

Australian Medical Association Limited
ABN 37 008 426 793

42 Macquarie Street, Barton ACT 2600: PO Box 6090, Kingston ACT 2604
 Telephone: (02) 6270 5400 Facsimile (02) 6270 5499
 Website : <http://www.ama.com.au/>



PBS CHANGES TO OPIOIDS A WIN FOR PALLIATIVE CARE

The Australian Medical Association welcomes much needed improvements to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) listings for opioids, which will clarify their important role in alleviating suffering for palliative care patients.

AMA President Dr Omar Khorshid said the Association supported important reforms to reduce the inappropriate use of opioids in Australia.

“However, the original PBS changes implemented on 1 June 2020 caused significant confusion and concern from prescribers and their patients,” Dr Khorshid said.

“The changes unintentionally made accessing opioids from prescribers more difficult for palliative care patients with a legitimate clinical need.

“This was particularly difficult for non-cancer palliative care patients.

“Opioids are clinically necessary in many circumstances to relieve suffering from pain and breathlessness experienced by palliative care patients.

“Prescribers were also faced with additional administrative burden when requesting PBS approval for opioids.”

The AMA has been advocating to the Department of Health and the Therapeutic Goods Administration, providing feedback from AMA members on the 1 June 2020 changes.

“The Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC) has reflected this feedback in the 1 October 2020 PBS listing changes, so it’s pleasing that the vital advocacy work of the AMA has been heeded,” Dr Khorshid said.

“Patients will be exempt from the 12-month pain management review by a second doctor or palliative care nurse practitioner if their clinical condition makes the review not possible.

“This is an important change for palliative care patients who may be too unwell for this to occur.”

The AMA President thanked Palliative Care Australia for their work in this space and their ongoing advocacy for palliative care and said the AMA would continue to work with the government and other stakeholders to improve communication on opioid reforms.

“Current clinical guidelines do not recommend opioids for the long-term treatment of chronic non-cancer pain,” Dr Khorshid said.

“Almost 150 hospitalisations, 14 emergency department presentations, and three deaths every day in Australia are caused by issues linked to inappropriate opioid use and this is a set of numbers we need to continually focus on improving.”

CONTACT: Maria Hawthorne 02 6270 5478 / 0427 209 753

Follow the AMA Media on Twitter: http://twitter.com/ama_media

Follow the AMA President on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/amapresident>

Like the AMA on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/AustralianMedicalAssociation>