

# FACT SHEET

## HOSPITAL PHARMACY AND THE QUALITY USE OF MEDICINES

Australia has gained an international reputation for its leadership in the Quality Use of Medicines movement, mainly because of the development of a National Medicinal Drugs Policy which is used as a framework for strategies designed to enhance health outcomes for all Australians. The National Medicinal Drugs Policy aims to achieve the best possible pharmaceutical drug use through a number of mechanisms which seek to ensure that the public has timely access to safe, effective and affordable medical treatment.

### Quality Use of Medicines

The goal of Quality Use of Medicines is to optimise medication use and health outcomes by careful selection of drug therapy. It recognises that, in some instances, no medication may be the most appropriate treatment. Quality Use of Medicines also dictates that potential risks and benefits of drug therapy must be assessed and that there should be attention to details such as dosage, duration of treatment, monitoring and cost.

Under the principles of Quality Use of Medicines, there is also an emphasis on the detection, documentation, management and prevention of drug-related problems such as side effects and drug interactions.

### How do Hospital Pharmacists contribute to the Quality Use of Medicines?

Modern hospital pharmacy practice is focused on strategies to achieve Quality Use of Medicine. The National Medicinal Drugs Policy strongly emphasises a partnership approach to Quality Use of Medicines, whereby patients work with their doctor, pharmacist, nurse or carer towards safe and effective treatment.

Hospital pharmacists play many critical roles in promoting Quality Use of Medicines:

- Hospital pharmacists have prime responsibility for maintaining appropriate and timely access to medication for patients in hospital. They also contribute to maintaining continuity of medication supply at the time of discharge from hospitals. By compounding specialised medications, hospital pharmacists ensure access to otherwise unavailable products.
- Hospital pharmacists ensure that public funds are used judiciously for the purchase of pharmaceutical drugs. This involves strategies such as the use of formularies, the negotiation of bulk purchasing contracts, and the implementation of generic substitutions where appropriate.

- Hospital pharmacists are available as an important information resource for patients. This information is conveyed through counselling, using consumer medicines information (CMI) and through educational strategies.
- Hospital pharmacists use their unique training and experience in educating other healthcare professionals, providing input into the undergraduate and postgraduate education of doctors, nurses and community-based pharmacists.
- Clinical pharmacy services are specifically directed at using a team approach to ensure that medication therapy is wisely selected, using an appropriate dosage for the correct period of time, and that untoward interactions and side effects are detected, documented and treated and, where possible, prevented.

For more information about hospital pharmacy, contact The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia. Information is also available on the World Wide Web at [www.shpa.org.au](http://www.shpa.org.au)