

Media release

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Discussing dysphagia key to medicines safety as one million Australians face swallowing difficulty

The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) is highlighting the impact of swallowing difficulty (dysphagia) on medicines safety, and the timely 4th edition update of its leading publication [Don't Rush to Crush](#) on [Swallowing Awareness Day 2022](#), an initiative of Speech Pathology Australia.

SHPA Chief Executive Kristin Michaels says dysphagia has profound implications for the safe use of medicines.

'On behalf of our members we're proud to get behind #SwallowAware2022 and raise awareness around the difficulties of a dysphagia diagnosis, which encompasses any problem with swallowing, drinking, chewing, eating, controlling saliva, taking medication, or protecting the lungs from food and drink.

'This is particularly important to pharmacists as it presents an ideal opportunity for to ask their customers and patients if they are having trouble swallowing their medicines. Not only can this avoid the risk of medicine-related harm, but it can also lead to the proper diagnosis and treatment of a swallowing disorder.'

The latest edition of [Don't Rush to Crush](#), Australia's comprehensive guide to safely administering oral medicines to people who have swallowing difficulties or have enteral feeding tubes is the biggest edition yet.

This edition uses the IDDSI Framework and Testing methods to classify the thickness of over 100 oral liquid medicines, providing health professionals with an internationally recognised thickness classification. For people with dysphagia, the thickness of liquids, as well as the texture of food, is an important factor to consider for swallowing safety. Liquids, including liquid medicines must be of suitable thickness to slow their flow and reduce the risk of the liquid being inhaled into the lungs. The IDDSI Framework and Testing methods provide a common international language to improve swallowing safety for people of all ages, in all care settings and all cultures.

SHPA Publications Manager Keli Symons says *Don't Rush to Crush* is the first resource to test and publish the thickness of oral liquid medicines using the IDDSI Framework.

'SHPA's [Don't Rush to Crush](#), recognised as a required pharmacy text by the Pharmacy Board of Australia, provides vital information at the point of care in hospitals, pharmacies and residential aged care facilities to ensure the safe and effective use of medicines for people with swallowing difficulties.'

Tim Kittel, National President of Speech Pathology Australia, says like breathing, swallowing is essential to everyday life.

'Around one million Australians have a swallowing difficulty. Swallowing problems can occur at any stage of life. However, the knowledge of dysphagia and its implications remain largely unknown for most Australians.

'We welcome SHPA's support of Swallowing Awareness Day 2022. Dysphagia is a difficult diagnosis to swallow but today is an opportunity to bring attention to swallowing disorders and to connect people with speech pathologists, the professionals who can help.'

The fourth edition of Don't Rush to Crush is now available through the [SHPA Bookshop](#), [eMIMSCloud](#) and [MIMS Online](#), and Medical Director's [AusDI](#).

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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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