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Australia invests $11.7 M in research to reduce harmful medication

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The Australian government is investing $11.7 million in medical research for pharmacists to support patients with the safe use of medicines.

All Australians will take some form of medication throughout their lives for a number of reasons, but using medicines are not without risk. The Pharmaceutical Society of Australia estimates 400,000 people present to emergency departments with medication problems each year, and 250,000 are hospitalised. They believe half of these events could be prevented.

The 2020 Quality, Safety and Effectiveness of Medicine Use and Medicine Intervention by Pharmacists grant recipients tackle some of the common prescription drug issues for at-risk groups.

This includes the growing number of Australians – more than 1.7 million people – who aren't aware they have symptoms of chronic kidney disease (CKD). For this group, some medications are dangerous and can cause toxicity in the kidneys.

As part of this program, University of Sydney researchers will receive almost $1.9 million to pilot a CKD screening program by community pharmacies, to identify and manage patients with the disease.

The University of Sydney will also receive $2.3 million to develop an integrated referral pathway for Australians with osteoporosis, to help decrease the risk of falls by reducing the use of medicines that lead to falls and improve the use of anti-osteoporosis medicines for bone strength.

The outcomes of the research undertaken through the grants will help inform ongoing work to ensure pharmacist fulfil their full scope of practice and could also inform the future Community Pharmacy Agreements.