

17 January 2019

Letter to Pharmacy Banner and Buying Groups Regarding the Provision of Homeopathic products

I am writing to you following the publication of the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia's recommendations to the Choosing Wisely Campaign.

Choosing Wisely Australia® enables clinicians, consumers and healthcare stakeholders to start important conversations about tests, treatments and procedures where evidence shows they provide no benefit and, in some cases, lead to harm. The campaign is led by Australia's health professional colleges and societies and facilitated by NPS MedicineWise.

A key Choosing Wisely recommendation from the PSA is related to the provision of homeopathic products within Australian community pharmacies and states,

“Do not promote or provide homeopathic products as there is no reliable evidence of efficacy. Where patients choose to access homeopathic treatments, health professionals should discuss the lack of benefit with patients.” The full list of PSA's Choosing Wisely recommendations is available at <http://www.choosingwisely.org.au/recommendations/pharmaceutical-society-of-australia>

Many consumers are not aware that there is no reliable evidence to support the use of homeopathic products to treat or prevent ailments. There may be a public perception that these products have health benefits, placing their health at risk if they choose homeopathic products and reject or delay treatments for which there is good evidence for safety and effectiveness.

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) statement on homeopathy expects that the Australian public will be offered treatments and therapies based on the best available evidence.¹ The PSA is aware that a number of Banner and/or Buying Groups for community pharmacies include homeopathic products in their planograms, catalogues, specials, social media communications, and allocated stock ranges. This contravenes PSA's Choosing Wisely recommendations.

Pharmacy Banner Groups and Buying Groups, as well as individual pharmacists, may believe that housing homeopathic products provides a platform from which to have a matter-of-fact conversation about the lack of evidence for homeopathic products. It has become increasingly clear that in pharmacies where these products are stocked, this conversation may not occur, as the patient may see the presence of these products as a de facto endorsement of their appropriateness. It has also become clear that where a pharmacy does not stock homeopathic products, these conversations occur, and the result is that counselling is provided without any risk of supplying a product that has no evidence.

The supply of homeopathic products is in contravention of the PSA Code of Ethics for Pharmacists². The PSA Code of Ethics, recognised by the Pharmacy Board of Australia, states that pharmacists should only “*supply or promote any medicine, complementary medicine, herbal remedy or other healthcare product where there is credible evidence of efficacy and the benefit of use outweighs the risk.*” It is therefore clear that homeopathic products should not be stocked or sold within a community pharmacy environment, and that those responsible for purchasing and stockholdings should do whatever is in their power to remove these products from the shelves of community pharmacy.

All health professionals, particularly pharmacists and doctors, have a critical role to work with consumers so they can make informed decisions about how best to manage their health using evidence based medicine. I congratulate those pharmacies, which have already made the decision to remove homeopathic products from their shelves and the many others who are making plans to do so.

On behalf of the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia, I call on all community pharmacy Banner and Buying Groups to **draw a line in the sand and cease all activities that promote the stocking, promotion, recommendation, or marketing of homeopathy**. Let us lead by example, so that the Community Pharmacy sector is a health destination that consumers can consistently call upon to receive the best possible care.

I look forward to you and your pharmacy network joining the PSA in leading the profession to embrace evidence based practice and to eradicate anything from our practice that might compromise patient care and the pharmacists’ reputation as a trusted, patient focused health care professional.

Yours Sincerely,



Dr Chris Freeman
PSA National President

1. National Health and Medical Research Council. 2015. NHMRC Statement on homeopathy and NHMRC Information paper – Evidence on the effectiveness of homeopathy for treating health conditions. At: <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines-publications/cam02>
2. Pharmaceutical Society of Australia. 2017. Code of Ethics for Pharmacists. At: <https://www.psa.org.au/membership/ethics/>