a "sick day" for the sake of mental health, resulting in overall improvements in staff satisfaction and atmosphere in the pharmacy.

I have found that doing the Mental Health First Aid training has made me more confident to ask patients about acute mental health symptoms, including asking for the first time 'Have you had thoughts about hurting yourself'?

Mental Health First Aid training – Western Australian pharmacists and pharmacy staff.

Over June and July 2024, three workshops were held in Western Australia to provide mental health first aid training for pharmacists and pharmacy staff.

The purpose of the training was to:

- improve access to mental health support and referral in the community through pharmacists and community pharmacies
- upskill the pharmacy workforce through the delivery of MHFA training and improve their ability to support the Western Australians during mental health challenges, and
- develop and train pharmacist credentialed Mental Health First Aid trainers for WA.

I enjoyed the discussions and being able to learn from the fellow participants and their experiences as well as from the instructor. I think there are few courses where that is possible and encouraged which makes this course so special.

New career pathway for pharmacists in Australia



93%
of participants
agreed:

They would feel partially or entirely confident to provide support to someone experiencing a mental health problem, experiencing a worsening of an existing mental health problem or in a mental health crisis' as a result of completing this training.

Enhancing access to care – loneliness training



- **World-first**
- **Innovation**
- **Transformative education**
- **Addressing the ‘elephant’ in the room**
- **Breaking down the barriers**

Loneliness training – a world first.

The groundbreaking Pharmacist Training Program on Loneliness is specifically designed to address one of the most pressing social and health issues of our time—loneliness. With growing evidence of its profound impact on health and wellbeing, this training equips pharmacists with the knowledge and skills to make a difference in their patients' lives.

People who feel lonely are at higher risk of potential serious health issues and negative social behaviours which can in turn also affect health outcomes. Medication adherence can also be affected. (Supporting Your Practice. Australian Pharmacist 2023. At: <https://my.psa.org.au/s/training-plan/a110o00000KMYfXAAX/lonelines>)

The Pharmacist Training Program on Loneliness is a transformative educational experience that goes beyond skill-building. It delves into the essence of human connection, exploring how its absence can significantly affect both mental and physical health. Participants will learn from global experts through exclusive interviews and gain insights from pharmacist peers already addressing loneliness in their communities.

The program offers 10 self-paced learning modules, including an introductory module and 9 comprehensive modules, followed by a multiple-choice assessment (25 questions). Upon successful completion of all modules and assessments, participants will receive a certificate of completion.

Throughout the modules, there are interactive quiz questions designed to prompt reflection and learning, though they are not part of the formal assessment.

It is now estimated that about 36% of the Australian population experience loneliness. To put this into context, this is significantly greater than the number of people known to have diabetes in Australia (about 5.5%).

The role of the pharmacist:

Pharmacists hold a unique position as some of the most trusted and frequently accessed health professionals globally. Their close relationships with patients put them in an ideal position to identify and screen for loneliness. This training will empower pharmacists to:

- educate patients and carers about the health risks associated with loneliness
- recognise the impacts of loneliness on medicine use and overall health
- collaborate with patients and healthcare teams to address the effects of loneliness
- reduce the stigma around loneliness by encouraging open conversations, and
- provide consistent, actionable strategies to address loneliness at the patient, pharmacy, and community levels.

This training is free to PSA members.

Impact so far:

Since its launch in August 2024, the response has been amazing, with over 1,200 pharmacists already enrolling in the course. Participants are equipped with the tools to make a meaningful difference in their patients' lives and contribute to the improvement of public health outcomes.

The launch of PSA's loneliness training is sparking new conversations with stakeholders in disability, aged care, and other sectors about loneliness and how to address it. It is creating new spaces and opportunities to engage in these often-challenging discussions.

This impactful program aligns with R U OK? Day and highlights the importance of these conversations, not only within Australia but also on a global scale.



1200

pharmacists have enrolled in the course
since launch in August 2024.



Quality use of medicines - pharmacists in general practice



46,894

Total activities completed by pharmacists in the General Practice original program.

Pharmacists in general practice collaborate closely with GPs and other healthcare professionals, playing a pivotal role in optimising the quality use of medicines. The integration of pharmacists into multidisciplinary general practice teams is transforming health care delivery by enhancing medication management, improving chronic disease care, and strengthening primary care capacity. Their contributions range from performing medication reviews and offering tailored advice to patients, to conducting clinical audits and delivering educational sessions for GPs and practice staff.

