

Community pharmacists

Towards the end of life, home-based patients may lose the ability to swallow and therefore need subcutaneous medicines for symptom control. Their carers need to know how to manage those medicines.

Resources produced by *caring@home* assist community pharmacists to support carers who are caring for a person requiring palliative care at home.

The free resources, targeted to health care professionals, community service providers and carers, aim to support carers to help safely manage breakthrough symptoms that require subcutaneous medicines.

The resources are applicable in all jurisdictions across Australia.

Why teach carers to manage subcutaneous medicines?

One of the most frequent reasons that community-based palliative patients are transferred to inpatient units in the last weeks of life is because their symptoms cannot be adequately controlled at home. [1]

Research confirms that with standardised support from health care professionals and adequate information and resources, carers can be taught the skills to help manage breakthrough symptoms safely for the person for whom they are caring. [2,3]

Importantly, this can improve outcomes for patients and carers report feeling a great deal of satisfaction from contributing to symptom control, impacting positively on their bereavement. [4]

Resources to support community pharmacists

Pharmacists play an important role supporting carers who are looking after home-based patients near the end of life. This can be through stocking medicines required by the patient and providing advice, within their scope of practice, to carers about subcutaneous medicines.

Resources to support community pharmacists in this role include:

- A consensus-based list of medicines suitable for use in the community for the management of terminal symptoms developed by the Australian and New Zealand Society of Palliative Medicine (ANZSPM)
- palliMEDS – an app based on the ANZSPM list of medicines and developed by NSP MedicineWise for *caring@home*.

caring@home aims to improve the quality of palliative care service delivery across Australia.

The national project has developed standardised and free resources that support people to be cared for and to die at home, if that is their choice.



“The *caring@home* resources are an outstanding example of how carers, with support from health care professionals and community pharmacists can be empowered to manage breakthrough symptoms, through the administration of subcutaneous medications.”

A palliative care pharmacist

For more information:

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caring@home resources

Community service providers	<i>Guidelines for the handling of palliative care medicines in community services</i>	These guidelines, developed by NPS MedicineWise for <i>caring@home</i> , can be used by community service providers to inform the development of detailed protocols and procedures tailored to the requirements of individual services.
	Example policy and procedures: <i>Supporting carers to help manage breakthrough symptoms safely using subcutaneous medicines in the home</i>	This document may be used by community service providers to develop and/or review relevant documentation within their own organisation's policy and procedure framework.
Health care professionals	Online education modules	The online education modules educate nurses to train carers to manage breakthrough symptoms safely using subcutaneous medicines.
	Palliative care symptom management medicines for Australians living in the community	A consensus-based list of medicines suitable for use in the community for the management of terminal symptoms, developed by ANZSPM.
	palliMEDS	This free app, based on the ANZSPM medicine list, and developed by NPS MedicineWise familiarises primary care prescribers and community pharmacists with eight palliative care medicines used for management of terminal symptoms.
Carers	A practical handbook for carers: <i>Helping to manage breakthrough symptoms safely using subcutaneous medicines</i>	The handbook provides written and pictorial material with all the information a carer needs to help manage breakthrough symptoms safely using subcutaneous medicines.
	Writing a label, opening an ampoule and drawing up medicine: <i>A step-by-step guide</i>	This illustrated guide explains how to label a syringe correctly, open an ampoule and draw up medicine using a step-by-step approach.
	Giving medicine using a subcutaneous cannula: <i>A step-by-step guide</i>	This illustrated guide explains how to give medicine through a subcutaneous cannula using a step-by-step approach.
	Medicines diary	The medicines diary is for carers to record all the subcutaneous medicines that are given.
	Colour-coded labelling system	The colour-coded labelling system acts as a safety check to ensure the correct medicine is given for each breakthrough symptom. It includes sticky labels for syringes and the Symptoms and medicines: <i>Colour-coded fridge chart</i> .
	A practice demonstration kit	The demonstration kit is used to practise giving medicines through a subcutaneous cannula.
	Short training videos	The videos show how to do each step when giving subcutaneous medicine.
	Translated resources	Select carer resources are available online in the following languages: Arabic, Greek, Italian, Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, Tagalog and Vietnamese.

- Rosenberg JP, Bullen T, Maher K. Supporting family caregivers with palliative symptom management: A qualitative analysis of the provision of an emergency medication kit in the home setting. *Am J Hosp Palliat Care*. 2015; 32(5): 484-9.
- Healy S, Israel F, Charles M, Reymond L. Laycarers can confidently prepare and administer subcutaneous injections for palliative care patients at home: A randomized controlled trial. *Palliat Med*. 2018; 32(7):1-8.
- National Institute for Health Research, Journals Library. CARer-Administration of as-needed sub-cutaneous medication for breakthrough symptoms in home-based dying patients: a UK study (CARiAD). Available from: <https://www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk/programmes/hta/151037/#/> [Accessed 6 February 2017].
- Healy S, Israel F, Charles MA, Reymond L. An educational package that supports laycarers to safely manage breakthrough subcutaneous injections for home-based palliative care patients: development and evaluation of a service quality improvement. *Palliat Med*. 2013; 27(6): 562-570.