



No. 35: Integration of general practice pharmacists into primary healthcare settings for chronic disease management

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Caitlin Shaw, Medical Student, School of Medicine and Dentistry, James Cook University.

Email: caitlin.shaw@my.jcu.edu.au

Chronic disease management is a key responsibility for primary healthcare services in Australia, yet improving outcomes for patients with chronic disease is not always achieved. This is in part due to suboptimal prescribing practices, inadequate efforts to reduce medication-related harms and adverse drug events, and insufficient support for patients to optimise medication adherence.

This is particularly significant in underserved populations, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and those living in rural and remote areas.

General practice pharmacists (GPPs) are pharmacists integrated into a primary care team who provide clinical services to improve quality use of medications for the practice population. Integration of GPPs within primary healthcare services is a model of care which could help address these gaps, yet GPPs currently have a very limited role in primary healthcare in Australia. Integration of GPPs should be more widely adopted across primary healthcare services. This model of care must be supported by national policy frameworks and appropriate funding structures, as well as a defined scope of practice for GPPs.

Current data is insufficient to adequately understand the potential role of GPPs in improving medical management of chronic disease and health outcomes in the unique Australian healthcare context. Governments should support further data collection and research efforts trialling this model of care in Australian primary healthcare settings. Developing appropriate delivery and funding models of GPP integration in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and rural and remote health services is also required to support the potential benefit of this service to underserved communities.

Recommendations

- A standard term for a general practice-based pharmacist is needed urgently and should be agreed upon by relevant stakeholders.
- A recognised position description framework and scope of practice for GPPs should be developed.
- Governments should support an integrated GPP model of care.
- Integrated GPP models should be underpinned by supportive policy frameworks and appropriate funding.
- Quality of care indicators should be consistently measured.
- Governments should support further integrated GPP trials and data collection.