

## Media Release:

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### ***Overuse of medicines in older Australians: what can we do?***

**Two thirds of the Australian population over the age of 75 years take five or more medicines daily. On average at least one of these is either harmful or unnecessary.**

A National Stakeholders Meeting: *Quality use of Medicines to Optimise Ageing in Older Australians* to be held today at Sydney's Kolling Institute of Medical Research, Royal North Shore Hospital aims to develop a national strategy to tackle the complex issue of overprescribing in our ageing population.

Leaders from the Federal Departments of Health and Social Services, national expert advisory committees on the registration, use and funding of medicines, Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Healthcare, Alzheimer's Australia, as well as consumer groups, clinicians, pharmacists, nurses, residential and community aged care leaders, academic researchers, educators and economists will come together to discuss ways to improve overall quality of use of medicines for older Australians.

"Polypharmacy, usually defined as the use of five or more drugs, is a real issue for the ongoing overall health and wellbeing of older Australians," says Professor of Geriatric Pharmacology at Sydney Medical School, Royal North Shore Hospital, and meeting convener, Professor Sarah Hilmer.

An ageing population and associated increase in chronic disease including, but not limited to, dementia, means that polypharmacy is commonplace. In addition, there is strong evidence that the use of multiple medications increases the risk of adverse events such as falls, confusion, hospitalisation, loss of independence and death."

Hosted by the NHMRC Cognitive Decline Partnership Centre (CDPC) and NPS MedicineWise the meeting will provide an opportunity to draw on a wide range of expertise to explore the development of policies and resources to address the issue of overprescribing and ways to reduce the number of unnecessary and potentially harmful medicines typically being prescribed.

"People with a diagnosis of dementia are particularly at risk of polypharmacy due to the fact that they are not only being treated for the symptoms of the disease but also for typical age related issues," explains Professor Susan Kurrle Chief Investigator and Director of the CDPC.

Ms Aine Heaney, NPS MedicineWise Client Relations Manager says, "This has been a key area of focus for NPS MedicineWise for some time. Good medicines management for older Australians will improve patient care by reducing polypharmacy and the associated risks, as well as reducing inappropriate prescribing."

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**The NHMRC Cognitive Decline Partnership Centre (CDPC):** The CDPC is a \$25 million partnership between academics, industry partners and Alzheimer's Australia with the aim to change policy, systems and practice, improving the lives of people living with dementia and cognitive decline. For more details on CDPC activities visit the CDPC website – [www.sydney.edu.au/medicine/cdpc/](http://www.sydney.edu.au/medicine/cdpc/).