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Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today has three pages of news plus a full page from the upcoming Pharmacy Connect conference.

Assisted dying push

PROPOSALS recommended by a Victorian panel led by Professor Brian Owler could see pharmacists dispense lethal medication from a locked box to terminally ill patients.

The final report of the Ministerial Advisory Panel on Voluntary Assisted Dying details strict protocols which would see the pharmacist only dispense the drugs if there is a valid permit issued by the Department of Health and Human Services.

The guidelines state the patient would need to be expected to die within a year, be a resident of Victoria and aged at least 18.

The patient must also make three requests, one of them written, and demonstrate sufficient mental capacity to make the decision.

NZ ethics update

THE New Zealand Pharmacy Council is seeking feedback on a new code of ethics for pharmacists, including additions addressing the sale of complementary and alternative medicines (CAMs).

The Council said the revised code aims to reflect that it does not oppose the use of CAM when they have demonstrated benefits for patients, have minimal risks and the patient is making an informed choice - view the proposals at pharmacycouncil.org.nz.

Ramsay ramps up pharmacy

LISTED hospital operator Ramsay Health Care has announced the acceleration of its push into community pharmacy, via its franchise model which was initially flagged 11 months ago (*PD* 31 Aug 16).

Of the 29 community pharmacies currently operating under the Ramsay banner (up from 20 in Aug last year), in various locations close to hospitals across Australia, eight of them operate their Section 90 licences within the hospital precincts.

These include four 24/7 community pharmacies in major Ramsay hospitals.

Ramsay Pharmacy Group ceo Peter Giannopoulos said the company planned to grow the franchise model to around 300 community pharmacies by 2020.

Each franchise will place "the most accessible health professional, the pharmacist, at the centre" of the business, Giannopoulos told *Pharmacy Daily*.

The Ramsay principles focus on "better care" - as in continuously improving care to achieve better patient outcomes, he said.

Ramsay has 53 years of delivering excellence in health care including the last 10 years in pharmacy practice within its hospitals (Section



94 licences), dispensing more than 1.25 million scripts in the last 12 months, and now three years in the community setting as well.

The franchise model being implemented delivers consistency in standards and

patient outcomes through compliance around certain brand elements, shop fitout, marketing elements and training, he said.

At the same time, the Ramsay approach will be to remember that

the franchisee owns the business and will have their own input and ultimate responsibility as well.

The franchise is intended to be the "conduit for transition" from acute care into the community setting, Giannopoulos said.

The Ramsay pharmacy franchise, as part of the largest private hospital group and ASX listed but with global touchpoints, brings a strong value proposition to interested pharmacists, he added.

Pharmacists wanting to express an interest either in options for their current business, or even acquisitions, can contact the Ramsay pharmacy marketing team or Peter Giannopoulos himself (**pictured**) on GiannopoulosP@ramsayhealth.com.au.

Tasmanian pharmacy going to the dogs

THE Tasmanian Pharmacy Authority is seeking legal advice over the right of pharmacists to take their dogs to work, citing concerns about dispensary hygiene.

Registrar Margie Cole was quoted by the *Hobart Mercury* confirming the Authority had already asked several pharmacists to stop having their dogs behind the counter.

The concerns have been taken to the state's Department of Premier and Cabinet as well as the Health Department, with the Authority urging law changes which would give councils clear powers to instruct owners to remove their dogs from pharmacies.

The unnamed pharmacists have reportedly resisted the calls.

"The pharmacists say 'our customers love them' [but] I have members of the public ringing me saying they are not impressed," Cole said.

"Clearly pharmacies have to be a very hygienic place; we are just amazed that the pharmacists think it's OK," she added.

Tasmanian Pharmacy Authority chairman Rhys Jones has called for changes to the Dog Control Act, saying "there are serious concerns about hygiene with having any animal in the pharmacy, especially in the dispensary and medicines preparation area".

He said members of the public had contacted the Authority from time to time, advising they had seen pharmacists handling their dog and then handling medicines without washing their hands.

