



# ASPIRE

BUILDING STRONG FOUNDATIONS IN PALLIATIVE CARE

## Palliative Care Foundation Training Program for Pharmacists

If you have any queries, please feel free to contact Leah Robinson and/or Megan Tremlett who are leading this work for PSA.



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Supported by funding from the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care under the National Palliative Care Projects Grant Program, the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) has developed a national Palliative Care Foundation Training Program for Australian registered pharmacists.

PSA's aim is to equip pharmacists in all practice settings with the foundation knowledge, skills, and compassion needed to provide exceptional palliative care support to patients through safe and quality use of medicines.

This training program is not intended to prepare pharmacists to specialise in palliative care, but rather to broadly upskill the profession to further support palliative care, including for diverse patient populations.

The 8-module course is accredited for pharmacists' Continuing Professional Development and available free of charge via self-directed online learning to all Australian pharmacists.

The course is available from 13th May 2025.



To enrol in the program scan the QR code or visit [www.psa.org.au](http://www.psa.org.au)



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Building strong foundations in Palliative Care

## Module 1 – Introduction to Palliative Care

### Sub Themes

- Palliative care in Australia
- Definition of terms used in palliative care
- Principles of palliative care
- Holistic care
- Palliative care settings
- Overview of disease states of people with life limiting illnesses

### Learning Objectives

1. Define the principles of palliative care
2. Describe places where palliative care is provided in Australia
3. Recognise the five elements of holistic care
4. Discuss leading causes of death in Australia

## Module 2 – The Pharmacist's Role in Palliative Care

### Sub Themes

- Direct patient care
  - Pharmacist practice settings
  - Transitions of care
  - Practical aspects of care including medicine storage and disposal
  - Dose administration aids and staged supply
  - Legal and ethical considerations (including voluntary assisted dying)
- Medication rationalisation
  - Medication review
  - Deprescribing
- Administrative roles
  - Supporting timely access to medicines
  - Supporting advance care planning
  - Cost considerations
  - Quality use of medicines and clinical governance
- Communication
- Patient advocacy
- Stakeholder liaison (including General Practitioners, palliative care teams)
- Counselling, advice & education
- Compassion and empathy
- Future role for pharmacists

### Learning Objectives

1. Recognise legal and ethical considerations for pharmacists supporting palliative and end-of-life care
2. Describe the role of pharmacists in medication rationalisation
3. Discuss the importance of facilitating timely access to medicines for palliative and end-of-life care
4. Identify ways in which pharmacists can support practical aspects of care for people living with a life-limiting illness

## Module 3 – Person-centred Care

### Sub Themes

- Goals of care
  - Patient goals of care (and how these may change)
  - Trauma informed care (knowing the individual's history and personal circumstances)
  - Advance care planning
- Diverse patient populations
- Communication
  - Communicating with patients and carers
  - Difficult conversations
  - Patient perceived burden
  - Cultural considerations in palliative care
  - Language and terminology

### Learning Objectives

1. Define patient goals of care in the context of palliative and end-of-life care
2. Recognise the role of pharmacists in supporting advance care planning
3. Explain the importance of compassion and empathy when supporting people with a life-limiting illness
4. Discuss the role of pharmacists supporting the palliative care needs of diverse patient populations
5. Recognise the need for inclusive, person-centred approaches to communication in palliative care

## Module 4 – Supporting Carers

### Sub Themes

- Who is a carer?
  - Demographics of carers, including young carers
  - Statistics - carers as the largest palliative care workforce
- The diverse role of carers
  - Carers as substitute decision-makers
- Carer fatigue and distress
  - What do carers need & how can pharmacists support this?
  - Medicines Management
  - Cost considerations in palliative care
  - Navigating the health system
  - Referrals & further support

### Learning Objectives

1. Describe the role of carers as the largest palliative care workforce
2. Recognise the role of pharmacists in meeting the needs of carers who are supporting people with a palliative diagnosis
3. Identify pathways of referral and support for carers

## Module 5 – Trajectory and symptoms of people living with life limiting illnesses

### Sub Themes

- Common palliative care symptoms
- Disease trajectory (including longer term conditions) and touch points with pharmacists
- Functional decline in palliative care
- What dying looks like
  - What a good death looks like

### Learning Objectives

1. Discuss the prevalence of disease states which lead to death
2. Recognise common disease trajectories for people with progressive, life-limiting illnesses
3. Describe how indicators of functional decline can be used to proactively plan medicine management for a person approaching end of life
4. Outline common symptoms experienced at end of life
5. Describe what the physiological process of dying looks like

## Module 6 – Symptom Management

### Sub Themes

- Medicines used in palliative care
  - Off-label use of medicines
  - Traditional and bush medicines
  - Medicines in the last days of life (including core medicines)
  - Pharmacovigilance
- Continuous Subcutaneous Infusions (Syringe drivers)
- Nonpharmacological measures
- Anticipatory prescribing
- Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) for palliative care (including Prescriber Bag)

### Learning Objectives

1. Identify medicines used to relieve symptoms in palliative and end-of-life care
2. Identify pathways of access to medicines that are non-PBS, off-label or Special Access Scheme
3. Discuss nonpharmacological measures which may be used to relieve symptoms at end of life
4. Identify evidence-based resources to assist with management of continuous subcutaneous infusions
5. Explain the importance of anticipatory prescribing in palliative and end-of-life cares

## Module 7 – Interdisciplinary Palliative Care

### Sub Themes

- The palliative care workforce
  - Generalist and specialist palliative care
- The role of each health profession in palliative care
- Pharmacists as knowledge brokers
- Care coordination
- Communicating with other health professionals
  - Early notification
- Referral pathways

### Learning Objectives

1. Explain the role of health professionals involved in palliative care
2. Recognise the importance of care coordination in palliative care
3. Describe approaches to interdisciplinary communication in palliative care
4. Identify referral pathways to optimise interdisciplinary care in palliative care

## Module 8 – Grief, Bereavement and Self-Care

### Sub Themes

- Death literacy
- Compassionate communities
- Supporting people who are grieving
- When to refer
- Caring for the health workforce

### Learning Objectives

1. Describe contemporary grief theory
2. Define the concept of death literacy
3. Discuss the role of pharmacists in supporting people who are grieving
4. Identify ways in which health professionals can practise self-care while supporting palliative patients and their caregivers

