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PSA welcomes regional pharmacist mental health training support for pharmacists and patients

PSA welcomes the NSW Government funding announcement to train pharmacists in regional areas to identify and assist patients with mental health issues.

It is estimated that close to half (45.5%) of the Australian population between 16 and 85 years of age will experience a common mental illness in their lifetime with the prevalence of mental health issues, such as depression, increasing with other chronic conditions.

These mental health challenges are even more common in rural Australia, where pharmacists are the most accessible healthcare professional, working in close collaboration with doctors and nurses.

Pharmacists are well placed to support these patients in the community and identify them early so they can be referred to appropriate mental health providers, including GPs. Evidence suggests that prevention and early interventions can reduce the need for more complex and costly interventions.

Patients in regional areas have greater difficulties in accessing these services with patient experience data showing one in three patients living in outer-regional, remote and very remote areas having difficulty accessing services.

PSA NSW President Professor Peter Carroll said that “Pharmacists are trusted and accessible health professionals, often coming in contact with consumers with mental health issues, and for the majority of people with lived experience of mental health issues treatment is best provided in the community”.

Professor Carroll said it is pleasing to see that collaborative efforts involving both the Pharmacy Guild of Australia, and the PSA have resulted in tangible investment in supporting the pharmacy workforce to improve the mental health of the NSW community.

“The Pharmaceutical Society of Australia fully supports the announcement by the NSW Government and looks forward to working with them to equip pharmacists in further supporting these communities”.

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