

# SA Palliative Care Community Pharmacy Update

A joint initiative of South Australian Palliative Care Services

*Medications that were good then, might not be the best choice now.* Community pharmacists can lead deprescribing conversations with their patients and support GPs

## Medication options, risk and benefits at end of life

One of your regulars, Mrs Bull tells you she takes too many medications, with more added since her cancer diagnosis. She never feels good, even between chemo cycles and doesn't see the point of so many tablets. She was discharged from hospital 3 weeks ago where she was introduced to palliative care.

You decide to invite Mrs Bull back into the pharmacy at another time to best discuss her medication goals and assess potential risk and benefits of her current medications. She qualifies for a [MedsCheck](#).

You ask *"Is there anyone else you would like to be here with you while we talk?"*

In preparation;

- > you anticipate a conversation about her deteriorating health and changes to her medications likely to arise
- > You consider the process you will utilise to potentially identify medications for deprescribing;

## Talking about medication changes at the end of life

The time at which a patient is ready to talk about end of life care varies from patient to patient, but open and honest communication that is sensitive to the situation starts early and continues through the patient journey. The aims of such discussions in this case may include:

- > Eliciting Mrs Bull's level of understanding, main problems or concerns about her medicines, her cancer, cancer treatment and any impact that these are having on her;

- > Determining how much information she wishes to receive and providing this to ensure medicine optimisation;
- > Find out whether Mrs Bull wishes more support regarding her medications with her husband or other carers

## Simple strategies will improve pharmacists' confidence and ensure patients and their carer's needs are acknowledged and met

- > Convey respect and understanding of the person, being mindful of cultural values and beliefs
- > Learn what is most important to the patient, their goals of care
- > Acknowledge any raised fear or concerns
- > Tailor information to the individual needs
- > Let the patient know you will be here to support them and their carer

## Some resources include:

- > [End-of-Life Essentials](#) - An Australian based eLearning program (CPD points available)
- > [VITALtalk](#)-quick guides, videos, courses (US based)
- > [Communicating Strategies in Pharmacy \(543kb pdf\)](#). In: ACCP Updates in Therapeutics 2017: Ambulatory Care Pharmacy Preparatory Review and Recertification Course

## For more information

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This update is intended to provide practical up to date and factual information relating to pharmacy and medicines management in the setting of Palliative Care and is based on critical review of available evidence. Individual patient circumstances must be considered when applying this information. Please feel free to distribute this update further to interested colleagues.

