

Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features four pages of news.

New warnings for pregabalin

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration has advised of new boxed warnings being added to the Product Information and Consumer Medicine Information for medicines containing pregabalin and gabapentin.

The enhanced warnings advise of risks of misuse, abuse and dependence, with prescribers asked to monitor patients regularly during treatment with the drugs.

A TGA investigation found unintentional deaths related to pregabalin rose from 16 in 2013 to 121 in 2016, while there has been a tenfold increase in the pregabalin-related ambulance attendances since 2012.

Both medicines are used to treat neuropathic pain and epilepsy, but present serious side effects when used in conjunction with sedating medicines such as opioids.

Guild seeks \$425m for ODT program

CONCERNS over opioid misuse in Australia are behind a rare pre-Budget submission from the Pharmacy Guild of Australia.

The Guild has called on the Federal Government to allocate more than \$425 million over the next four years to boost access to opioid dependence treatment (ODT) through community pharmacies and ensuring equity of access to treatment "irrespective of where a person lives".

Under the model proposed in the Guild's submission ODT would be recognised as a Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) benefit, with the Federal Government funding in-pharmacy dose management and provision of take-away ODT medicines, as well as the administration of injectable medicines by trained pharmacists providing program consistency in access, care and support for eligible community-based patients.

Guild National President, George Tambassis, said the measure would help reduce the health, social and economic costs of substance misuse.

"We recognise the significant public benefits of the treatment programs and their capacity to



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assist individuals to be productive members of society," he said.

"Given the magnitude of the issue we believe that a national coordinated approach to the management and treatment of opioid misuse is required.

"There are nearly 150 hospitalisations and 14 emergency department presentations involving opioid harm every day in Australia, and three people die from drug-induced deaths involving opioid use daily.

"These are alarming statistics and we must act on them without hesitation.

"Our submission offers a practical and pragmatic approach to helping address this growing problem."

The Guild also called on the Federal Government to allocate \$8.6 million - or \$1,500 per eligible pharmacy - "as part of the change management requirements to prepare pharmacies and support consumers with the national rollout of electronic prescriptions" in the 2021/22 financial year.

Tambassis noted the introduction of e-scripts will help reduce medication errors.

"Community pharmacies have been required to adapt and



invest the most when integrating e-prescriptions into both their clinical and business workflows and as volumes increase, the need for pharmacies to access and utilise appropriate IT infrastructure will only increase," Tambassis said.

"In our submission we are calling for support to help pharmacies enact the necessary changes to ensure e-prescribing is able to live up to its expectations as a major tool in reducing medication errors."

The funding would be in addition to the \$18.3 billion Seventh Community Pharmacy Agreement.

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Pharmacy Daily

Pharmacy COVID-19 testing 'worrying'

QUEENSLAND'S planned pharmacy-based COVID-19 testing trial "makes no sense at all", Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) National Vice President, Dr Bruce Willett believes.

Speaking with the RACGP's *NewsGP* publication, Willett said the proposed program, which is set to involve five pharmacies in Queensland Health's Cairns, Townsville, West Moreton and Metro North health regions (PD 01 Feb), was a threat to public safety.

"You're asking people who are potentially infected to walk through crowded shopping areas and have their tests in a retail space," he said.

"Obviously there is some benefit to the pharmacist in that they're hoping people will buy things as they walk past the shelves on the way in and out.

"But from a public health point of view, it's certainly not worth it."

Willett added that there was little appetite amongst pharmacists to conduct COVID-19 testing in store.

"The majority of pharmacists that I've talked to - in fact, all the pharmacists that I've talked to who aren't pharmacy owners - are against this and not keen for this to happen at all," Willett said.

"This seems to be an initiative at the behest of the Pharmacy Guild of Australia, who represent only pharmacy owners, [and] see this as a business opportunity while transmission is low.

"But, of course we've seen with outbreaks in the Northern Beaches [area of Sydney], Queensland and Melbourne that that can change in a heartbeat.

"So it does still have the risk of bringing COVID carriers into busy retail spaces, and that is a concern."

A Queensland Health spokesperson told the RACGP that it has been working with the



five participating pharmacies to adapt the service model to their workflows.

"This is to ensure that the service is conducted in a way that maximises staff and patient safety without disrupting the pharmacy's service delivery," the spokesperson said.

