

SA Palliative Care Community Pharmacy Update

A joint initiative of South Australian Palliative Care Services

Palliative Care Services offer a broad range of support which aims to provide a seamless patient journey with smooth and timely transitions from one service to another, and where possible, for patients to die in their place of choice.

Donald

Donald is a 66 years old man with multi-system atrophy (a rare and progressive neurodegenerative disorder) and lives at home alone. This disease significantly impacts on his mobility and ability to perform his usual activities of daily living. He also has atrial fibrillation (on anticoagulants), severe chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (symptomatic dyspnoea) and osteoarthritis affecting his shoulder. Despite these conditions, he remained fiercely independent and would like to remain in his own home as long as possible.

A multidisciplinary support

To support Donald's wishes to remain at home, he was referred to the community Palliative Care Services. Services offered:

- > **Case manager** – usually a community palliative nurse, will perform all initial assessments and screenings to identify Donald's needs, referral to the relevant discipline and ongoing liaison with the multidisciplinary team.
- > **Physiotherapist** – to help maximise physical function, comfort and quality of life. Comprehensive assessment conducted to better manage mobility and functional issues. Physiotherapy can also help control symptoms such as breathlessness, pain and fatigue.
- > **Occupational therapist** – to assist Donald in maintaining his independence at home by providing equipment assessment and recommendations for adapting the home environment to accommodate new ways of doing things e.g. iPad for communication (Donald

sometimes struggles with his speech) and modified functional equipment e.g. utensils to assist eating, general household aids and dressing aids (Donald has tremors and poor mobility).

- > **Pharmacist** – to help maximise quality use of medicines by performing medication reviews and provide patient education to assist with medication compliance.
- > **Social worker** – provides emotional (counselling/advice to Donald and family/carers) and practical supports including assistance with documents (e.g. advance care directives, will etc.) and finances.
- > **Medical officer and/or Nurse Practitioner** – provides medical review and support where required during changes in the palliative care phases. This can be in the form of a home visit if Donald is unable to attend the outpatient clinics.

Other services available but not required by Donald at this time include volunteer support and bereavement support - these services can be extended to carers and family members if required.

For more information

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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.

