

From NPS MedicineWise

Multidisciplinary approach to reducing pharmaceutical misuse



Hospitalisations for pharmaceutical opioid poisoning now exceed those for heroin use. In fact, most people who enter Australian drug and alcohol treatment programs are doing so because of prescription opioid and/or benzodiazepine use (*Aust Prescr* 2014; 37: 79-81). Mortality associated with prescription opioid use is on the rise, and around 40% of deaths involve a legitimate prescription for oxycodone for non-cancer pain (*Forensic Sci Med Pathol* 2015; 11: 3-12).

The National Pharmaceutical Drug Misuse Framework for Action identifies national priorities to minimise harm from pharmaceutical drug misuse. Under the nine priority areas, there are a number of actions designed to support the entire health care team involved in medicine management, including prescribers and pharmacists.

NPS MedicineWise recently launched an online module to help pharmacists identify and manage prescription drug misuse as part of the broader care team. Often pharmacists are well placed to identify issues and improve quality use of medicines in patients they see in their pharmacies. This can be done by influencing the way an individual uses medicines, but also by identifying and relaying concerns back to the prescriber about potential misuse.

The module aims to help pharmacists improve their integration into a multidisciplinary care team, and offers suggestions and ideas to help pharmacy cultivate closer ties with general practice and allied health providers at a local level. Learning objectives include identifying the warning signs of drug misuse and how to respond, how to hold sensitive conversations with patients, and the role of pharmacists in the patient care team.

It is also important that clinicians recognise the contribution pharmacists can provide in reducing misuse of prescription medicines, and seek opportunities to build closer ties with their local providers. Pharmacists are very well placed to identify medicines issues and work collaboratively with the prescriber to improve outcomes for patients. The module is freely available online at <http://learn.nps.org.au>.

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