

MEDIA RELEASE

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Real time monitoring: there may be pain in the detail

Painaustralia welcomes plans for national real-time monitoring of prescription drugs, but warns the system must support patients with untreated chronic pain.

Minister for Health Greg Hunt's announcement of a \$16-million plan for a national real-time monitoring system for prescription drugs is a welcome move, but more must be done to support people with chronic pain who are often unable to get the right treatment.

Carol Bennett, CEO of Painaustralia said: **“Putting an end to doctor-shopping for people addicted to prescription medication will save lives, but it is important the new system also helps people with legitimate need to access best-practice pain management.”**

One in five Australians live with chronic pain and this prevalence increases to as many as one in three older Australians and up to 80% of aged care residents. One in five GP consultations involve a patient with chronic pain and in about a quarter of these cases at least one opioid is prescribed.

Currently in Australia people with chronic pain are still being forced to wait as long as a year for treatment in a public multidisciplinary clinic, while many cannot afford the number of allied health treatments required to manage their pain effectively without over-reliance on painkillers.

Ms Bennett said: **“Australia needs a real-time monitoring system to avoid doctor shopping and curb the rise in overdoses, however, fixing the problem of over-use of prescription painkillers where there is an underlying issue of chronic pain requires other steps including:**

- **an alert system to identify patients who have chronic pain and are at risk of addiction**
- **ensuring our health workforce is skilled in best-practice assessment and treatment of pain**
- **better access to public pain services, particularly for people in regional Australia**
- **clear pathways for referral to both addiction specialists and programs as well as best-practice chronic pain support, utilising primary health care as much as possible**
- **an overhaul of our Medicare and private health insurance systems to make ongoing allied health support affordable for people.”**

Although chronic pain is difficult to treat and may be lifelong, evidence shows that multidisciplinary pain management is the most effective approach for minimising the impact of pain, improving function and quality of life, and avoiding or minimising reliance on painkillers.

More information:

Australia has a plan for delivery of best-practice pain management Australia-wide, called the National Pain Strategy. Find out more here:

<http://www.painaustralia.org.au/improving-policy/national-pain-strategy>

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