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Cannabis concentrate alarm

UNIVERSITY of Queensland (UQ) researchers have expressed concern around the recent legalisation of medicinal cannabis in Australia potentially giving rise to super-potent cannabis concentrates with associated harmful effects.

UQ Centre for Youth Substance Abuse Research's Dr Gary Chan, who led the butane hash oil study, said a significant proportion of cannabis users used the concentrate.

"Butane hash oil is a cannabis concentrate that is over 10 times more potent than herbal cannabis," Chan said.

"Although users were more likely to report medical use, the use of butane hash oil was associated with high levels of depression, anxiety disorder and other illicit substance use. These results were consistent globally," he added.

The research was based on data from the Global Drug Survey, the world's largest drug survey that collects data about drug users.

The tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) content of butane hash oil can be as high as 80%, while the THC concentration in herbal cannabis is approximately 9-15%, depending on the method of cultivation.

Butane hash oil is produced by solvent extraction (maceration, infusion or percolation) of marijuana or hashish.

After filtering and evaporating the solvent, a sticky resinous dark liquid with a strong herbal odour remains.

Chan said there had been a rise of butane hash oil use in the United States, and considered it to be an unexpected by-product of cannabis legalisation.

"The production and promotion of hyper-potent cannabis concentrates with 70 to 80% THC now account for 20% of the markets in Washington and Colorado, and use of these hyper-potent products seems to be gaining popularity in Canada," he said.

"Given that Australia has recently legalised medical cannabis use, surveillance needs to take note of any rise in the use of concentrates because it can be produced with relatively simple equipment that is easily accessible.

"However, at this stage there is no evidence for medical use of butane hash oil for any health condition."

CLICK HERE to access the *Drug and Alcohol Dependence* paper.



MI under review

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration is currently reviewing the use of MI (methylisothiazolinone) in skincare because it can cause allergic contact dermatitis.

Ego Pharmaceuticals has welcomed the move, citing research published in the *Medical Journal of Australia* which found the rate of allergic reactions to MI jumped from 3.5% to 11.3% over a two-year period from 2011 to 2013.

Stroke approach

THE Stroke Foundation has welcomed the publication of a new series of papers which call for a global consensus approach to stroke recovery research.

The documents are the outcome of the first Stroke Recovery and Rehabilitation Roundtable last year, which discussed key priority areas including pre-clinical recovery research, biomarkers of recovery, intervention development, monitoring and reporting and measurement in clinical trials.

The Foundation's ceo Sharon McGowan said the papers were an important step forward in finding a cure for stroke, with Federal Government investment "now needed to continue the journey".

To view the papers published in the *International Journal of Stroke* **CLICK HERE**.

Morning-after stoush

BRITISH pharmacy giant Boots has issued a public apology after suggesting that lowering the price of emergency contraception would "incentivise inappropriate use".

The company had maintained pricing for the morning-after pill, despite rivals Tesco and Superdrug recently halving its pricing.

The Boots response attracted criticism, with health campaigners and Labour MPs describing it as a "sexist surcharge" and an "unacceptable" moral position.

While emergency contraception is available free under the National Health Service, often women find it difficult to get an appointment and so buy the drug on the high street.

ATSIPSS winners

THE Pharmacy Guild of Australia has announced the recipients of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Pharmacy Scholarship Scheme (ATSIPSS).

This year two students have been awarded the prestigious scholarship and will receive funding assistance during their time at university.

The two students are Maree Perry from the Queensland University of Technology and Emma Sampson of University of Newcastle.

Scholarship holders receive \$15,000 each year, for up to four years of study, to help cover the costs associated with study.

National president of the Pharmacy Guild of Australia, George Tambassis said scholarship holders received financial and mentoring support to ensure they got the most out of their university studies.

"The mentoring program not only helps the students develop a learning plan, but it provides support to students outside of the university environment," he said.

"It's an important tool for supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to undertake studies in pharmacy at university."

Currently the Pharmacy Guild of Australia still has one Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Pharmacy Scholarship available and Bachelor or Master of Pharmacy students are invited to talk to the Guild.

The ATSIPSS project is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health as part of the Sixth Community Pharmacy Agreement.

