

## BRIEF REPORT

# Advanced pharmacy practice: aligning national action with global targets

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### Abstract

Formalised advanced pharmacy practice is needed now more than ever for pharmacists to be able to competently manage increasingly complex patient services and demanding healthcare needs. Principally spearheaded by the International Pharmaceutical Federation, global efforts are guiding the development of foundation and advanced frameworks and facilitating their implementation. Australian action on practitioner development is largely aligned with international goals, but challenges remain in the face of establishing a sustainable national formal credentialing pathway. This paper reports on the latest global and local developments and discusses the opportunities available to continue to advance this agenda in line with global targets.

**Keywords:** pharmacy practice, advanced practice, practitioner development, international liaison, credentialing.

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### BACKGROUND

Defined advancement of pharmacy practice is a global imperative in order to meet and fulfil the increasingly complex needs of patients in the changing healthcare landscape. These changes require pharmacists to provide more complex services and to take on clinically oriented roles that are more advanced, extended and specialised than current entry level practice scopes. In addition to direct patient care, these extended roles are associated with leading and educating the wider pharmacy workforce, as well as undertaking research and evidence-based interventions in medicine management.<sup>1</sup>

In 2015, the International Pharmaceutical Federation Education (FIPEd) published a global report on advanced and specialised practice.<sup>2</sup> It is the first

publication of its kind to examine the needs for professional recognition of advanced pharmacy practice worldwide. For the workforce to be able to competently cater for complex health needs, the report states that 'pharmacists will need clear professional developmental pathways from foundation practice to established practice which is more advanced, and to have the opportunity to be formally recognised along the continuum of practitioner development'. The report also emphasises the benefits of recognising advanced-level pharmacists which includes improved patient safety and better health outcomes through the effective management of complex cases in expert practice areas.

Many aspects of the report are highly consistent with Australian thinking on practitioner development, and there is a significant level of resonance with outputs from the Pharmacy Practitioner Development Committee (PPDC, formerly known as the Advanced Pharmacy Practice Steering Committee) such as the Advanced Pharmacy Practice Framework (APPF).<sup>3</sup> In

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the 12 months since the release of the FIP report<sup>2</sup> there has been substantial global and local activity relating to advanced practice, and it is timely to reflect on the role of The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) in the progression of this agenda, across the spectrum of foundation through advanced practice.

## FOUNDATION PRACTICE

It is widely recognised that pharmacists are required to demonstrate appropriate levels of foundation practice before acquiring the competencies and capabilities needed to be considered specialised or advanced practitioners.<sup>2</sup> There are two principal reasons for this: first, early career specialisation is now generally considered a poor strategy (for all healthcare professionals) which undermines workforce flexibility. Second, urgent health system needs are focused on community care, and clinically managing an increasing proportion of complex patients across a spectrum of comorbidities.<sup>4</sup>

In their 2013 report to the UK's Royal Pharmaceutical Society (RPS), 'Professional Recognition and Professional Advancement', the Joint Partners Credentialing Task group identified that the ability of healthcare professionals to enhance patients' quality of life and therapeutic outcomes, and to advance scientific and public health imperatives, depends on a solid foundation of capability and competency built during initial education and experiential training.<sup>5</sup> The necessity for pharmacists to be supported by programs targeting foundation in addition to advanced and speciality practice has also been highlighted by the recent launch and publication of the FIP Workforce Development Goals (WDGs).<sup>6</sup> The WDGs are a proactive, and shared, response to the need to develop a flexible and competent global workforce that will meet the needs of patients in complex healthcare systems. The WDGs provide a framework for global and national action planning for pharmacy workforce development. Two of the WDGs are particularly pertinent to this discussion: WDG 2: 'Foundation training and early career development', and WDG 4: 'Advanced and specialist expert development'.

