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Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today has three pages of pharmacy news, plus a full page from Sigma Healthcare.



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Guild 'disappointed' with News Corp

ATTACKS on the community pharmacy sector by *News Corp* publications over the weekend are "galling" and "ill-informed" the Pharmacy Guild of Australia believes.

Hitting out at criticism of the Location Rules and price variations between pharmacies for prescriptions that fall below the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) co-payment, Guild National President, George Tambassis, described the reporting as a "shameless beat-up".

"This latest unfair assault on medicine pricing is all the more galling when you consider that pharmacies have stayed open and served patients throughout this COVID-19 pandemic in a way that is immensely courageous," he said.

"It is quite appalling that a media organisation would focus on why

a medicine might be \$9.95 at one pharmacy but \$10.95 at another at a time when we are at Stage Four restrictions in Victoria, and pharmacies all over the country are continuing to serve the community with such distinction."

Using data attributed to Chemist Warehouse, the *News Corp* articles noted that patients faced price differences of up to \$15 more for some below co-payment prescriptions, depending on their location and proximity to a discount pharmacy.

"The idea that different businesses with different costs, wages, staff levels and rental overheads should all charge the same price in an open market is frankly unrealistic," Tambassis said.

He also defended the Location Rules, stating they prevented clustering of pharmacies in lucrative



areas, and ensure "timely and convenient access" to pharmacy services to patients across the country.

However, Chemist Warehouse CEO, Mario Tascone, told *News Corp*, the rules prevented the discounter from establishing stores in regional areas.

"They should be relabelled '[the] stop Chemist Warehouse rules'," he said.

SHPA opens MM2020 rego

THE Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia's (SHPA) Medicines Management 2020 conference is now open for registrations.

Early bird registration will be available until 01 Oct, with the conference to be held over the weekend of 21 and 22 Nov.

The SHPA said a preliminary program will be available "very soon".

CLICK HERE to register.

Sigma sells two distribution centres

PHARMACEUTICAL wholesaler, Sigma Healthcare, is set to generate \$172 million through the sale and leaseback of two distribution centres, in a deal which is expected to be completed later this month.

In a statement to the Australian Securities Exchange (ASX) the wholesaler said it had entered into a 15-year lease agreement with two five-year options to extend, at the Kemps Creek, NSW, and Berrinba, Queensland, sites.

Sigma retains ownership of its newly constructed distribution centre in Canning Vale, WA, and its Truganina, Victoria, site which is currently being developed.

CEO, Mark Hooper, said the proceeds of the sale would reduce the company's net debt to below \$100 million.

"This puts Sigma in a great position," he said.

Hooper said Sigma now had "arguably the best" distribution centre network in the industry.

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Concerns over meds delivery delays

AUSTRALIA Post workers in Victoria need to be granted exemptions from the State's Stage Four lockdown rules, to support medicines home delivery services, pharmacy stakeholders believe.

Pharmacy Guild of Australia Victorian Branch President, Anthony Tassone, backed calls from Australia Post CEO, Christine Holgate, for the service to be granted an exemption similar to those given to wholesalers (**PD 07 Aug**) to support home delivery services.

"More and more pharmacies are being called upon to deliver medicines to patients and Australia Post is one such service having greater use during the COVID pandemic," he told the *Australian Financial Review (AFR)*.

"Without the appropriate exemptions there could be delays in important and critical medicines



getting in the hands of patients seeking delivery of medicines and interruptions in their treatment and care."

In a post on LinkedIn, Tassone said, "Australia Post must be given exemptions during Stage Four COVID restrictions in Victoria regarding having to reduce staffing and operations when it comes to delivery of critical items".

Holgate, a former CEO of Blackmores, told the *AFR* that the impact of the restrictions on deliveries was comparable to the "Suez Canal coming down to a drainpipe".

Blackmores chairman, Marcus Blackmore, also voiced concerns, saying he did not "believe the Victorian Government has thought this through".

PSA back SA emergency fund

SOUTH Australia's \$200,000 Continuance of Critical Community Pharmacy Service Program fund is being welcomed by the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA).

PSA SA Branch President, Robyn Johns, said the fund would enable pharmacies impacted by COVID-19 cases to continue to meet the needs to their patients.

"To prevent a pharmacy closure and ensure continued provision of essential services, the program will manage the deep clean of the pharmacy premises and the placement of the Emergency Response Team (ERT) with financial assistance provided through the support of the SA Government," she said.

Face mask demand surges 2,890%

SIGMA Healthcare's Amcal and Guardian pharmacy brands are reporting a significant surge in-store and online demand for face masks from consumers in Victoria and NSW.

