Patient Medication Profiling Program
Questions and Answers

The Fourth Community Pharmacy Agreement (Fourth Agreement) provides funding of up to $33.6 million for a Patient Medication Profiling Program. This program is a new program funded under the Better Community Health Initiative of the Fourth Agreement.

The program is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing and will be managed by the Pharmacy Guild of Australia.

What is this program about?

The aim of the Patient Medication Profiling Program is to reduce the risk of medication-related adverse events by assisting people to understand and manage their medications, including prescription, over-the-counter and complementary medicines.

The provision of a medication profile to eligible patients is expected to improve their awareness of their medications (i.e., identifying them, understanding why they have been prescribed and when and how they should be taken). The medication profile will also give patients confidence in self-medication management, and support communication between the patient and other health professionals, especially on admittance to hospitals or aged care homes.

What will my role be?

Pharmacists participating in the program will be subsidised to provide patient medication profiles to a specified number of patients who would benefit from the provision of a profile.

What is a patient medication profile?

A patient medication profile is a comprehensive summary of all regular medications taken by a patient, including prescription, over-the-counter and complementary medicines. Current medication profiles may vary in format and the level and type of information provided.

What will the medication profile include?

It is expected that the medication profile provided under the program will include:

- medication brand name;
- list of alternative brand names;
- medication generic name;
- medication strength and form;
- dose and frequency;
- special directions or cautions;
- reason for use; and
- a coloured pictorial representation or product description for items not on the system (e.g., complementary medicines).
What medications are to be included on the profile?

Professional Standards and Guidelines will be developed to assist pharmacists to provide patient medication profiles. The medication profiles will include all:

- regular prescription medicines (including regular “when necessary” medications);
- regular over-the-counter medicines; and
- regular complementary medicines.

The success of the program relies on the patient having a current profile of their regular medicines. Changes to a patient’s medication regimen should prompt an update of the profile. However, the addition of short term courses of medications (eg antibiotics, cold and flu tablets) need not require profile updates. Pharmacists will receive training to assist them in making professional judgements, such as when an update to a profile is required.

When will the program start?

The program will be implemented in two stages. The first stage is expected to commence in April 2008. The outcome of this first stage will inform program arrangements for the second stage.

The second stage is expected to commence in July 2009.

How can my pharmacy participate?

The Patient Medication Profiling Program will be available to all community pharmacies.

To be eligible to access payments for the program, community pharmacies must register as a service provider. Information on how to register can be obtained from the Pharmacy Guild of Australia National Secretariat on 02 6270 1888 or visit www.guild.org.au.

A participating pharmacy must:

- have staff that are appropriately trained and pharmacists who have performed a mandatory self-assessment for history taking;
- have a separate room or screened area (distinct from the general public area of the pharmacy) that:
  - allows for confidential, sit down consultations between the pharmacist and patient; and
  - allows the pharmacist and patient to talk at normal speaking volumes without being overheard by other visitors or pharmacy staff;
- have a computer system and software able to provide colour medication profiles;
- agree to provide the medication profile service in accordance with professional service standards and protocols for the program;
- provide medication profiles to a minimum number of patients (yet to be determined) in line with program guidelines;
- perform mandatory self-audits in line with Professional Standards and Guidelines; and
- agree to collect and provide data to inform the program’s development and evaluation.

What support will I receive?

All participating pharmacies will be provided with a pharmacy readiness kit containing:

- an operating manual;
- advice on establishing the necessary infrastructure to support the provision of patient medication profiles within pharmacy;
- information on the program and advice that may assist pharmacists to identify patients who would benefit from a medication profile;
- details of any support networks;
- materials that promote the service to consumers and other health professionals; and
- relevant Professional Standards and Guidelines.
In addition, specific training will be provided to pharmacists to inform and assist in the taking of medication histories and to provide information about the service requirements of the program. The training will also ensure that participating pharmacists and their staff are aware of and understand the Professional Standards and Guidelines for this program.

What payments are made to participating pharmacies?

Participating pharmacies may be eligible to receive a subsidy of up to $4,200 for full participation during Phase 1. This funding will contribute to the costs associated with the provision of services under the program, and the collection and provision of data to assist in program evaluation.

Payments to pharmacies in the second stage of the program will be informed by evaluation of the first stage.

What patients are eligible for this service?

During the transition period, patients will be eligible to participate in the program if they have an identified need for a medication profile and:

- are not in an aged care home, correctional facility or hospital;
- have consented to receive a patient medication profile;
- have a valid Medicare or Department of Veterans’ Affairs (DVA) card.

Patients must have been a regular prescription customer at the pharmacy for at least the previous three months in order to generate a meaningful medication history. Some exceptions may apply and such circumstances will require the pharmacist’s professional judgement.

During the first stage, pharmacists will liaise with patients, carers and other health professionals and use their professional judgement to determine a patient’s need for a medication profile.

Program data gathered during this phase of the Program will inform the revision of the patient eligibility criteria for the second stage, to ensure the most appropriate patients are targeted for this service. Data will also be used for program evaluation.

Will patients be charged for the service?

During the first stage, pharmacies must charge patients a set fee of $5 per annum for each original profile provided.

As the success of the program relies on patients maintaining a current medication profile, pharmacies will be required to provide any updates for changes to regular medications free of charge for the remainder of the year.

Patients requesting an update to their medication profile from a different pharmacy (regardless of whether they have a copy of their current profile with them) must be charged a set fee of $5 for the service. This fee recognises that the new pharmacy will need to prepare a new profile.

Different service fee arrangements may apply for the second stage of the program.

Pharmacies will need to inform patients that the charge is imposed as a condition of participating in the pilot and not imposed by the Australian Government. Patient charges are not co-payments and therefore will not count towards the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) Safety Net.

A patient’s willingness to pay will be an important part of the program evaluation.

What about patient privacy?

Pharmacists will be expected to comply with current Pharmaceutical Society of Australia’s professional practice standards that require that the consumer’s right to privacy is to be observed at all times.

Pharmacies participating in the program will be randomly audited to ensure that these requirements are met.
Patient level data required for program evaluation will be de-identified and will only be collected from eligible patients giving their consent for this to occur.

**How do I obtain further information?**

The Pharmacy Guild of Australia is currently developing material to assist pharmacies prior to and during participation in this service, and will be providing regular communication to pharmacists during the implementation of the program. Information on how to register and training requirements will be provided when all details are finalised. All pharmacies are encouraged to read through the fact sheet and consider becoming involved in this new professional program when rolled out later in April 2008.

For further assistance, contact the Pharmacy Guild of Australia National Secretariat on 02 6270 1888 or visit [www.guild.org.au](http://www.guild.org.au).