



strokefoundation

30 June 2014

Inquiry into Community Pharmacy
Secretary
Legal and Social Issues Legislation Committee
Parliament House
East Melbourne VIC 3002

By email: lsic@parliament.vic.gov.au

Dear Committee Secretary,

Re: Inquiry into Community Pharmacy: The role and Opportunities for community pharmacy in primary and preventative care in Victoria

I am pleased to provide this response to the above Inquiry on behalf of the National Stroke Foundation. For any queries on this submission please contact the Director, Advocacy Rebecca Smith on rsmith@strokefoundation.com.au or 0466 217 988.

This submission provides feedback on the role of pharmacies in making referrals to other health care professionals, the role of community pharmacies in rural and remote Victoria and other issues relevant to the role and opportunities for community pharmacies in primary and preventative care.

The role of pharmacies in making referrals to other health care professionals

The NSF advocates a prevention pathway model targeting people at increased risk of stroke that recognises the need for increasing awareness of risk amongst individuals, providing high quality, integrated assessment of risk of stroke, heart disease, diabetes and kidney disease as well as risk management using evidence based medication and lifestyle interventions. This model relies on the early detection of risk factors so that individuals at risk can be referred¹ to see their GP who will then manage their risk factors through medication and lifestyle modification. This approach is also endorsed by other members of the National Vascular Disease Prevention Alliance (Including the Heart Foundation, Diabetes Australia and Kidney Health Australia).

The NSF sees pharmacies as an important setting supporting this prevention pathway, in particular in raising individual awareness of individual risk and increasing the number of individuals who present to the GP for a full assessment. Pharmacies are able to conduct simple measures such as blood pressure measurement and the Australian Type 2 Diabetes Risk Assessment (AusDrisk) tool to help individuals understand if they may be at risk of

¹ The NSF understands the term 'referral' to be an informal recommendation rather than a formal introduction of a patient as used in the medical profession.

common and highly co-morbid chronic disease which may require further assessment by a GP.

The NSF has been working with pharmacies in Victoria, NSW and Queensland since it initiated the Know Your Numbers (KYN) Program in 2007. The KYN program is a community and pharmacy based health check program looking at the risk of heart disease, stroke and diabetes. An evidence-based intervention it has proven successful in enabling Australians at risk of chronic disease to better understand and take action to reduce their risk. To date, more than 270,000 people have participated in the program.

Free blood pressure and diabetes risk checks were carried out in 1,730 pharmacies, community health centres, hospitals and other locations during 2013 as part of the KYN program with almost 100,000 blood pressure checks and just over 45,000 checks that included blood pressure and AusDrisk.

Data collected from the program over time have found:

- For every 100,000 people checked at a pressure station, more than 18,000 will visit their GP.
- For every 100,000 people checked at a pressure station, between 57 and 191 strokes can be averted.
- Among those identified as 'high risk', 69% didn't know they were at risk of diabetes.

The National Vascular Disease Prevention Alliance has also been a strong supporter of community based health promotion initiatives such as the KYN program towards the early identification of high risk factors for cardiovascular disease, kidney disease and diabetes.

The NSF also sees a key role for community pharmacies in increasing uptake of the current Victorian Government-funded Life! Program. The Life! Program is for people at high risk of type 2 diabetes, heart disease and stroke and is managed by Diabetes Australia – Victoria. At present, the program is delivered through group-based courses or individual Life! telephone health coaching sessions. However, anecdotal evidence suggests the uptake of this program has not been high, despite significant investment. Community pharmacy provides a vehicle to increase the number of people who are aware that they are at risk of heart disease, stroke and diabetes, acting as an important entry point to the Life! program.

The role of community pharmacies in rural and remote Victoria

New data analysis on a report commissioned by the NSF has found that all of rural and remote Victoria, with the exception of the federal electorates of McMillan, Ballarat and McEwen, is in the top 25% of highest stroke incidence per 100,000 population and the top 25% for percentage of population with high blood pressure. This represents an enormous opportunity and need to raise the level of individual awareness of risk factors for stroke in rural and remote Victoria.

There are many issues faced by stroke survivors in rural and remote areas across Australia. These are commonly issues relating to transport, access and availability of specialist stroke facilities. It is therefore of increasing importance to detect the prevalence of any risk factors for stroke so that preventative action can be taken at the earliest opportunity. Given the accessibility of community pharmacies in rural and remote Victoria, the NSF supports their role in providing appropriate activities such as a simple health check including blood pressure checks and the AusDrisk assessment tool. Community pharmacies play an important role in being a first point of contact for people unsure of their health risks.

any other issues relevant to the role and opportunities for community pharmacies in primary and preventative care.

The NSF supports the role of community pharmacies in addressing high rates of stroke, heart disease and diabetes in the community.

Community pharmacy plays an important role in the home medicines review program. The Home Medicines Review (HMR) program aims to enhance the quality use of medicines and reduce adverse medicines events and is conducted by an accredited pharmacist in the patient's home. The Federal Government made a number of changes to the HMR in March, 2014 which will limit the number of services provided by pharmacists and pharmacies. This may have an adverse impact in the future, given that NSF audits show that despite nearly all people with stroke leave hospital with appropriate medication, many are off their medication when come back to hospital with another stroke².

The NSF also advocates the continued presence of community pharmacies in the Quality Use of Medicines objective under the National Medicines Policy.



Dr Erin Lalor
Chief Executive officer

² National Stroke Audit – Acute Services. Clinical Audit Report 2013.
http://strokefoundation.com.au/site/media/NSF687.ClinicalServicesAudit2013.Final_.pdf