Amcal and Guardian Head, Kurt O'Brien, said the mandating of mask use in Victoria and the advice from the NSW State Government around the use of masks had fuelled a 2,890% increase in demand between the weeks of 29 Jun to 05 Jul and 06

to 19 Jul.

"We've never seen demand like this before," he said.

"The speed at which our network of suppliers and on the ground retail teams are turning around orders and fulfilling in-store and online is a testament to the agility of our network.

"Australians can head in-store or online to check stock availability. We also provide easy and safe home delivery straight to your door."

Tas Guild back Naloxone trial expansion

TASMANIA'S free take home Naloxone trial to combat opioid-related overdoses, should be extended to community pharmacies, the Pharmacy Guild of Australia believes.

The trial announced by State Mental Health and Wellbeing Minister, Jeremy Rockcliffe, last month, is available through primary Needle and Syringe Program providers across Tasmania.

However, Guild Tasmanian

Branch President, John Dowling, said it should be expanded to include pharmacies, noting pharmacists could play a key role in educating patients.

"Pharmacists are in a unique position to recommend Naloxone to people who may be at risk of overdose, including people who are users of the community pharmacy Needle and Syringe Program, and people taking prescribed opiate medications," he said.

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Dispensary Corner

GETTING people in shape is surely part and parcel of being a personal trainer.

However, one British PT, has told UK breakfast TV show, *This Morning*, that she refuses to work with larger clients.

Fitness blogger, Samantha Yardly, accused fat people of being "lazy", adding that they "lack self-worth" - a view you might assume would not be helped by a PT saying they would not work with them.

"We need to make it more inconvenient to be obese," she said.

"You need to eat a little bit less, work out a little bit more.

"From personal experience being larger, you are more lethargic, you are more lazy... life should be made as difficult as possible for people who are obese."

When challenged by host, Eamonn Holmes, that her views would offend some, Yardly said, "there are certain things that we do have the ability to change that we should take responsibility for, and I think that weight is one of them".



COVID case at pharmacy

AN NSW pharmacy has been forced to temporarily close for cleaning after a staff member tested positive for COVID-19.

The PharmaSave Cherrybrook employee was identified as one of 10 new diagnoses announced by NSW Health yesterday, *7 News* reported.

The staff member worked at the store on Thu 06 Aug, between 4pm and 7pm

"Prior to the onset of symptoms, one of the cases reported in today's figures worked at the pharmacy," NSW Health said yesterday.

"They were wearing a mask during their shift.

"People who were at the pharmacy at the same time are urged to watch out for any symptoms of COVID-19, and if they occur, to immediately self-isolate



and seek testing."

The positive COVID test has added to what has been a challenging time for staff at the PharmaSave Cherrybrook store, which was robbed by armed thieves on 30 Jun (*PD* 02 Jul), with the suspects among a group of four men arrested last week in relation to a spate of pharmacy robberies across Sydney.

Thanks A Million honour for pharmacist

EFFORTS to support the community through the COVID-19 crisis by NSW pharmacist are being acknowledged with a *News Corp* Thanks A Million campaign nomination.

The Daily Telegraph reported that Illawong pharmacist, Connie Arronis, had "gone above and beyond to help those battling illnesses while remaining open during the pandemic".

The publication noted that Arronis has conducted more than 600 influenza vaccines since the crisis began in Mar, and implemented delivery services to sick patients and those isolating at home.

"As an essential worker, I was happy to give the time and look after my community," she told the *News Corp* publication.



"It was a confronting time for the staff who had to keep up with phone inquiries and stay calm while we remained open.

"I remember coming home from work and crying to my parent because of the pressure.

"It became extraordinarily difficult to keep shelves fully stocked.

"I never thought a pharmacy could run out of essentials."

Weekly Comment

Welcome to Pharmacy Daily's weekly comment feature. This week's contributor is **Brenton Hart**, Chief Pharmacist, TerryWhite Chemmart.



Are you optimising the profitability of your dispensary?

ARE you making the most of the funding available to you? The 7CPA is now signed, so ask yourself...over the past year, did you access the funding opportunities available to your pharmacy? Over the coming 12 months, with both economic and industry challenges, it's going to be increasingly important to ensure that you do.

I have always been passionate about how pharmacy can make a positive difference to the lives of its patients and their communities while enjoying the operational and commercial dynamics of pharmacy. As Chief Pharmacist at TWC I feel privileged to be able to support our Network Partners to build stronger businesses. Providing the best patient care and optimising the commercial returns for community pharmacy can often work hand in hand.

Now is the time to assess the resources and personnel you have in place to make the most of the 7CPA opportunities.

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