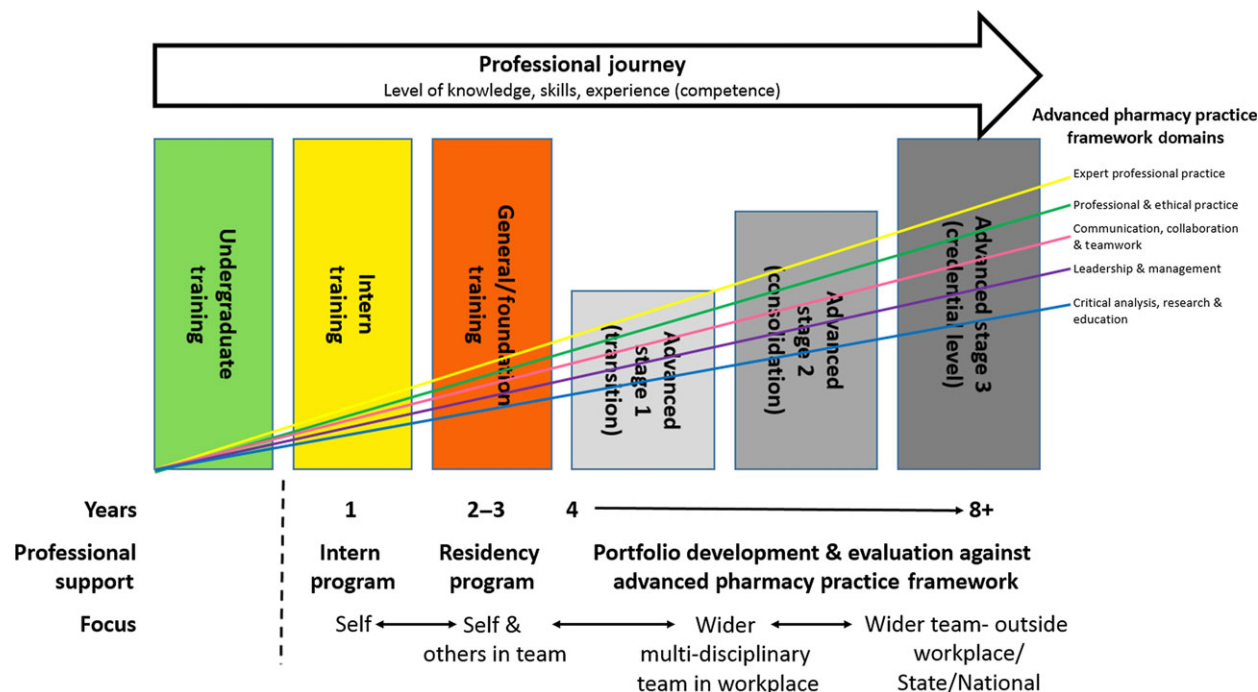
The adaptation of the United Kingdom's General Level Competency Framework<sup>7</sup> (later to become the RPS Foundation Practice Framework) in Australia facilitated a needs-based learning response to practitioner development, and was shown to improve and support clinical performance of pharmacists.<sup>8</sup> This led to SHPA implementing a national tool, the Clinical Competency Assessment Tool (clinCAT) to guide the development of consistent general level or foundation practice.<sup>9,10</sup> SHPA

has significantly advanced the national agenda for foundation training, with the forthcoming introduction (in 2017) of a structured, formalised and accredited 2-year residency program for pharmacists; the program aims to produce competent general level pharmacists who are prepared to progress along the advanced practice continuum. The APPF has been adopted as the Competency Framework for SHPA Residency Programs with the expectation that residents will demonstrate performance at the transition level in all domains by the completion of the program. The clinCAT will be utilised to provide feedback to residents on their clinical practice, and their wider impact and experience will be mapped against the competencies in the five APPF domains and documented in a personal portfolio (Figure 1).

## ADVANCING PRACTICE

The clinical decision-making and patient care abilities of advanced pharmacy practitioners are recognised to be at significantly higher levels than those of entry-level pharmacists.<sup>2</sup> To further support advanced practitioners in delivering optimal patient care, there is a need for formal recognition of advanced practice and for competency development frameworks that support the progression of advanced and speciality pharmacists. Evaluation of competency development frameworks in pharmacy education has recommended developing a formal structure to offer support of post-registration pharmacists through mentoring and supervision.<sup>4,11</sup> This has been reinforced by FIP's WDG 4: 'Advanced and specialist expert development', which maintains that countries/territories and member organisations should have 'education and training infrastructures in place for the recognised advancement of the pharmacy workforce as a basis for enhancing patient care and health system deliverables' (Table 1).<sup>6</sup>

In the period 2010 to 2016 the Australian pharmacy profession made great progress in the development and implementation of a practitioner development pathway. This included a survey to gauge the perspective of the Australian pharmacy profession with respect to advanced practice recognition, the results of which demonstrated a clear preference for assessment by submission of a professional portfolio and the desire for a credential to recognise advanced practice.<sup>12</sup> The APPF was published in October 2012, and the Australian Pharmacy Council (APC) was endorsed in December 2013 as the independent entity being responsible for the credentialing of advanced practitioners in Australia. In 2014, APC began a credentialing of advanced practice pharmacists' pilot program, to evaluate the assessment



**Figure 1** The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) practitioner development pathway linking foundation practice (WDG 2) and advanced practice (WDG 4). It demonstrates the enhancement of performance across all five Advanced Pharmacy Practice Framework domains as practitioners develop in breadth and depth of experience and skills, including communication, collaboration, teamwork, leadership, management, critical evaluation, research and provision of education through professional development.