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Dispensary Corner

SPANISH researchers have revealed some surprising side-effects of new cancer therapies, with 14 patients being treated using the drugs seeing their grey hair turn back to brown.

A total of 52 subjects were participating in a study of side effects from treatment with Keytruda, Opdivo and Tecentriq.

When the first patient's grey hair was restored to its former lustre (see the 'before' and after pics below) Dr Noelia Rivera thought it must be an isolated case, but found similar results when she asked other patients to send in photos from before their treatment commenced.

All but one of the hair-changed patients responded positively to the treatment, suggesting hair darkening could be an indication that the drugs are working.



AND while we're on the subject of hair, the exhumation of the body of famous artist Salvador Dali has seen his iconic moustache amazingly preserved in the grave.

The body has been removed from a crypt beneath the Dali Museum in Figueres, Catalonia as part of a paternity case.

Narcis Bardalet, who embalmed the artist's body after his 1989 death, helped with the recovery and said he was delighted.

"His moustache is still intact, like clock hands at 10 past 10, just as he liked it. It's a miracle," he said.

Smoking age rises

THE US state of New Jersey has banned the sale of tobacco products to anyone aged under 21, as part of ongoing efforts to "make the next generation tobacco free".

Similar "Tobacco 21" laws have already been enacted in Hawaii and California, as well as more than 250 individual US cities and counties.

Tobacco use is the number one cause of preventable death in the United States, killing over 480,000 Americans and costing the nation about US\$170 billion annually in health care bills.

Medibio appoints

LISTED digital health company Medibio Limited has appointed Adam Darkins as deputy chairman of its board of directors.

Darkins, who has been based in the USA since 1997, joins Medibio from Medtronic PLC where he worked on new payment models to transform health care.

Medibio has developed an "objective test to assist with the diagnosis of depression, chronic stress and other mental health disorders," based on research conducted at the University of WA.

NZ NSAID changes

NEW Zealand's Medsafe regulator has launched a public consultation on a proposed change to the warning statements on labels of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) available without a prescription.

The move follows a recent meeting of the NZ Medicines Adverse Reactions Committee which discussed the risk of spontaneous abortion in pregnant women taking the medications.

The Committee recommended that Medsafe update the Label Statements Database to amend the warning statements regarding use in pregnancy for oral medicines containing NSAIDs available without a prescription.

In particular, the proposed revised statements add a new warning not to use NSAIDs if **trying to become pregnant** or during the first six months of pregnancy, except on the advice of a doctor.

The expanded warning would also apply to all oral dose forms (solid and liquid) of ibuprofen, diclofenac, naproxen, mefenamic acid, flurbiprofen and benzydamine.

The current warning statement only applies to diclofenac and ibuprofen sold as OTC medicines for oral use.

Feedback is sought by close of business on 15 Sep 2017.

Medsafe noted that if the proposal was accepted the move would result in harmonised package labelling for New Zealand and Australia, which may be desirable for both consumers and industry to reduce confusion.



Welcome to PD's weekly comment feature.

This week's contributor is Toni Riley, Community Pharmacist and Project Manager of National Return of Unwanted Medicines.



Potential dangers and damage associated with unwanted medicines

THERE are many reasons why it is not a good idea to store unwanted medicines at home. In 2016 more than 5,000 children were hospitalised because of accidental poisoning with medicines found in their homes. And almost 900 adults were also hospitalised because of the same reason.

In 2010-2012 accidental poisoning (includes medicines as well as other household poisons) was the 15th cause of premature death in Australia. And two in three of those deaths were males.

Expired medicines are also a potential hazard in the home as well. All medicines have an expiry date, after which the potency and stability of the medicines are no longer within acceptable specifications. Medicines degrade over time and become less effective and potentially even toxic. Needless to say, storage conditions have quite a significant impact on this rate of degrading – medicines stored in the glovebox of a car are far more likely to contain less active ingredient than those stored in the ideal conditions.

These are frightening large numbers, but community pharmacy has a role to play in ensuring that consumers understand the dangers that lurk in their medicines cabinets.

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