"Pharmacies will not commence offering the service until all the pilot requirements are met."

PPA to launch COVAX EOI

PHARMACIES with a Pharmacy Programs Administrator (PPA) account will receive an online COVID-19 vaccination expression of interest (EOI) form on 05 Feb.

Details of the EOI process went online yesterday, which outlined the site readiness requirements for pharmacies to participate in the COVID-19 vaccine (COVAX) rollout.

Pharmacies will be required to submit information regarding their capacity, details on opening hours, staffing levels and the estimated numbers of vaccines able to be administered daily, by 19 Feb.

Pharmacies without a PPA account should contact the **PPA's Support Centre** to request a personalised response link.

CLICK HERE to review the EOI documents.



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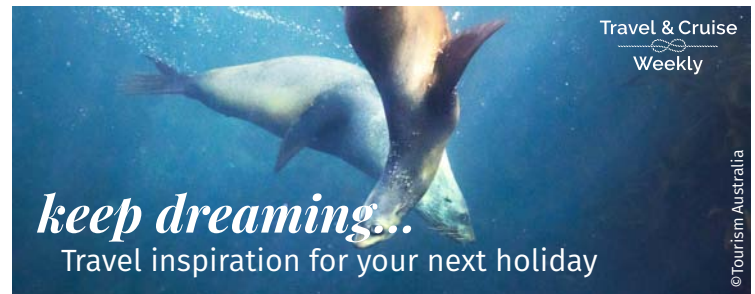
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LNP top recipient of Guild donations

QUEENSLAND'S Liberal National Party (LNP) received more donations from the Pharmacy Guild of Australia than any other branch of a political party in the 2019/20 financial year, data from the Australian Electoral Commission reveals.

The Guild donated a total of \$214,120, with the LNP receiving more than 20% of the funds (\$47,650), through nine separate contributions.

The Liberal Party's Federal branch was the second biggest recipient of Guild support collecting \$36,550, with donations ranging from \$100 to \$12,500, with the Australian Labor Party's Federal branch receiving \$35,750 from the organisation - including a payment of \$27,500 made on 06 Apr 2020.

The Guild contributed \$27,850 to the National Party, through three donations made between 10 and



17 Jan 2020.

Donations totalling \$27,590, \$20,000 and \$18,730 were made to the ALP Western Australian branch, Liberal Party's Tasmania and Western Australian branches respectively.

Meanwhile, Medicines Australia made contributions of \$131,275 to the three major parties, with

the Liberal Party the top recipients of the organisation's funding (\$64,875), ahead of the ALP (\$57,600), with the National Party being given \$8,800.

Pharmaceutical companies, MSD and Bristol-Myers Squibb, were also significant donors in 2019/20, making contributions of \$88,150 and \$85,250, respectively.

APP super early bird rego closing

PHARMACISTS planning to attend the Australian Pharmacy Professional Conference and Exhibition 2021 this May can secure savings through super early bird registration, which closes on 08 Feb.

The event is scheduled to take place from 20 to 23 May on the Gold Coast.

APP Chair, Kos Sclavos, said the deadline for the super early bird discount was timely, following the easing of COVID-19 restrictions in Queensland for parts of NSW and Victoria.

"With travel restrictions from Sydney in particular easing, now is the time to register and save up to 20% on your registration fee," he said.

Nationwide delivery from Chemist2U

THE Chemist2U mobile phone app and web-based portal allowing customers to purchase prescription medicines and OTC products (PD 05 Nov 2020) has announced the expansion of its footprint across the country.

Each Chemist2U pharmacy partner automatically receives orders placed via the app from customers in their area, providing an "e-pharmacy service extension strategy" to expand their customer base, according to Chemist2U CEO Matthew Cullen.

"Chemist2U is the next revolution in healthcare, propelling pharmacies into the 'delivery app' market by bringing same day delivery of medicine and more to your door," he said.

The initiative is part of Tonic Media Network, which operates screens in 5,500 GP waiting rooms Australia-wide reaching 15 million potential patients.

As well as that, a national TV and digital advertising campaign will launch this month - for more details call 1300 22 32 32.

FIP launches digital education report

THE International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) says a large proportion of pharmacy schools and faculties across the globe do not yet offer digital health education or training, according to the results of a report published last week.