Workforce Development Goal 4—description	Rationale, drivers and potential indicators
Countries/territories and member organisations should have education and training infrastructures in place for the recognised advancement of the pharmacy workforce as a basis for enhancing patient care and health system deliverables.	Need for a common and shared understanding of what is meant by ‘specialisation’ and ‘advanced practice’ in context of scope of practice. Enhance competency and capability of an advanced and expert pharmacist (including specialisations extending into industry and administration settings) for greater optimisation of complex pharmaceutical patient care. Systematic use of professional recognition programmes/systems as markers for advancement and specialisation.

processes prior to full implementation of the program. Fifty-three pharmacists were selected to participate in the pilot from 138 expressions of interest. This ensured diversity by reflecting all areas of pharmacy practice. Forty-three practice portfolios were subsequently submitted for evaluation. SHPA acted as a Readiness Support Organisation (RSO) providing support to members in the development of their portfolios for submission. Fourteen participants were evaluated at Advanced-Stage 2; one portfolio was unable to be evaluated; and 28 participants were evaluated at the credential level (Advanced-Stage 3) and are entitled to use the post-nominal *Adv. Prac. Pharm.* (Advanced Practice Pharmacist).

The rationale, drivers and potential indicators for WDG 4 (see Table 1) provide guidance for progress toward meeting the goal. Through the PPDC, which includes representation from all national pharmacy organisations, and through additional work completed by SHPA (Figure 1), these indicators have been largely met in the Australian setting.

### CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

After the successful conduct of the 2015 pilot by the APC, a formal program of advanced practice credentialing

commenced in March 2016. Based on the recommendations of the pilot, the APC implemented a National Credentialing of Advanced Practice Pharmacists program which incorporated an important role for RSOs and encouraged submission of portfolios for assessment at all three stages of the APPF. Unfortunately, a lack of marketing and promotion within and outside of the pharmacy profession of the long-term benefits and impact of recognised advanced practitioners has seen a poor uptake by the profession for an ongoing program of advanced practice recognition and credentialing. This is despite a high proportion of respondents to the survey indicating they considered they were working at, or working toward achieving, an advanced level of practice.<sup>12</sup>

Due to sustainability issues with the model, the credentialing program ended in October 2016.<sup>13</sup> The APPF remains an important framework to describe advanced practice in Australia and is being integrated into the national competency standards for the profession, rather than as a stand-alone advanced practice framework, to truly reflect the continuum of practitioner development. The profession now needs to review the means by which to recognise advancement at all stages, including the credential level.

One of the greatest challenges in encouraging pharmacists to seek recognition of more advanced pharmacy practice is that tangible benefits are not yet perceived by the majority of the profession.<sup>2</sup> In Australia, these challenges include a lack of external drivers for pharmacists to pursue formal recognition of more advanced practice, such as links to career progression, remuneration and employer expectations. Clinical Service Capability frameworks for some Australian state and territory health services are now mandating breadth and depth of pharmacy services required.<sup>14</sup> However, unlike our medical colleagues, the criteria for recognition of hospitals as formal training program sites for pharmacy interns and residents are yet to stipulate the requirement for recognised advanced practitioners as leaders, managers, educators and evaluators; but this would appear a logical next step in the formalisation of pharmacist practitioner and workforce development.

SHPA and the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia have affirmed their commitment to developing advanced practice and progressing professional recognition.<sup>15,16</sup> SHPA is currently working in consultation with the pharmacy profession to continue the development and recognition of advanced practice, to maintain an evidence-based, collaborative approach to formalised evaluation, feedback and recognition of practitioners against the APPF. Formal recognition of advanced practice is a high priority for SHPA because it builds on

SHPA's residency program and other ongoing workforce transformation projects.

## CONCLUSION

As a profession we have a new and exciting opportunity to develop and implement a sustainable recognition pathway for advanced practice. The successful uptake of the FIP WDGs and the development of effective foundation and advanced practice programs rely on collective support from all professional pharmacy leadership bodies and the use of professional development frameworks to guide pharmacists along their professional journeys. The WDGs reinforce the importance of ensuring competency and capability of foundation, advanced and expert pharmacists in all pharmacy sectors for greater optimisation of complex pharmaceutical patient care.

## Competing interests

None declared.

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