

RELEASE STATEMENT

Resources for improving palliative services to home-based patients released today

29 October 2018 - Most Australian palliative care patients prefer to be cared for at home and the majority want to die at home, though less than 10 per cent achieve that wish, according to a 2017 report by the Australian Productivity Commission.

caring@home – a national project led by Brisbane South Palliative Care Collaborative, Metro South Health and funded by the Australian Government - aims to improve the quality of palliative care service delivery across Australia by providing resources that will support people to be cared for and to die at home, if that is their choice.

caring@home today released a range of best practice and consistent resources for community service providers, health care professionals and carers to support carers to help manage breakthrough symptoms safely in community-based palliative care patients using subcutaneous medicines.

Prof. Liz Reymond, Deputy Director, Metro South Palliative Care Service, Metro South Health and Project Director of *caring@home*, said that the resources are intended for health care professionals to support carers and palliative care patients living in the community.

“The *caring@home* package is designed to support nurses to teach carers to help manage breakthrough symptoms safely using subcutaneous medicines prescribed by the person’s doctor/nurse practitioner. If carers volunteer for this role, palliative patients can remain at home for longer,” said Prof. Reymond.

One of the most frequent reasons that palliative patients have to be transferred to inpatient units is because their symptoms cannot be adequately controlled at home.

“Apart from unwanted admissions and associated unnecessary healthcare costs, failure to achieve timely and effective control of symptoms has enormous consequences resulting in tremendous distress to patients, carers and community service providers alike,” Prof. Reymond said.

Dr. Greg Parker, Director, Metro South Palliative Care Service said research has shown that carers who are supported with education and resources, tailored to their needs, can confidently, safely and competently manage subcutaneous medicines to relieve breakthrough symptoms in home-based palliative care patients.

“The *caring@home* resources enable the primary care team to deliver this support to carers,” said Dr. Parker.

Carers have reported a great deal of satisfaction from contributing to their loved one’s symptom control and that it impacts positively on their bereavement. Conversely, they report feeling disempowered when unable to provide adequate symptom management.

In early 2019, parts of the carers' package will be available in Cantonese, Mandarin, Italian, Arabic and Greek for use by those communities.

The resources are applicable in all jurisdictions across Australia.

There are a limited number of *caring@home* packages available to services. Each service site can order up to six (6) packages from www.caringathomeproject.com.au. It is expected that each service site will keep one full package as a master copy so that the service can produce future packages as required. All package documents can be downloaded from the website and printed by the service.

caring@home is a three-year project being conducted by a consortium of Brisbane South Palliative Care Collaborative (lead agency), Metro South Health, Aged & Community Services Australia, Australian Primary Health Care Nurses Association, CareSearch, Leading Age Services Australia, NPS MedicineWise, Pharmaceutical Society of Australia, The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners and University of Technology Sydney .

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Further information:

caring@home resources include:

- State and Territory-specific *Guidelines for the handling of palliative care medicines in community services* developed by NPS MedicineWise
- Consensus-based list of medicines suitable for use in the community for managing terminal symptoms and endorsed by the Australian & New Zealand Society of Palliative Medicine
- Education resources for carers
- Online education modules for health care professionals
- palliMEDS - a smartphone app for prescribers
- Example policy and procedures that can be used by community service providers to develop and/or review relevant documentation within their own policies and procedures framework.