

Media Release:

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Optimising medicine use in older Australians

An outcome statement from the recently convened **National Stakeholders' Meeting on Quality Use of Medicines to Optimise Ageing in Older Australians** is being released during 'Be Medicinewise Week' to coincide with the day focusing on medicines and ageing.

The **Outcome Statement** [<http://sydney.edu.au/medicine/cdpc/documents/about/outcome-statement-national-stakeholders-meeting.pdf>] outlines how the lives of older Australians can be improved through better use of medicines.

Taking multiple medicines is a major burden in time and cost to older adults and adverse drug reactions can be mistaken as disease or as a symptom of ageing itself. Optimising medicines for older people with multiple medical problems is challenging and is even more complex when caring for people with dementia. Use of harmful or unnecessary medicines also impacts the health system through the high cost of medicines and of treating patients with adverse drug effects.

Gaining a clearer understanding of how much overuse of medicines occurs in older Australians is key, according to experts at the recent National Stakeholders Meeting: *Quality Use of Medicines to Optimise Ageing in Older Australians*.

There is emerging evidence that withdrawal of harmful or unnecessary medicines is safe and may improve quality of life in older people. When surveyed, over 90 per cent of older Australians said that they would like to stop one of their medicines if their doctor said it was possible.

More than 80 stakeholders, including consumers, clinicians, academics, policy makers and observers from government departments of health and social services attended the meeting hosted by the NHMRC Cognitive Decline Partnership Centre and NPS MedicineWise, to discuss strategies to improve quality use of medicines for older Australians, with an emphasis on avoiding the harms of multiple medicines use.

The outcomes statement details three key findings from the meeting:

- Many older Australians take harmful or unnecessary medicines. This has negative impacts on health and well-being, as well as significant financial costs.
- There are opportunities to improve medication use by older Australians through changes to policy, practice and data management.
- Harmful or unnecessary medication use can be reduced through a partnership approach to quality use of medicines.

Meeting convenor, Sarah Hilmer, Professor of Geriatric Pharmacology at Royal North Shore Hospital and the University of Sydney, commented, "This meeting set the agenda to improve quality use of medicines for older Australians, emphasising avoiding the harms of multiple medicines use. Ongoing partnership of the many stakeholders the meeting brought together is critical to improving medicines use and outcomes for older Australians."

Dr Lynn Weekes, NPS MedicineWise CEO says, "The Be Medicinewise Week campaign helps to raise awareness on polypharmacy and the increased risks of experiencing side effects and interactions as we age. The outcomes statement from the recent national stakeholders meeting reflects widespread commitment to the importance of achieving good medicines management for older Australians."

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Find out more information about the Be Medicinewise Week campaign at www.nps.org.au/be-medicinewise-week

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