

# SA Palliative Care Community Pharmacy Update

A joint initiative of South Australian Palliative Care Services

Following [Part 1](#), this case study demonstrates cultural considerations when caring for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients in a community pharmacy setting.

## Building rapport

David is a 74yr old Aboriginal male who was recently diagnosed with metastatic colorectal cancer. He is a new customer to the pharmacy, and when asked about his medication history he is slightly reluctant to answer and is avoiding eye contact.

*Power imbalances often occur in healthcare settings, which may make Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples reluctant to share information – particularly with non-indigenous healthcare professionals. Building rapport and trust can be done by introducing yourself, sharing something personal and asking about David's life rather than immediately asking about his medications. Avoiding eye contact is often a respectful act in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and it would be respectful to follow David's lead and do the same.*

## Men's business and women's business

Several days later David enters the pharmacy wanting something for his pain. However, David is reluctant to share the source or location of his pain with the female pharmacy assistant serving him.

*There are strong gender roles in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and David may not be comfortable talking to a female about 'men's business'. A male staff member may make David feel more comfortable talking about the location of his pain.*

## Death and sorry business

Several months later David and his son James enter the pharmacy. James discloses that David is rapidly deteriorating and that it's his wish to pass away 'on country'.

A pharmacist could help to facilitate this process by:

- > Organising a greater supply of David's medication
- > Organising a [caring@home](#) palliative care package to support David's family caring for him Family titles like 'brother' may be used for all males of the same generation.
- > Organising alternative supply/storage arrangements if there is difficulty storing medications appropriately (e.g. returning to a remote community without easy access to refrigeration for insulin storage)

Several weeks later James enters the pharmacy and mentions that David has 'passed away' peacefully on country.

*When offering condolences, it's important to clarify with James how you should refer to his father – mentioning the deceased by name isn't always appropriate in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture. When referring to death it's more appropriate to use terms like 'passed away' or 'passed on' as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities avoid use direct statements about death and dying.*

## Useful Resources

- > [Gwandalan palliative care](#)
- > [Deadly Pharmacists \(free module hosted by PSA\)](#)

With thanks to Dilaan Selva-Nayagam for contributing

## For more information

Contact the Advanced Practice Pharmacists:

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This update is intended to provide practical up to date and factual information relating to pharmacy and medicines management in the setting of Palliative Care and is based on critical review of available evidence. Individual patient circumstances must be considered when applying this information. Please feel free to distribute this update further to interested colleagues.