



## Communities encouraged to be medicinewise this Multicultural Health Week

Every year, thousands of people are hospitalised because of medicine-related problems. Interactions between medicines, accidentally doubling up on a dose, and adverse effects are some of the factors that can result in hospitalisation. Many of these incidents are potentially avoidable.

This is why Multicultural Health Week this year is putting the spotlight on medication safety. This year's theme "*working together for safe, quality care*" focuses on medication safety as part of the National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards.

The week aims to raise awareness about the importance of communication between healthcare professionals and their patients, and the impact good communication can have on improving medication safety.

The NSW Multicultural Health Communication Service is coordinating Multicultural Health Week as a state-wide activity and this year has partnered with the Clinical Excellence Commission and NPS MedicineWise in consultation with Multicultural Health Services in Local Health Districts across NSW.

NPS MedicineWise Executive Manager of Program Delivery, Gloria Antonio, said millions of people take medicines each day, but knowing as much as possible about their medicines can help to avoid medicine mishaps.

"No medicine is completely free of side effects, but asking your health professional questions and finding out as much as you can about your medicines will help you understand the risks and benefits, avoid side effects, and enjoy better health," she said.

"Everyone has a role to play in their own health care and safety. We encourage people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to ask for a free professionally trained interpreter when you're in hospital or at a doctor's appointment, keep a list of regular medicines you take including any complementary or traditional medicines, and bring the list to the hospital with you," Ms Antonio said.

With the increasing diversity of patients in Australia there is a need to address culture and language within the health system.

Professor Cliff Hughes, Chief Executive Officer Clinical Excellence Commission said that health professionals have an active role to play in ensuring that they assess their patient's cultural and linguistic needs, obtain informed consent and consider their health beliefs, needs and values.

Professor Hughes emphasised that the health system is responsible for keeping all patients, including those from multicultural backgrounds, safe by providing interpreters, access to multilingual information resources, and using techniques such as the Teach Back method, which allows clinicians to gauge a patient's understanding of the health information they've received.

Mr Peter Todaro, Director of the NSW Multicultural Health Communication Service encourages all healthcare organisations to continue to develop and use in-language health resources as part of their daily care of multicultural patients.

For more information, visit [www.multiculturalhealthweek.com](http://www.multiculturalhealthweek.com)

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