

MEDIA RELEASE

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Pilot study highlights value of integration in primary care

An innovative pilot study embedding pharmacists into general practice has demonstrated the valuable impact of integrated primary care in western Sydney.

WentWest, the Western Sydney Primary Health Network, in partnership with a research team from the Graduate School of Health, University of Technology Sydney introduced the pilot in 2016, collaborating with Blacktown, Hills District and Mount Druitt General Practice Associations to integrate non-dispensing pharmacists into general practice. The aim of the study was to improve the prescription of medicines, reduce adverse drug events and provide pharmaceutical expertise to patient care, ultimately contributing to a more coordinated and effective model of care in keeping with [Patient Centred Medical Homes principles](#) of which [team-based care](#) is a key building block ([source: Bodenheimer Model](#)).

Six pharmacists conducted 493 consultations across 16 general practice sites within a six month period. Patients were selected for various reasons, examples include, polypharmacy (>30%), diabetes management (20%) and asthma and COPD management (>8%). The patient cohort represented was taking an average of 9.2 ± 4.3 medications and had an average of 5.5 ± 2.7 medical conditions. 90% of patients seen by pharmacists had at least one drug-related problem. 71% of the 984 pharmacist recommendations were actioned by the GPs.

The GPs reported that the integration of a pharmacist was welcomed as a positive addition to the general practice team, leading to enhanced inter-professional collaboration and improved patient care. Pharmacists acted as educators for both the patient and prescribers. There were 100 per cent acceptance of pharmacist recommendations relating to patient education and lifestyle.

Professor Shalom Benrimoj, Head of the Graduate School of Health UTS states that, "Overall the results indicated that there is an established patient need for optimising pharmacotherapy and that pharmacists are effective in making appropriate recommendations to resolve drug-related problems once they have been detected."

Walter Kmet, WentWest CEO, said "The pharmacist in general practice project demonstrates the benefits of a collaborative, team-based approach to care and provides evidence to support the ongoing implementation of intervention within general practice. Pharmacists have a valuable role to play in reducing and resolving drug-related problems, improving chronic disease state management and supporting the general practice team."

“The results of the study, further support the embedment of Patient Centred Medical Homes (PCMH) principles within general practice, as health professionals seek to work in a team-based environment to provide coordinated and integrated care to their patients. We are delighted to see the results of the study illustrate the value of the PCMH approach and what this brings to patients, providers and the broader health system,” said Mr Kmet.

The full evaluation report is now available on the WentWest [website](#).

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