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Community of Practice for GPs: Opioid management in Tasmania

Monday 26 October 2026

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Today's presentation: Iatrogenic Opioid Dependence: Where Pain and Addiction Intersect with Dr Emma Carmichael

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Iatrogenic opioid dependence

Where pain and addiction intersect

Learning outcomes

After this session, I will be able to:

- Recognise and assess the signs and features of opioid dependence in patients presenting in primary care settings.
- Describe and reflect on the impact of stigma associated with opioid replacement therapy (ORT) and its influence on patient engagement, treatment access and health outcomes.
- Establish professional networks with local AOD services to support coordinated care and continuity of treatment.
- Demonstrate knowledge of local AOD service models, referral pathways and multidisciplinary approaches to managing opioid dependence.

Opioids

- They work in acute pain
- Useful in end of life care
- Potent respiratory depressant
- Most common drug involved in unintentional overdose deaths
- There is a reversal agent



Intranasal Naloxone Spray

THN program

“Just here for my scripts Doc”

How to reduce risk of accidental OD

ASSESS THE PATIENT

- what's causing this pain
- is their pain stable or worsening
- any new features
- something new going on or worsening comorbidities
- other impacting conditions, including mood
- what other substances/alcohol are they using
- older patients watch liver and renal function
- other sedating medications – esp BZD
- Any aberrant behaviour– early pick up, escalating doses, multiple prescribers**, check TasScript**

Discussing opioids in chronic non cancer pain

- Tolerance
- Opioid hyperalgesia
- Opioid withdrawal symptoms
- “No fault” discussion of their “new problem”
- “Believe for the patient”



Concerns of OUD

- Failed attempts to cut down
- Early requests for supply, increasing oMEDD
- Using other people's medication
- Increasing salience – time spent thinking about, planning, and sourcing opioids
- Presentations to ED in withdrawal or pain crisis
- Preference for certain medications
- Ring PSB for any concerns
- Consider staged supply, consider IV site check and UDS
- Refer for medical assessment with ADS

Sourcing illicit supply

Do not provide any further scripts for S4Ds or S8s, refer to ADS

Opioid deprescribing

- Set your patient up to win – educate
- One SR opioid option
- PRN use – for emergency use only
- Adjuvant pain meds
- Review all sedating medications
- Negotiate wean with patient
- ANY REDUCTION IS A WIN

Discussion

- Any questions or comments from the audience?

- Any additional comments from our panel?