The PSA, in partnership with PHNs across Victoria, Queensland, and Western Australia, is leading several innovative pharmacists in general practice programs. These initiatives tap into the specialised expertise of pharmacists to address Australia's evolving healthcare needs, while providing extensive professional development opportunities for pharmacists entering the general practice space.

The programs encompass a broad spectrum of services, including early intervention for healthy ageing, management of chronic heart failure, and supporting older Australians to live independently at home. By embedding pharmacists within general practice teams, these programs demonstrate the tangible benefits of pharmacist-led care in improving patient outcomes.

These initiatives offer practices a unique chance to evaluate the integration of pharmacists within their clinics. Many practices have embraced the model, with six practices offering pharmacist's permanent positions following program completion. This milestone underscores the growing recognition of the value pharmacists bring to primary care, marking a significant success in expanding this new career pathway for pharmacists in Australia.





Western Australian Primary Health Alliance (WAPHA) - original program, pharmacists in general practice.

The first GP-Pharmacist program in Western Australia commenced in 2017, funded by WAPHA in partnership with PSA, to integrate a pharmacist into the multidisciplinary team in a general practice to improve health outcomes for patients and to provide effective and efficient care. This pilot program continued until 2021.

Based on the success of the pilot program, in January 2023 a new program launched, with 13 pharmacists integrated into general practices across Western Australia.

Aligned with The Quintuple Aim for Health Care Improvement, these programs are able deliver impact across a range of areas, including patient experience, population health, reducing costs and health equity.

Impact 2023 – 2024 - Original program, pharmacists in general practice.

Patient experience:



99%

of patients agreed or strongly agreed it was helpful to speak to the pharmacists about their medicines. Patient feedback was consistently positive.



32 mins

was the average patient consult length, from pharmacist reported data. The pharmacists took time to educate patients about their medicines and undertook considered medication reviews.

Clinic staff experience:



96%

of clinic staff found the medication reviews by the pharmacists in general practice as very or extremely valuable.



93%

found the pharmacists to be very or extremely valuable to their practice team.



9,672

Patient consultations



4,790

Medicine reconciliations



6,816

Medication management reviews



8,333

multidisciplinary team consultations



3,449

Transitional care activities



1,072

Audit activities



2,842

Stakeholder liaisons



1,130

Liaisons with community pharmacy



Through our partnership with the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia, we've successfully integrated non-dispensing pharmacists into general practice, delivering significant benefits to both patients and practices. Patients now experience improved medication safety, adherence, and tailored advice, enhancing their health outcomes. For practices, having a pharmacist onsite means better care coordination, reduced prescribing risks, and more efficient patient management, particularly for those with complex medication needs. This initiative fosters collaborative healthcare and highlights the valuable role pharmacists play in general practice, ultimately supporting better health outcomes across our communities.

Leanne Durrington, WAPHA CEO.



Queensland Pilot - pharmacist in general practice 2024 – 2025

Pilot program commissioned in the Townsville region, funded by Northern Queensland PHN, enables older persons to live at home for as long as possible through early intervention activities, such as medication management, rationalisation and optimisation to better chronic disease management and support healthy ageing.

Pharmacist in general practice discovers passion for spirometry.

Michael Hewson's unexpected journey into spirometry has led to his involvement in a national project focused on COPD diagnosis in primary care and his expertise being sought by Lung Foundation Australia.

Michael recalls how this all began, almost by chance. "On my first day at Derbarl Yerrigan Health Service, I was graciously given the spirometry 'room' as my office. By day two, I had volunteered to support spirometry services within the practice."

His enthusiasm and commitment to spirometry training did not go unnoticed. The team at Spirometry Learning Australia quickly recognised his enthusiasm, which soon led to national-level consultations and collaborations.

Derbarl Yerrigan Health Service in Western Australia has been providing culturally appropriate services to their community for over 50 years, with a strong focus on chronic disease management. Derbarl Yerrigan offers a comprehensive spirometry service which includes carbon monoxide monitoring, oxygen saturation tests, asthma and COPD action plans, inhaler and spacer technique education, asthma control tests and COPD assessment tests, breathlessness checklists and concluded with case conferences for selected patients, now with the additional support of a pharmacist on the multidisciplinary team.

Michael Hewson explains to Kaylin Ugle that a strong exhale is required for every spirometry test.





