



MEDIA RELEASE

NOVEMBER 2024

National Medicines Symposium 2024

Ageing well: safe medicines, better lives

As Australia's population continues to age, the need for more appropriate and safer medicine use is critical. The [National Medicines Symposium 2024](#), hosted by the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality, will address this issue under the theme 'Appropriate Use of Medicines in an Ageing Population.'

This free virtual event on Tuesday, 19 November 2024, will bring together healthcare professionals, researchers and policymakers to discuss approaches to medicine management for Australians as they age.

More than 15 expert speakers will explore how to reduce the risks associated with polypharmacy, improve communication between healthcare providers, and empower patients to make informed decisions about their medicines.

With almost 40% of Australians aged over 75 and 95% of Australian aged care residents on five or more medicines*, the risks of adverse drug interactions, side effects and medication errors are high.

Associate Professor Liz Marles, Clinical Director for the Commission and a general practitioner, said we need to rethink how we prescribe and manage medicines to prevent harm and improve quality of life.

"Imagine taking five or more medicines every day – this is the reality for many older Australians. It is important to consider the appropriateness of and possible interactions between medicines to reduce the risks and improve patient outcomes."

One of the key topics at the Symposium will be deprescribing – the process of stopping medications that may no longer be necessary or could be harmful. As healthcare professionals are increasingly aware, deprescribing can reduce the complexity of treatment regimens and minimise the potential for harmful drug interactions.

Professor Jennifer Martin, Physician, Clinical Pharmacologist and President of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians, explains why the practice of deprescribing is crucial.

"Many older Australians are on medicines they no longer need, sometimes for decades. Deprescribing

* Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care, [Atlas 2021 - Fourth Australian Atlas of Healthcare Variation](#)

isn't just about reducing pills – it's about carefully assessing the risks versus benefits of each medication and improving the patient's quality of life by simplifying treatment based on evidence.”

Professor Martin's session will offer insights into the physiological changes associated with ageing and share practical tools and strategies for healthcare providers to reassess their patients' medications and deprescribe safely.

At the heart of effective medication management is person-centred care. As Associate Professor Marles notes, “Person-centred prescribing is essential. It allows us to manage the care of people with multiple health conditions while minimising the risk of harm caused by unnecessary medicines. Just because you were prescribed a treatment at age 60 doesn't mean it is still the best option at 80.”

This approach prioritises the individual's values and health goals, ensuring that prescribing practices not only address medical needs but also align with what matters most to the patient.

In addition to deprescribing, the Symposium will explore digital tools that support medication management, giving healthcare providers and patients access to vital information for safer, informed decision-making.

The Hon. Mark Butler MP, Minister for Health and Aged Care, will open the Symposium, providing an address that underscores the government's commitment and actions on better medication management for Australia's ageing population.

Other speakers include:

- Professor Libby Roughead, Director of Quality Use of Medicines and Pharmacy Research Centre, University of South Australia
- Dr Lisa Kouladjian O'Donnell Lecturer, School of Pharmacy, Faculty of Medicine and Health, The University of Sydney and Deputy Chair, Australian Deprescribing Network
- Professor Melissa Baysari, Professor Health Research, The University of Sydney
- Ms Alice Nugent, Pharmacist Advisor, National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations

Register now

Don't miss this unique opportunity to engage with Australia's leading medicine safety and prescribing experts. Register now for the National Medicines Symposium and gain valuable insights and actionable strategies to enhance your practice.

To register and download the full program visit safetyandquality.tv/NMS24

- Tuesday, 19 November 2024
- 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM AEDT
- Free virtual event

More information

safetyandquality.gov.au/nms

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About the Commission

The Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care is an Australian Government agency that leads and coordinates national improvements in the safety and quality of health care based on the best available evidence. By working in partnership with patients, carers, clinicians, the Australian, state and territory health systems, the private sector, managers and healthcare organisations, the Commission aims to ensure that the health system is better informed, supported and organised to deliver safe and high-quality care. www.safetyandquality.gov.au