



**MEDIA RELEASE**  
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**Horse before the cart? Pain groups call for more effective treatment ahead of prescription monitoring**

Pain groups across Australia say it is putting the cart before the horse to implement a national Real Time Prescription Monitoring (RTPM) system before there is a plan to provide additional pain management and treatment options.

The comments come as the federal government [allocated the national \\$23m IT contract](#) for the RTPM system to Fred IT (which is owned by The Pharmacy Guild and Telstra Health).

Painaustralia CEO Carol Bennett says although prescription monitoring systems have a role to play in reducing the number of overdose related deaths, they can only be effective if they are underpinned by community awareness; health professional education and training; and effective, accessible pain management treatment alternatives. These additional treatment options include access to psychologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and exercise physiologists.

“A national RTPM system will help identify problems in pain management, but not offer any workable solution to address the unmet needs of patients. There are millions of Australians, in fact one-in-five, managing pain on a daily basis. Pain medication is the primary treatment solution, even though it is generally ineffective in long term pain management.”

A report by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare found that over the past decade, drug-induced deaths were more likely to be caused by prescription drugs than illicit ones, and at a dramatically increasing rate<sup>1</sup>. This report illustrates the rising availability of benzodiazepines and other opioids (like oxycodone and morphine) and increasing prescription rates.

“Community-wide pain education for patients and doctors plus ready access to holistic pain treatment needs to happen before we identify and monitor those who are dependent on opioids. Patients deserve the full range of pain treatments being available close to their homes rather being reliant on medication only, especially opioids which the evidence shows are not effective in the long term management of chronic pain. Monitoring alone risks harming more patients than helping.” Faculty of Pain Medicine Dean, Dr Meredith Craigie said.

President of the Australian Pain Society, Fiona Hodson stated, “Evidence shows that pain is best managed using a multidisciplinary approach and currently there is limited access or funding for allied health services to support and manage people experiencing pain in the community. This also includes better remuneration and care plans under the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) for GP’s, medical specialists and allied health professionals to effectively manage chronic pain patients.”

“Pain is a very real problem for Australians. This is why it is so important the [National Strategic Action Plan for Pain Management](#) is prioritised and fully funded, so that when a national medication monitoring system is implemented, GPs and their patients are able to access more effective ways to manage their pain. We urge Australian governments to put the horse back in front of the cart and invest in what should be done to address the epidemic of pain conditions in this country,” Ms Bennett concluded.

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2017. Non-medical use of pharmaceuticals: trends, harms and treatment, 2006-07 to 2015-16. Drug treatment series no.30. Cat. no. HSE 195. Canberra: AIHW.

**Media contact:** Jessica Conway

**Phone:** 0421 288 439

**Email:** [Jessica.conway@painaustralia.org.au](mailto:Jessica.conway@painaustralia.org.au)