

# **MEDIA RELEASE**

**NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA**

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

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## Award-winning project making a difference to care of our elderly

An innovative UTAS-led project aiming to reduce the use of sedatives in aged care facilities is making a difference to the way our elderly are cared for.

The RedUSE (Reducing use of sedatives) project involved extensively researching the way psychotropic medicines were prescribed in the aged care setting and then using this information to shape an intervention study to reduce the use of sedatives in 13 aged care homes in Hobart.

Dr Juanita Westbury, from the UTAS School of Pharmacy, designed and conducted a pharmacist-led intervention project which successfully promoted the appropriate use and timely review of these medications.

RedUSE involved Dr Westbury, Professor Greg Peterson, Dr Shane Jackson (all UTAS School of Pharmacy) and Professor Andrew Robinson (UTAS Wicking Dementia Research Centre and School of Nursing and Midwifery.)

The project was recently awarded a prestigious national Medicinewise Award.

Dr Westbury is pleased with the award win and the positive impact the study has had.

“Psychotropic medications are often used in residential aged care facilities, or nursing homes, to treat insomnia, anxiety and challenging behaviour,” Dr Westbury said.

“Sometimes these medications can cause effects like confusion, oversedation and falls. They should only be used when other non-drug strategies have been tried.”

Dr Westbury said the project involved much collaboration with community.

“The program received significant community engagement from aged care homes around Tassie to obtain data and great effort from Hobart aged care homes, GPs and community pharmacies who worked very hard to reduce sedative use.

“We are very grateful for their co-operation.”

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