FIP surveyed 1,060 pharmacy schools, faculty members, students and practitioner groups from 91 countries, finding many stakeholders are lacking familiarity with emerging digital health technologies

such as blockchain, bots, digital medicines and artificial intelligence.

"With increased complexity of health conditions and ageing populations, digital health can be the key to many unmet needs in health services," said Aukje Mantel-Teeuwisse, chair of the group overseeing the report.

She said FIP would be developing a global competency framework for digital health in pharmacy education - view the report online at fip.org.

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Dispensary Corner

WIDE state-by-state disparities in COVID-19 vaccination priorities across the USA have led to a surge in so-called “vaccine tourism” as people cross state lines to gain accelerated access to the jab, according to *The Guardian*.

America has more than 50 unique vaccination plans, with some states giving priority to smokers, while others have dubbed journalists as essential workers who should get inoculated first.

Florida is apparently one of the most popular destinations because it has a policy of vaccinating anyone over 65, with estimates that more than 50,000 doses have gone to people who have deliberately travelled there for the vaccine.

The state has recently implemented new ID rules to ensure more doses go to local residents, with demographers noting significant racial and socioeconomic issues across the country which have seen vaccine recipients so far being overwhelmingly white & wealthy.

However Florida’s approach is quite comprehensive when compared to the policy in Wisconsin, where mink fur farmers are being given priority as next in line for the jab.

According to Stephanie Schauer, Wisconsin’s immunisation program manager, if the virus runs rampant through mink farms it could spread to other animals or humans.

Apparently receptors in the lungs of mink are particularly susceptible to COVID-19.

Trans education needed

BOOSTING pharmacists’ education about transgender care could contribute to improving healthcare outcomes in the group, researchers believe.

A review of pharmacists’ role in transgender healthcare by academics from James Cook University’s College of Medicine and Dentistry, noted that pharmacists could play an important role in addressing the disparities observed in the care of transgender patients.

The authors reviewed 15 studies conducted in the US, finding pharmacists performed a variety of roles in transgender healthcare, including patient education and counselling, management of cross-sex hormonal therapy, patient advocacy and the provision of preventative care.

“Although pharmacists considered their role important, they lacked confidence in their knowledge to provide appropriate care to this patient group,” the authors said.



“This review has highlighted that there is a need for education in transgender care for both pharmacists and pharmacy students, so that they are both confident and comfortable to play a meaningful role in transgender care.

“Pharmacists’ involvement in addressing the health disparities experienced will contribute to improving the overall health outcomes for this group.”

New poisons standard published

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration has noted the release of the Standard for the Uniform Scheduling of Medicines and Poisons (SUSMP) No. 32 effective from 01 Feb 2021.

Also known as the Poisons Standard, the new edition supersedes the Oct 2020 version, with a range of changes reflecting recent decisions by the Advisory Committee on Medicines Scheduling.

These include rulings on sumatriptan and zolmitriptan from 07 May 2020; rizatriptan from 24 Aug 2020; eletriptan,

ibuprofen and cumyl-pegalalone on 25 Nov 2020; and the delegate-initiated ruling on cannabidiol from 15 Dec 2020.

There are also a number of “minor, delegate-only decisions” which were not referred to the Committee, including a new entry in Schedule 4 for SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) vaccines.

This addition of a specific separate item for the vaccines is “included to highlight the scheduling of such products given their significance as part of the national response to the COVID-19 emergency”.



Guild Update

Carers Gateway

THE Pharmacy Guild and many community pharmacists recognise the role of carers as integral to Australia’s health system.

Community pharmacists and staff are a huge support for carers, helping them to manage their own health and wellbeing on top of caring for a loved one.

Community pharmacists and pharmacy staff can support carers by making them aware of services that are available to help them cope, but also to take care of themselves.

One such service is [Carer Gateway](#), an Australian Government initiative designed to support unpaid carers.

The Department of Social Services works with lead service providers across all regions in Australia to deliver in-person, online and phone-based support and services to carers.

Services are available free to carers no matter where they live.

More details are available on the [Carer Gateway](#) website and the [Carer Gateway YouTube](#) channel houses many videos to help carers understand the support and services available to them.

You can also follow the [Carer Gateway Facebook](#) page.