

MEDIA RELEASE



National Prescribing Service Limited



Palliative
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Australia

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Better use of medicines needed in palliative and end-of-life care

A report into appropriate, safe and effective medicines use in palliative care will be launched by the National Prescribing Service (NPS) and Palliative Care Australia at the 10th Australian Palliative Care Conference in September.

The report, *Achieving quality use of medicines in the community for palliative and end-of-life care*, is the first to document a shared understanding of the barriers to the best use of medicines during the end stages of life.

Informed by submissions from more than 70 healthcare organisations and individuals, the report identifies key issues affecting medicines use in palliative care and identifies opportunities for action and areas where further work is needed.

“This report is extremely significant for anyone involved in palliative care: doctors, pharmacists, nurses, patients, families and carers,” NPS CEO, Dr Lynn Weekes said.

“The principles of quality use of medicines are often forgotten during the end stages of life, when really this is the most critical time for best practice. Patients at the end of life are often taking a large number of medicines to manage pain and other symptoms, and the medicine regimen may change frequently within a short period of time.”

Palliative Care Australia CEO Donna Daniell says the report is an important first step in recognising unique medicines use issues in palliative care, the findings of which will help inform policy and practice direction.

“Medicines use has an even greater impact at the end of life than in any other area of therapeutics and as such, demands a greater level of precision and rigour. We know that today people at the end of life experience more pain and unrelieved symptoms than they should. The reality is that much of this can be prevented,” Ms Daniell said.

“Palliative care is finally being included in conversations about health care. It is increasingly recognised that for quality care at the end of life to be real, in all care settings including the home, improvements in quality use of medicines are imperative.”

The report will be presented by NPS program officer, Aine Heaney at the 10th Australian Palliative Care Conference in Perth on Friday 25 September.

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PCA is the peak national organisation representing the interests and aspirations of all who share the ideal of quality care at the end of life

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