



## **Position Statement – September 2015 Pharmacists in General Practice**

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### **Guild Position**

Community pharmacy and general practice are integral and central parts of the health care system.

Closer collaboration between community pharmacists and general practice supported by integrated dispense and prescribing systems will improve the quality use of medicines, improve efficiency, reduce wastage and enhance the sustainability of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme for the betterment of individual patients as well as the broader Australian community.

Integrating pharmacists into general practice provides both an opportunity to enhance the collaboration between general practice and community pharmacy, and an opportunity to expand the scope of practice for pharmacists to better support people with chronic health conditions, particularly in regions in which there are GP shortages.

The Guild strongly believes that the best way to integrate a pharmacist into the general practice setting is through advancing the scope of practice of pharmacists to work as ‘Pharmacist Prescribers’ to deliver high quality patient care in collaboration with medical practitioners who would continue to have the overall responsibility for diagnosis.

The inclusion of a Pharmacist Prescriber into the primary health care team should increase the clinical capacity of general practice and assist in addressing the increasing demands in primary care.

The role of a Pharmacist Prescriber would include strengthening the link between general practice and the community pharmacy as well as improving a patient’s access to the health system and ensure the most cost-effective outcomes.

Importantly, these roles should not duplicate the support that patients already receive from their local community pharmacy but address the gaps in primary health care, particularly with the management of patients with more complex, chronic health conditions. The community pharmacy network is well placed to support GPs by providing common ailments services, supporting patient self-management for chronic conditions, providing preventative health services, and providing medicine reviews.

The Guild believes that for a Pharmacist Prescriber to be most effective within the general practice at maximum efficiency to the health system, they must:

- maintain and strengthen the patient’s relationship with their community pharmacy
- maintain and strengthen the relationship between the general practice and the local community pharmacies
- maintain and strengthen the communication between general practice and the local community pharmacies

### **National Secretariat**

Level 2, 15 National Circuit, Barton, ACT 2600 Australia  
PO Box 7036, Canberra Business Centre, ACT 2610 Australia  
Telephone: + 61 2 6270 1888 · Facsimile: + 61 2 6270 1800  
Email: [guild.nat@guild.org.au](mailto:guild.nat@guild.org.au) · Internet: [www.guild.org.au](http://www.guild.org.au)



- focus on areas of patient care that are not readily available through the local community pharmacy
- ensure efficient use of limited health funding by not duplicating services already being provided in the local community pharmacies
- not dispense medicines from the general practice
- remain professionally independent from the GPs within the practice
- support the general practice with prescribing audits and quality improvement in prescribing practice and medicine education
- be funded from outside the Community Pharmacy Agreement

Closer collaboration between community pharmacy and general practice can be achieved by enhanced communication and information technology such as secure messaging systems, tele-medicine and electronic patient medicine profiles which can be used to ensure all health professionals are involved and the patient remains the centre of the health care system.

Where onsite pharmacist support may be of value, this can be achieved by sessional 'Outreach Community Pharmacists', making better use of existing trained pharmacists and infrastructure. These pharmacists, employed by local community pharmacies, could provide support to local general practices on an as needed contract basis. This would maximise efficiency and reduce any duplication of services.

The Guild is willing to work with other organisations representing pharmacists and medical practitioners to trial models of care integrating Pharmacist Prescribers into general practice to enhance patient care without duplicating existing services and support.

### **Background**

In September 2014 the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) and the Australian Medical Association (AMA) announced they were working on a model where pharmacists would work alongside GPs in a practice.<sup>1</sup>

In the UK, the role of the pharmacist as a clinician has been strengthened by the development of prescribing rights with independent pharmacist prescribers being especially recognised as a vital source of clinical care in general practice.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://ama.com.au/article/general-practice-pharmacists-improving-patient-care>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.rpharms.com/policy-pdfs/pharmacists-and-gp-surgeries.pdf>