



Australia's unique system of community pharmacy



Community pharmacists are the custodians of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and play a vital role in the primary health care of all Australians.

Australia has the best system of community pharmacy in the world. It is envied by other nations for the way it delivers medicines to the public in a convenient, affordable and equitable manner.

The Federal Government subsidises the provision of prescription medications of proven efficacy through the network of 5000 pharmacist-owned community pharmacies through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS). Community pharmacists efficiently dispense subsidised medicines that heal the sick, improve quality of life for the chronically ill and – in many cases – save lives. Without the PBS, and committed pharmacists to monitor and manage the supply of medicines to the community, the cost of medicines would astronomically increase and health outcomes would be severely compromised.

Along with Australia's unique medicine scheduling system and a range of professional health services, the PBS comprises the backbone of community pharmacy in this country.

Community pharmacists are medicine experts, providing professional advice and counselling on medications, including their use and effects, as well as general health care. Their services are highly accessible – in the vast majority of cases, these services are offered to consumers free of charge and without the need to make an appointment. Regardless of where they live, all Australians have the same access to PBS medicines (within 24 hours) at no financial disadvantage.

Pharmacists are accountable for every piece of advice and service provided in their pharmacies. Their continuing registration and approval to dispense medication under the PBS depends on them always being present in the pharmacy and abiding by the rules of the Pharmacy Boards in the various States and Territories. A pharmacist who loses registration cannot continue to operate a pharmacy or even work in one. That is at once a powerful public protection and a sanction against any lessening of professional standards.

Pharmacists develop strong relationships with their patients, sometimes over generations, as many people enjoy the benefits of patronising a single pharmacy. The stronger the pharmacist-patient relationship, the better the health outcomes that can be expected.

If the pharmacist or their staff cannot help you with your health issue, then they will refer you to another health professional who can.

Community pharmacies in Australia employ over 12,000 university-qualified pharmacists and approximately 30,000 highly trained pharmacy assistants, and contribute an annual turnover of \$8 billion and tax revenues of \$200 million to the Australian economy.

If you have any health concerns or want to know more about community pharmacy in Australia "Ask your pharmacist" or contact:

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