

Media Release

Building GP skills to tackle “doctor shopping” and other opioid misuse

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A new WA Primary Health Alliance (WAPHA) education project is building the capability and confidence of GPs to recognise and respond to alcohol and drug issues for their patients.

WAPHA chief executive officer Learne Durrington says GPs have to deal with unusual drug use behaviour that can be a symptom of the practice of visiting multiple physicians to obtain multiple prescriptions for otherwise illegal drugs, known as “doctor shopping.”

“We know that people experience problems with all types of drugs, including over the counter and prescription medications for pain relief. GPs are often the first point of contact for those who may need help and so it’s important they are well equipped,” said Ms Durrington.

Treating Alcohol and Drugs in Primary Care (TADPole) is designed to build GPs’ skills in managing drug use issues, including understanding the new Schedule 8 regulations and prescribing code as well as boundary setting to support responses to so called “doctor shopping”.

Presented by Professor Moira Sim, Dr Eric Khong and other local specialists, the series of interactive training sessions have been developed by GPs with experience in treating alcohol and drugs in primary care.

“GPs have a key role not just in supporting patients facing issues with prescription opioids or illicit drugs, but they also look after families who are affected by drug use,” Dr Sim said.

“The training will offer practical skills and techniques that every GP can use.”

The first round of training will commence in September 2017. To register or for further information visit WAPHA’s events page <https://goo.gl/3yxiz6>

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About WAPHA: WAPHA oversees the strategic commissioning functions of the Perth North, Perth South and Country WA Primary Health Networks (PHNs). The WA PHNs are three of 31 PHNs established by the Australian Government nationally to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of medical services for the community. We work across the WA healthcare system with doctors, allied health professionals, Area Health Services and service providers to improve the coordination of

care for people who are at risk of poor health outcomes. For more information, visit www.wapha.org.au