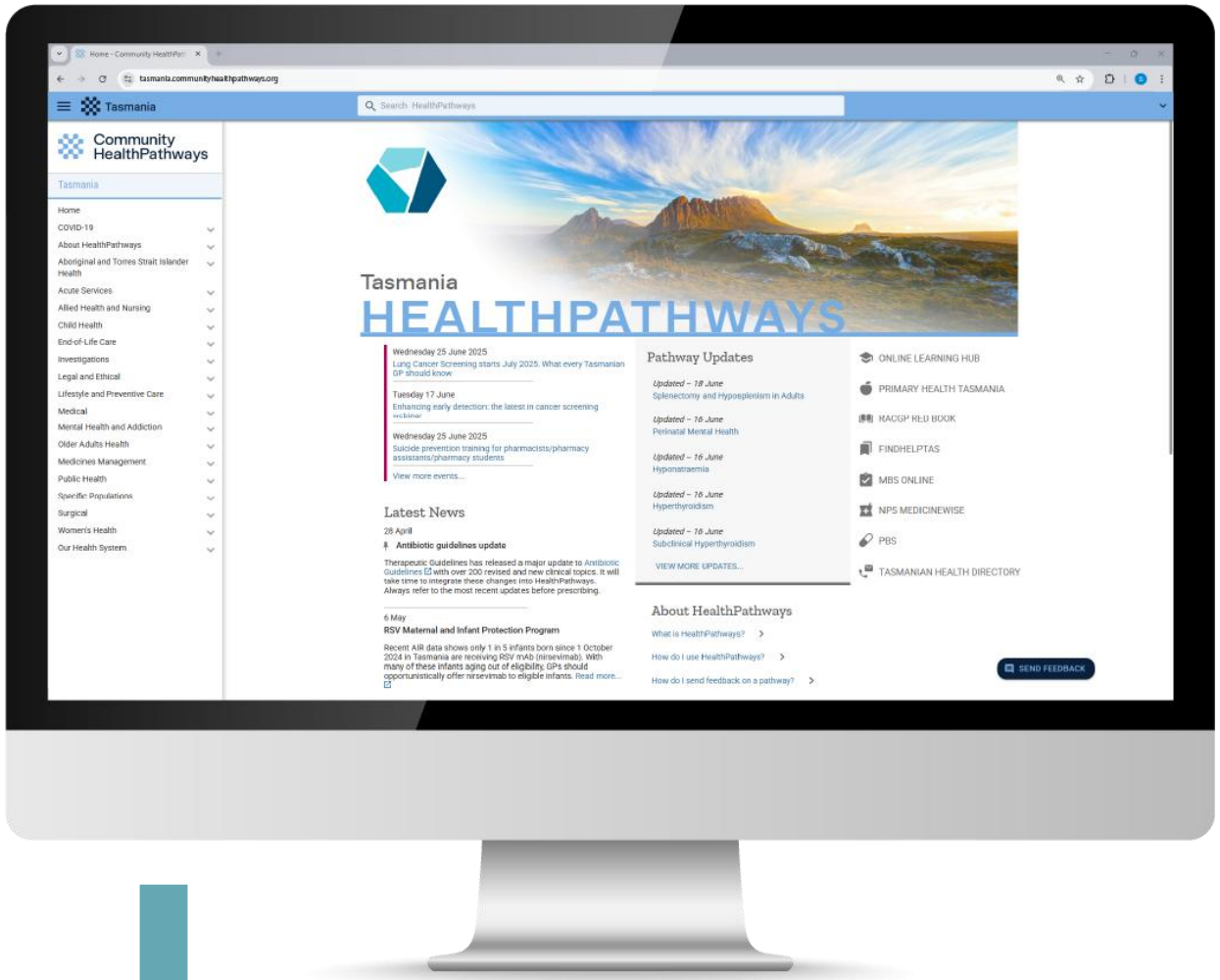
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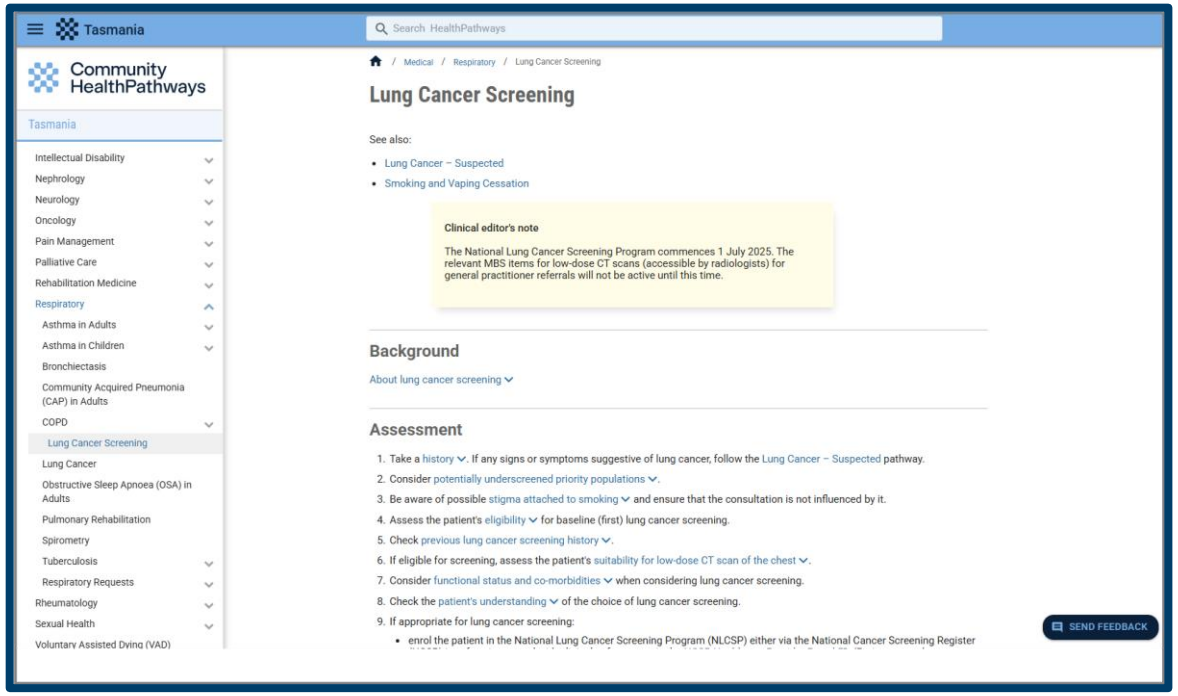
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is a web-based information portal developed by Primary Health Tasmania. It is designed to help primary care clinicians plan local patient care through primary, community and secondary healthcare systems.

tasmania.communityhealthpathways.org



Community HealthPathways



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