

MEDIA RELEASE

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Welcome relief for millions of Australians living with cancer pain

Painaustralia has welcomed Labor's commitment to investing \$2.6b in Medicare to improve cancer care and management.

"The high out-of-pocket costs associated with vital cancer related treatments like diagnostic imaging, oncology, surgery and medications can be a big barrier for cancer patients, who may be forced to make difficult choices between essential care or living with often painful cancer symptoms," Painaustralia CEO Carol Bennett said.

Painaustralia's new report released yesterday on [the Cost of Pain in Australia](#) highlighted that Australians living with chronic pain are forking out \$2.7b from their own pockets to manage their conditions. Many of these people will be living with cancer.

Pain is a common and often distressing problem in people with cancer. Pain can occur in patients in both early stage and advanced disease, and in cancer survivors as a severe and debilitating side-effect of treatment. It is estimated that 50% of adults and children with cancer pain are under-treated, despite the possibility of effective treatments for most patientsⁱ.

"We are hopeful that this landmark funding will enhance early intervention and better cancer treatment for millions of patients living with cancer and related pain," Ms Bennett said.

Research has shown us that the assessment and management of pain in cancer patients is of paramount importance in all stages of the disease, however, pain is still not adequately treated.

Studies have found that even though the quality of pharmacological pain management in cancer has slightly improved in the last decade, 1 in 3 patients on average do not receive pain medication considered appropriate for the intensity of pain experienced.ⁱⁱⁱ

Surprisingly, the barriers to effective pain management have remained largely the same over the last few decades. A lack of knowledge regarding pain assessment and management among clinicians is still very common.

"The much needed focus this will bring to cancer treatment also has the potential to increase awareness among consumers and doctors about pain management treatment options – and importantly, could support more pain specialist support for people undergoing cancer treatment," Ms Bennett said.

ⁱ Turk, D.C., *Remember the distinction between malignant and benign pain? Well, forget it.* Clin J Pain, 2002. 18(2): p. 75-6.

ⁱⁱ Deandrea S, Montanari M, Moja L, et al. Prevalence of undertreatment in cancer pain. A review of published literature, Ann Oncol, 2008, vol. 19 (pg. 1985-1991)

ⁱⁱⁱ Greco MT, Roberto A, Corli O, Deandrea S, Bandieri E, Cavuto S, Apolone G. *Quality of cancer pain management: an update of a systematic review of undertreatment of patients with cancer.* J Clin Oncol. 2014 Dec 20; 32(36):4149-54.

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