

Thursday 31 October 2019

Time for action

The Royal Commission into Aged Care interim report released today demonstrates the critical problem with medicine management in aged care, showing the urgent need for fundamental change.

Pharmaceutical Society of Australia National President A/Prof Chris Freeman said that a third of submissions expressing concern about medicine management is a reflection of the systemic failures in how medicines are used in aged care.

The interim report details “widespread overprescribing, often without clear consent, of drugs which sedate residents, rendering them drowsy and unresponsive to visiting family and removing their ability to interact with people.”

“There is no doubt that the absence of regular pharmacist services in aged care facilities is causing harm. Pharmacists are there to keep people safe from medicine-related harm. When you don’t have the right level of investment in pharmacists, this is the outcome which results” A/Prof Freeman said.

“Unfortunately, this is nothing new. PSA’s *Medicine Safety: Take Care* report identified 98% of people living in aged care facilities have at least one medicine-related problem.

The interim report identifies inadequate funding for medication management review programs for residents of aged care facilities.

“Pharmacists are well aware of these problems. PSA members have told us they feel handcuffed by lack of funding and regulatory barriers which prevent them from protecting residents from the harms caused when medicines are not used in a safe and effective way.

The report also found the use of psychotropic medicine was not clearly justified in 90% of cases in which they are prescribed in aged care.

“This is why PSA has called for pharmacists to work with GPs through collaborative prescribing arrangements. This should be progressed as a matter of urgency,” A/Prof Freeman said.

The report identifies the role the 7th Community Pharmacy Agreement (7CPA) will play in responding to the overuse of psychotropic medicines in aged care.

“PSA will act on the suggestions directed to us by the Royal Commission in the interim report. We will do everything we can to ensure residents are protected from the harms medicines are causing in aged care.

“When the Royal Commission into Aged Care interim report is titled ‘neglect’, we must all stand up and listen. That includes health professionals, the aged care sector, and importantly, government.

“We must all take responsibility in designing the improvements that are needed to protect our older Australians.

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