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Media release

Pharmacy services save lives and health system costs

Ask Your Pharmacist Week 2010 (29 August – 4 September) will celebrate the numerous professional services offered through community pharmacy. In addition to filling prescriptions, pharmacists provide reliable health and medicine advice, as well as a number of specialised professional pharmacy services, such as assisting patients with medicine management and the self-management of chronic diseases.

Medicine misadventure has been estimated to cost the health sector \$380 million a year. Each year, approximately 140,000 people are admitted to Australian hospitals as a result of medicine-related issues. Up to 69 per cent of these hospitalisations may have been avoided.

“Through offering a range of professional services, pharmacists can be of great help to people who may be confused about their medicines,” Kos Sclavos, National President of the Pharmacy Guild, said.

Community pharmacists are the most accessible health professionals in the health system. For this reason the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, as a part of the Community Pharmacy Agreements, funds the implementation trials for and delivery of a number of professional pharmacy services.

All of these services build on the trust, expert medicine and health care already provided to patients by community pharmacists and their staff. The services allow for patients to gain a deeper understanding of the clinical expertise of their pharmacist, beyond dispensing scripts, and a sense of the real value of the contribution made to their health and well-being.

Ongoing services provided by community pharmacies include:

Home Medicines Review - A Home Medicines Review requires a referral from your GP. It involves a pharmacist visiting you home and discussing any concerns or questions you may have about your medicines. You can ask your pharmacist how to avoid medicine mix-ups and how to recognise potential side effects. They will tell you what your medicines are for, when and how to take them. They may also identify interactions between your medicines. A Home Medicines Review is a great way to make sure you are taking your medicines correctly and can help you manage your medicines better. Ask your pharmacist or doctor for more information on Home Medicines Reviews.

Dose Administration Aids (DAAs) – Your pharmacist can organise your medicines into weekly blister packs. These help to ensure you take the right medicine at the right time.

Consumer Medicine Information (CMIs) – Your pharmacist offers to print out an information sheet for the medicine you are prescribed.

“Ask Your Pharmacist” about professional services to help you better manage your medicines.

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