Spirometry is a fantastic opportunity for a pharmacist to provide in depth, quality education not only around the use of inhaled medicines, but also on nicotine replacement therapy, vaping and cannabis use. We are experts in turning casual conversations into meaningful clinical outcomes

Michael Hewson, General Practice Pharmacist.

2
PHARMACIST



Case Study

Avoiding a preventable hospital admission

A patient with multiple comorbidities including abnormal heart rhythm, acute heart attack, type 2 diabetes, and elevated blood pressure was referred to the pharmacist following a recent occurrence of severe headaches and dizziness. The patient had self-ceased their medication for cholesterol and for blood thinning 3 months prior. The patient believed that the dizziness was caused by the blood thinner based on information they had encountered in a consumer medicine information leaflet.

Pharmacist Intervention: The pharmacist learned of the cessation of therapy during a routine consultation. The pharmacist explained the indication of the ceased medications and importance of taking them regularly to avoid complications. The patient had also run out of prescriptions so the pharmacist organised a new prescription with the doctor. The patient recommenced taking the ceased medicines.



Quality Use of Medicines



Programs funded under the Quality Use of Diagnostics, Therapeutics and Pathology (QUDTP) programs.

Quality Use of Medicines and medicine safety is one of the four central pillars of Australia's 2022 National Medicines Policy (NMP) and is a National Health Priority Area. The QUDTP program supports the Quality Use of Medicines and medical tests for health professionals and patients in Australia.

The PSA is committed to promoting excellence in healthcare and empowering individuals to make informed decisions about their health by ensuring access to accurate and up-to-date information. The PSA has partnered with likeminded organisations to improve the use of medicines and related health services in Australia through the following consortiums:

- Medicines Advice Initiative Australia (MAIA)
- Quality Use of Medicines (QUM) Alliance
- Quality Use of Medicines for Insomnia and Sleep Health (QUMISH).

PSA has worked as an integral member of the consortiums to identify practice gaps and quality use of medicines issues relevant to Australian pharmacists across all practice settings and developed quality, relevant and evidenced-based educational interventions to meet their needs.

Fostering sustainable partnerships to advance the Quality Use of Medicines (QUM) agenda.



Impact

Data gathered from evaluation surveys completed by participants assesses the impact and reach of these projects.

Key outcomes for QUDTP funded projects for first 6 months [FY23/24 Q3 and Q4].



1,040

pharmacists attended a live webinar or watched the recording



306

pharmacists attended workshops or in-person presentations



555

pharmacists enrolled in an online educational module



539

pharmacists read an *Australian Pharmacist* article

As pharmacists cement their place at the forefront of quality use of medicines and medicines safety in Australia, they require quality education to support their practice. The overwhelmingly positive feedback and numbers of pharmacists utilising these interventions demonstrates the value of the work the PSA is doing as part of these projects.

The PSA's continued involvement in these projects is essential to support pharmacists across all practice settings to continue to be the experts in the quality use of medicines and medicine safety in Australia.

The PSA recognises the funding from the Australian Government through the Quality Use of Diagnostics, Therapeutics and Pathology (QUDTP) programs and the strong relationships that have been forged with other consortium members throughout these projects.

Testimonials from pharmacists:

PSA gave a lot of practice and relevant tips. Very insightful thanks!

Inspired by the passion of the presenters for excellence of care

Case studies are fantastic and engaging

Great work all - very engaging and practical - thanks

Impact together

As Australia's leading professional pharmacy organisation, PSA is committed to partnering with others to improve the nation's health through excellence in pharmacist care. We encourage all PSA members to actively participate in projects and seize these evolving opportunities as the scope of practice expands. PSA will continue to stand alongside pharmacists, championing Quality Use of Medicines (QUM) and supporting them every step of the way.

References:

- 1 National Core Community Palliative Care Medicines List, [National Core Community Palliative Care Medicines List \(caringathomeproject.com.au\)](https://caringathomeproject.com.au), accessed 24 September 2024
- 2 Downing NJ, Skaczkowski G, Hughes-Barton D, et al. A qualitative exploration of the role of a palliative care pharmacist providing home-based care in the rural setting, from the perspective of health care professionals. *The Australia journal of rural health* 2024 <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajr.13115>

Contact us

We'd love to hear from you! To learn more about PSA Projects, please reach out to us at Projects@psa.org.au

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