

15 September 2022

Australian Government
Department of Health and Aged Care
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Re: Aged Care on-site pharmacists consultation

GSK Australia supports the Australian Government's implementation of a new measure to embed pharmacists in residential aged care homes to improve medication management and safety. We call on the Government to expand this role beyond medicine management to include the delivery of National Immunisation Program and private market vaccinations.

Pharmacists have a critical and trusted role in Australia's health system. We applaud the Government for recognising the value of on-site pharmacy services within aged care settings and acting to draw upon pharmacists' expertise to benefit senior Australians living in aged care.

To maximise the potential of this new program and its benefits to senior Australians, the pharmacist's scope of practice must be utilised. Expanding 'Theme 1: Developing and defining the role of the on-site pharmacists' scope of practice' from medicine review and management to include disease and illness prevention in the form of vaccinations will improve health outcomes. As a result, pressure will be reduced on the aged care and health system.

Currently, pharmacist scope of practice with regard to vaccination varies between state and territories. The Australian Government will have a key role in driving harmonisation nationally to ensure the program is made full use of.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the vulnerability of senior Australians in aged care and demonstrated importance of access to immunisation. It is well recognised senior Australians in aged care are overrepresented in COVID-19 case and mortality statistics.¹

We can take the lessons of the pandemic experience and apply them to protect our communities most vulnerable to disease and illness.

Pharmacists are qualified, experienced and trusted to administer vaccines. For example, almost 9 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines were accessed by Australians within the pharmacy setting².

¹ COVID-19 outbreaks in Australian residential aged care facilities – 9 September 2022 (Accessed September 2022).

² Australian Government Operation COVID Shield, COVID 19 Vaccine Roll-out report (Accessed September 2022).

GSK supports the addition of vaccination to the proposed key responsibilities of on-site pharmacists strengthening the health eco-system to support Australians in aged care. This includes pharmacists providing day-to-day monitoring of medications and resolving medication issues with local general practitioners (GPs), nursing, care staff and the community pharmacy. A coordinated approach will ensure better quality and improved use of medicines.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide GSK Australia's view. For more information or if I can assist further contact myself at peta.d.james@gsk.com or 0422 907 935.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Peta James". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Peta James
Head Government Affairs and Policy
GSK Australia

About GSK

GSK is a global biopharma company with the ambition and purpose to unite science, technology and talent to get ahead of disease together. We aim to impact the health of 2.5 billion people over the next 10 years. At the centre of this is our research and development focus on the science of the immune system, human genetics and advanced technologies, strengthened by our world-leading capabilities in vaccine and medicines development.

In Australia, we offer a broad portfolio of innovative and established vaccines and medicines in respiratory disease, HIV and oncology. Our asthma medicines, for example, have been helping Australians to breathe easier for over 50 years.

Our vaccines have been at the heart of the Australian National Immunisation Program from the time it began, helping to protect infants and children from multiple serious diseases. Beyond childhood, our vaccines help to protect Australians throughout life whether at home or travelling overseas.

Across the country, we employ approximately 500 Australians in many areas of expertise from graduates to senior managers.

For more information visit au.gsk.com.