



## PHARMACIES PLAY A KEY ROLE IN COMMUNITY TYPE 2 DIABETES AND CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE PREVENTION.

**Every day almost 280 people develop diabetes<sup>1</sup>, every 12 minutes someone dies of cardiovascular disease<sup>2</sup>, and one in every six people is likely to suffer a stroke<sup>3</sup>.**

The statistics about type 2 diabetes, heart disease and stroke in Australia are alarming and preventing these serious conditions has never been more important.

Pharmacies are in a key position to assess high-risk individuals with the type 2 diabetes risk assessment (AUSDRISK) tool and to promote the *Life!* program to clients looking to live a healthier life. Through referring customers to *Life!*, pharmacies can feel confident that their customers will benefit from an evidenced-based program that is facilitated by dietitians, exercise physiologists and other health professionals and to know they are playing an important part in raising awareness and reducing the risk of type 2 diabetes, heart disease and stroke in their local community.

The *Life!* program is a type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease prevention program and is the biggest program of its type in Australia. Coordinated by Diabetes Victoria and funded by the Victorian Government since 2007, the lifestyle modification program supports people to reduce their risk of these chronic diseases. Certified health professionals help participants learn more about nutrition and physical activity, goal setting, sleep, stress and managing lapses. The program is delivered as a Group Course or a Telephone Health Coaching service and participants can choose the option that best fits in with their lifestyle.

***The Life! program offers funding to support pharmacies to identify and refer eligible customers to the program. For more information visit [www.lifeprogram.org.au/for-health-professionals](http://www.lifeprogram.org.au/for-health-professionals) or contact [casefinding@diabetesvic.org.au](mailto:casefinding@diabetesvic.org.au)***

#### Footnotes

1 National Diabetes Services Scheme [www.ndss.com.au/data-snapshots](http://www.ndss.com.au/data-snapshots) Statistical Snapshot as at 31 March, 2015.

2 [www.heartfoundation.org.au](http://www.heartfoundation.org.au) Cardiovascular Disease Data and Statistics.

3 [www.strokefoundation.com.au](http://www.strokefoundation.com.au). "Stroke – nothing has changed. Still the nation's second biggest cause of death." 25 June 2012.



## UFS DISPENSARIES CASE STUDY

UFS Dispensaries is a community-based, not-for-profit organisation running 17 pharmacies throughout Victoria. Serving a large and diverse group of customers, UFS is also a *Life!* Case-Finding pharmacy with all of its pharmacies participating under the agreement. Since 2014, UFS has referred 274 high risk customers to the program.



UFS has found the *Life!* program to be of immense benefit to their customers. *Life!* provides UFS with program resources, including brochures, posters and balloons, to display and distribute through their stores. In addition UFS head office promotes the *Life!* program through advertising and supports their staff to learn more about the program and chronic disease prevention through their intranet and in-store visits.

Here, UFS' Chief Pharmacist, Bobby Mehta, discusses the important role pharmacists can play in chronic disease prevention.

### Why did UFS sign up to the *Life!* program Case-Finding agreement?

The sole purpose was to provide a meaningful, potentially life-changing service in order to help our local community understand their risk and be in a position to access a fantastic resource, through *Life!*, to help reduce that risk. The program is also a perfect fit with many of our other screening services which aim to better inform our local customers.

### Can you discuss the role pharmacies play in chronic disease prevention?

Pharmacies are an important, valuable and under-utilised community resource. Not only do we have regular contact with patients who suffer from chronic conditions, but pharmacists are also very knowledgeable, highly skilled health professionals who are well trusted by members of the community. We are ideally placed to dispense not only medication, but also provide fabulous professional services and highly appropriate and individually tailored advice.

### Do you have tips on how to discuss the topic of chronic disease prevention with customers?

It's all about starting the conversation. The community pharmacy is often a social hub of engagement and friendly conversation with loyal, local customers. Most are only too pleased to speak with their trusted local pharmacy staff about their health. It's even easier with the *Life!* case-finding service because you're not 'selling' anything to the customer, you are demonstrating great customer service and patient care, most of your customers will value this immensely.

### What are the benefits of the *Life!* program and would you recommend it to other pharmacies?

The major benefits are the ease of conducting a risk assessment [the AUSDRISK test]. The risk assessment is quick and easy and, crucially, free for customers. We would recommend the *Life!* program. It's easy, free for most and could make a huge difference to the health of your customers. Why wouldn't you do it?

**"Offering our customers the AUSDRISK test (a simple and quick test that can be done in the pharmacy) has a big impact on increasing *Life!* program participants and increasing knowledge and awareness among those who are at high risk of type 2 diabetes."**

**– Kathryn Fischman,  
Manager UFS Bridge Mall**

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