



MEDIA RELEASE
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New support while tapering opioids

An opioids [tapering algorithm](#) and [news article](#) are new resources released online today as part of NPS MedicineWise's educational program on '*Opioids, chronic pain and the bigger picture*'. The resources support pharmacists and nurses as well as GPs tapering opioids for patients with to reduce long term and potentially harmful use.

Around 6,300 GPs have been visited so far across the country as part of the NPS MedicineWise educational program, discussing the latest evidence and guidelines on opioid use in chronic non-cancer pain.

GPs were asked to respond to a post-visit survey on how the visit had affected their practice in relation to opioids. Of the 721 GPs who have responded to date:

- ▷ 42% said they will change their practice overall regarding the use of opioids for chronic non-cancer pain
- ▷ 18% will no longer prescribe opioids as a first step for chronic non-cancer pain
- ▷ 52% will start developing and implementing a clear plan with patients when starting an opioid trial
- ▷ 38% will start assessing the harms and benefits of opioids to identify patients who will benefit from tapering opioids.

"The opioid tapering resources are important for pharmacists, nurses, GPs and other prescribers to support patients while they taper their opioid use," said Ms Rawa Osman, pharmacist and clinical lead for the NPS MedicineWise opioids program.

"Every day in Australia there are 3 deaths and 150 hospitalisations due to pharmaceutical opioids, and reducing unnecessary prescription opioid use is an important part of solving this complex problem."

The new algorithm and news article about tapering opioids suggest health professionals take a 5 step approach: explore the patient's expectations, review the pain management plan, develop a tapering plan, discuss and manage withdrawal symptoms and, if in doubt, seek support.

To access the complete suite of resources for the current program '*Opioids, chronic pain and the bigger picture*', go to www.nps.org.au/professionals/opioids-chronic-pain#resources

To book an educational visit on the opioids program, visit nps.org.au or email bookavisit@nps.org.au.

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Spokespeople are available for media interviews.

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