

25 October 2017

Mr John Batten
President
Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS)
250-290 Spring Street
East Melbourne VIC 3002
Via email: college.sec@surgeons.org

Dear Mr Batten,

Re: Standardised opioid management plans on hospital discharge

We are writing to the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) to seek your support in improving discharge planning for patients on opioid therapy.

You are no doubt aware of the issues related to opioids in Australia and that opioid misuse and abuse can start in the hospital setting. Patients with genuine acute pain are being discharged without appropriate long-term opioid management plans. In addition, some patients with chronic pain have their opioids inappropriately increased during their inpatient stay.

The RACGP is set to release guidance for GPs on opioid therapy. One section of this guidance concerns clinical governance and the adoption of clinical handover standards in hospitals for patients with opioid therapy. The RACGP is asking the RACS and other medical bodies to consider intervention in this area. We suggest that hospital surgeons assist hospital pharmacists to implement a higher standard for medication discharge when patients are on opioid therapy.

Essentially, we believe that clinical handover should meet the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care's standards, and that a standardised opioid management plan should be provided. The management plan should entail a reason for prescribing, plans for tapering or cessation, and suitable warnings if high dose opioids (e.g. >100mg) are being prescribed.

General practitioners place a high value on hospital discharge summaries, particularly medication discharge summaries, and an intervention of this nature would be widely supported.

We believe this would be a positive contribution that the hospital sector could make to medication safety in Australia and we look forward to your response.



RACGP

Royal Australian College of General Practitioners

Healthy Profession.
Healthy Australia.

In the meantime, if you have any questions please contact Joanna Ong, Program Manager – Quality Care, on (03) 8699 0599 or at joanna.ong@racgp.org.au.

Yours sincerely

Dr Bastian Seidel
President

Dr Evan Ackermann
Chair, RACGP Expert Committee – Quality Care

CC:

President of the Royal Australian College of Physicians (RACP), Dr Catherine Yelland

Dean of the Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists (ANZCA) Faculty Pain Medicine Board (NSW), Dr Chris Hayes

Federal President, The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA), Professor Michael Dooley