Guide to the Pharmacological Management of End of Life (Terminal) Symptoms in Residential Aged Care Residents

Focus
This guide was developed specifically for use by residential aged care facility (RACF) clinical staff when planning and delivering end of life (terminal) care.¹

Key Features
This guide includes:

- An overview of:
  - Key principles guiding quality pharmacological management of end of life (terminal) symptoms.
  - RACF staff roles and responsibilities in optimal end of life (terminal) symptom management.
- A consensus-based list of medications, endorsed by The Australian and New Zealand Society of Palliative Medicine (ANZSPM), suitable for use in residential aged care for the management of terminal symptoms.
- A table summarising the uses, doses and routes of administration of the medications endorsed by ANZSPM.
- Flowcharts summarising the pharmacological management of four end of life symptoms within a quality use of medicine framework. The four symptoms are:
  - Nausea and vomiting
  - Pain
  - Respiratory distress
  - Restlessness and agitation

Suggestions for Use in Staff Education and Training²

1. The symptom management flowcharts and ANZSPM-endorsed list of end of life medications can be used as the basis for education and training sessions for RACF clinical staff.

2. The principles for quality medication management set out in this guide can be used to develop:
   - Key learning objectives for education and training activities.
   - Impact and outcome evaluation measures following education and training activities.

¹ Within the context of the PA Toolkit, ‘end of life (terminal) care’ refers to care provided in the final days or weeks of a resident’s life.

² Refer to the PA Toolkit Training Support Guide for detailed information about how to develop a staff education and training strategy to support the implementation of a facility-wide palliative approach to care in residential aged care settings.