

2018 Victorian State Election Priorities

Introduction

Victorian hospital pharmacists are proud to work in a state where safe, high quality care for patients is the priority. Recent investments in hospitals and healthcare have demonstrated this commitment, and the creation of Safer Care Victoria provides an important authority for quality and safety improvement for the benefit of Victorians.

The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) members are key members of multidisciplinary healthcare teams, working to manage the use of medicines in metropolitan and regional hospitals across Victoria. Hospital pharmacists are embedded into medical units, treat patients on specialist wards,

support patients in Emergency Departments, advise prescribers, facilitate clinical trials, provide outreach to patients going home from hospitals, dispense medicines and counsel patients. International evidence shows that regular pharmacist input in a hospital setting is cost-effective, resulting in reduced length of stay and increased patient and/or carer satisfaction¹. Australian evidence has shown a \$23 return for every \$1 spent on clinical pharmacy services in a Victorian hospital².

Our members are progressive advocates for clinical excellence, committed to evidence-based practice and passionate about patient care.

1. Continued support for the implementation of electronic medicine management systems for Victorian public hospitals to improve safety and quality of care received by Victorians.

With the ongoing evolution of Victorian eHealth systems, hospitals across the state have been able to introduce electronic medical records as part of electronic medicine management systems with the aim of improving patient care. However, many hospitals are implementing electronic medicine management systems in a fragmented approach, without prescribing and dispensing systems or covering all areas of the hospital which provide medicine. This introduces the risk of additional errors as the result of running parallel systems (i.e. paper-based and electronic medical records) and limits the benefits an integrated system delivers in reducing prescribing and dispensing errors. The poorly designed partial application of EMM, and subsequent failure to appreciate organisational implications associated with their partial introduction, can introduce unexpected new risks in patient

safety. Continued investment in EMM for all Victorian hospitals is a strategic approach to ensuring the safety and high-quality care of Victorians.

2. Investment in opioid stewardship services in all Victorian hospitals with surgical facilities to address opioid prescription and supply.

With the increasing trend of misuse of prescription opioids in Victoria, the introduction of an opioid stewardship program into Victorian public hospitals has great potential for reducing harm when supported by adequate funding and management. The recent Victorian Inquiry into Drug Law Reform has recommended that a sector-wide trial based on an Opioid Stewardship model be implemented in hospitals broadly to promote best practice in the prescribing and use of opioids. This is timely as international research has indicated that while the majority of prescribing of opioids occurs in the community, 70% is initiated in hospitals with 17% of patients continuing

opioid use long-term³. Victoria has the opportunity to lead the Australian response to growing opioid misuse and dependence and invest in the prevention of opioid misuse for the health and wellbeing of Victorians.

3. Continue to support further workforce innovation in clinical pharmacy.

Victoria leads Australia in key areas of pharmacy innovation thanks to support from the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services. Innovations in clinical practice, such as enabling pharmacists to complete the medicine management plan in the medical discharge summary, has shown strong positive results for general medical patients with reduced medicine errors in medicine summaries⁴. Other Victorian innovations such as partnered pharmacist charting of medicines have shown that greater pharmacist service delivery in an acute setting is achievable, safe, effective, cost-saving and sustainable⁵. As demand for hospital services and pressure on medical practitioners continue to increase, these innovations, where pharmacists work to their fullest scope of practice, should be supported for broad implementation in Victorian hospitals.

To support the provision of clinical pharmacy services, the role of hospital pharmacy technicians in the pharmacy workforce is also a key consideration. Technicians are health professionals who work under the supervision of hospital pharmacists in dispensing and preparing medicines in hospitals for both inpatients and outpatients and play an important support role in the delivery of hospital pharmacy services and quality patient care. Expanding the role of technicians has been demonstrated to increase hospital pharmacies' patient-focused activities⁶ by increasing the capacity of pharmacists to undertake patient-facing activities. Education for pharmacy technicians currently delivered by TAFEs and private colleges should be expanded to support the development of entry and advanced level competencies in order to meet the demands of hospital pharmacy practice.

4. Bridge the gap in the delivery of clinical pharmacy services by supporting the provision of clinical pharmacy services across seven days and in Emergency Departments

Pharmacists are an underutilised pillar of the healthcare system across Australia. Victoria is well supported by internationally renowned pharmacy schools from which more than 300 students graduate each year. And yet the current provision of clinical pharmacy services in Victorian hospitals is inadequate to meet patients' needs, indicated by a study which showed that approximately 20% of patients experience a significant delay in medicine administration upon arrival at

the facility and that 12% of missed doses were considered high risk^{7,8}. Hospital pharmacy services play a key role in ensuring hospitals meet their Medicine Safety accreditation requirements and provide safe and high-quality care for all patients taking medicines. However many Victorian hospitals do not provide clinical pharmacy services for all patients who require them, particularly those admitted over weekends or after 5pm. Similarly, embedding of pharmacists in Emergency Departments is uneven in Victorian hospitals despite evidence that employment of pharmacists supports medicines quality and safety and frees up medical doctors⁹. For Victorian hospitals to provide the highest quality care for Victorians, greater access to hospital pharmacy services including medicine reconciliation, management of polypharmacy and adverse drug reactions, therapeutic drug monitoring and medicine counseling, for both inpatients and Emergency admissions, is essential.

5. Recognising pharmacists as medicines experts by involving pharmacists in Victorian health care reform

With the Victorian health system working towards the vision of Health 2040: advancing health, access and care, hospital pharmacists are able to provide evidence-based medicines management practice to improve the quality of care delivered to Victorians. The Department of Health and Human Services has taken a positive step forward by establishing Safer Care Victoria in response to the report [Targeting zero, the review of hospital safety and quality assurance in Victoria](#). However, greater representation of pharmacy expertise would be beneficial for medicines policy in Victoria. SHPA supports the appointment of a Chief Pharmacist to enable a greater contribution to medicines policy and support interaction between state and federal agencies in relation to medicines and medicines funding. The Chief Pharmacist role is already established and highly regarded in Western Australia, New South Wales, South Australia and Tasmania. The role would liaise between all streams of pharmacy and the Department, whilst also fostering relationships with other health professionals in Victoria to support policy development, planning and implementation of health care reform for the benefit of Victorians taking medicines.

References

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