



Community pharmacy and the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme

The Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) provides timely, reliable and affordable access to the Australian community of more than 700 medicines in their different forms and strengths. Community pharmacies are central to the effective operation of the PBS because of their professional management of medicines and their accessible and wide network.

In 2015, the PBS celebrates its 67th anniversary. The Scheme grew out of a widely-held view that the Government has an obligation to the people of Australia to provide adequate health care.

How the PBS works

Many medicines cost the Government much more than the price a consumer pays – some cost hundreds, even thousands of dollars, but the Government provides a subsidy so that a consumer pays much less. Consumers receive the benefit of this subsidy when they have a prescription for a medicine filled under the PBS.

Patients must pay a contribution (or 'co-payment') which, at 1 January 2016, was \$38.30 or only \$6.20 if you had a concession card. The Australian Government pays the remaining cost. The PBS covered around 297 million prescriptions last year. This equates to about 12 PBS prescriptions per person in Australia for the year.

With new and more effective medicines helping us to lead longer and healthier lives, the PBS is growing each year. The cost of the PBS to the government is billions of dollars, so governments of all persuasions keep a close watch on this rising cost so that it remains sustainable.

PBS Safety Net

If any family needs a lot of medicine in a calendar year, the PBS Safety Net helps with the cost of medicine. Once the family reaches a Safety Net threshold, they can apply for a PBS Safety Net card and PBS medicines will be less expensive (or free) for the rest of the calendar year.



To be able to apply for the PBS Safety Net card, records of purchased PBS medicines should be kept on a prescription record form, which can be requested from any pharmacy. Alternatively, if a patient uses the same pharmacy all the time, they will usually record this information on their computer.

Success

Australia's health system, and in particular the PBS, is widely recognised both here and overseas as being one of the best in the world. This judgement is based not only on grounds of access, equity, structure and funding arrangements, but also with regard to health outcomes. One of the major strengths of the PBS is that it is a national program, which ensures a consistent approach to drug evaluation and registration and to the pricing of PBS items.

Community pharmacy and the PBS

Community pharmacy operates in a highly regulated environment to provide the highest quality of care in delivering cost-efficient, safely dispensed pharmaceuticals under the PBS. Australia's 5,500-plus pharmacies are well-distributed throughout metropolitan, suburban and rural regions providing convenient access to the community. Despite the size of the country and the large distances involved, patients can be assured of receiving the medications they need in even the most remote locations within 7224 hours of ordering. This is thanks to the efficiency of the drug distribution network, including manufacturers, wholesalers and pharmacists.



Community pharmacy provides services

The healthcare system in Australia benefits greatly from payment for pharmacist services because expanding these services leads to improved patient compliance, less inappropriate medication use, fewer preventable adverse drug effects and interactions, reduced hospitalisation, reduced GP visitation and a better quality of life for the Australian community. Community pharmacy is committed to working with Government to find ways in which health costs can be reduced through the provision of enhanced professional services, at the same time ensuring that the world's best system to access medicines is maintained.

Community pharmacy is one of the principal untapped resources for achieving further improvements in the health status of Australians. There is an increasing body of evidence to demonstrate that community pharmacists can and do perform countless activities that benefit patients, assist doctors, save money for the purchasers of health services and enhance the delivery of health care services.

Community pharmacist services lie at the front line of healthcare savings.

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