

## Head to Health

**THE** Federal Government has announced the launch of its new digital mental health gateway, 'Head to Health'.

Head to Health is described as an essential tool for the one in five working age Australians who will experience mental illness each year.

The website helps people take control of their mental health in a way they are most comfortable with and can complement face-to-face therapies.

"Evidence shows that for many people, digital interventions can be as effective as face-to-face services," Health Minister Greg Hunt said.

"Head to Health provides a one-stop shop for services and resources delivered by some of Australia's most trusted mental health service providers."

Go to [headtohealth.gov.au](http://headtohealth.gov.au) for details and access.

## Med shortage supply

**THE** Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has updated its page outlining the supply of medicines during a medicines shortage.

Even when a drug is not included on the ARTG, it may be approved for import and supply if no other registered good that could substitute for the short supply product is available, or if no alternative exists but an application for registration of one has been made.

The page summarises the considerations and conditions for health professionals - [tga.gov.au](http://tga.gov.au).

## Amazon pharmacy imminent

**AMERICAN** retail giant Amazon is reportedly finalising its strategy in relation to the sale of prescription drugs online, with a final decision to be made in the next few weeks according to *CNBC*.

The company's health ambitions at this stage particularly relate to the USA where the prescription medication market is worth as much as US\$560 billion annually.

The report says the decision is imminent, and follows significant research by Amazon into the health space including the recruitment of a general manager (*PD* 19 May).

The speculation has already seen a 5% decline in the share prices of retail pharmacy groups in the USA including Walgreens, CVS Health and Rite Aid.

Analysts say any move by Amazon into pharmacy would have a significant impact on the sector, with the company having about 75 million subscribers to its Amazon Prime service and "nearly unlimited resources".

## China to accept foreign meds data

**REGULATORS** in China have confirmed they plan to accept clinical data from overseas trials in order to speed up drug approvals.

According to Wu Zhen, deputy head of the China Food and Drug Administration, the plan aims to improve the accessibility of new drugs, some of which have been available in other countries for up to seven years before making it to market in China.

In Australia Amazon's plans are less developed, with the company earlier this year confirming it would roll out a full retail offering here from next year (*PD* 20 Apr).

It's not clear at this stage whether this would involve pharmacy lines, but API ceo Richard Vincent said the company was not significantly concerned about Amazon's impact (*PD* 21 Apr), saying health and beauty had not been a key growth driver for the company.

## ADEs during illness

**PATIENTS** may be susceptible to adverse drug events (ADEs) during acute illness due to comorbidities or medicine use, according to an article in the latest *Australian Prescriber* from NPS MedicineWise.

Acute illness should prompt careful monitoring or dose adjustment in patients prescribed certain medicines, authors state.

Drugs such as metformin, diuretics and sodium-glucose co-transporter 2 inhibitors, when there is a risk of hypovolaemia, may need to be temporarily suspended, especially for those with chronic kidney disease at the limits of their physiological reserve.

This article is accredited with CPD points for pharmacists who can log in at [learn.nps.org.au](http://learn.nps.org.au).

## EU excipient advice

**THE** European Medicines Agency has updated labelling guidelines to add new safety advice for 15 drug excipients - see [ema.europa.eu](http://ema.europa.eu).

## SAS and AP support

**THE** Therapeutic Goods Administration's (TGA's) latest consultation: 'Changes to accessing unapproved therapeutic goods through the Authorised Prescriber (AP) and Special Access Schemes (SAS)' has received broad support from most respondents.

A submission from the Society of Hospital Pharmacists (SHPA) in conjunction with therapeutic advisory groups was one of 37 public submissions received.

That submission highlighted the need for health service facilities to be able to procure stock in advance of expected usage and supported an early move to an online system, with integration into prescribing and dispensing software planned for a second phase.

The SHPA also sought inclusion of suitable unregistered products that could meet a national emergency on the SAS Category B list.

The submission said the TGA should be responsible for comparative analyses of such products, their indications and their source and maintain "systematic communication" to health facilities around these details.

In addition, any drugs that can treat serious morbidity (such as loss of limb or blindness) should also be included on the SAS Category B notification list, the SHPA submission said.

Where an SAS product is to be used in a hospital setting, the Society would still insist that hospital Drug and Therapeutics Committees retain responsibility for vigilance.

Visit [tga.gov.au](http://tga.gov.au) for submissions.

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## Dispensary Corner

**WHILE** good for the environment, the movement to eliminate plastic shopping bags may have some unintended health consequences according to Britain's Food Standards Agency (FSA).

Reusable shopping bags may cause microbial cross contamination and should be colour coded or labelled so shoppers can have separate bags for raw foods, packaged items and household products such as detergent, according to new FSA recommendations.

Packaging can harbour traces of harmful bacteria that can cause stomach bugs, the agency warned in a blog post, urging consumers to take common sense steps "to minimise the chances of getting food poisoning".

"Even if there are no obvious spillages or staining after several uses we would recommend that cotton/fabric 'bags for life' be machine washed regularly if they have been used for carrying raw items," it added.

A new UK regulation requires large shops to charge 5p for single use plastic bags, while in Australia major supermarkets such as Coles and Woolworths have also announced plans to phase out plastic bags.



## Dispensing fail suspension

A **NORTHERN** Irish pharmacist convicted for a dispensing error which led to the death of a patient has had his registration suspended for seven months.

Antrim pharmacist Martin White accidentally dispensed propranolol instead of prednisolone to a 67-year-old COPD patient, who died shortly after taking the medication, a Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland (PSNI) statutory committee heard in a hearing late last month.

PSNI acknowledged that White, who was sentenced to four months' imprisonment, which was suspended for two years in Dec 2016, had made an "isolated incident in an otherwise unblemished career" and had been "open and transparent" throughout the investigation into the patient's death.

White was working as pharmacy manager at Clear Pharmacy in the

Antrim Health Centre when the prednisolone script was presented by the patient's husband.

The prescription label had directed that eight tablets of prednisolone 40mg be taken daily for five days, but the label was inadvertently affixed to a packet of 40mg beta-blocker propranolol.

When the patient took eight propranolol tabs, she quickly fell ill, was taken to hospital and died a short time later as a result of the toxic effects of the high dose.

White admitted that the propranolol box was located adjacent to prednisolone packets in the alphabetically arranged dispensary shelving.

Since the incident, White expressed "remorse and regret for his actions" and said it was "impossible" for him to "conceive that he could practise again".

Visit [psni.org.uk](http://psni.org.uk) to access the full determination.



## US Zika-screens blood

**THE** US Food & Drug Administration has approved the cobas Zika test, a "qualitative nucleic acid test for the detection of Zika virus RNA in individual plasma specimens" from volunteer blood donors - [fda.gov](http://fda.gov).

## Guild Update

### Guild Elections

**CONGRATULATIONS** to everyone who has been elected to National Council and to Branch executive positions. In particular, welcome to the three new Branch Presidents, David Heffernan in NSW, Trent Twomey in QLD and Simon Blacker in the ACT. Thanks to Rick Samimi, Tim Logan and Amanda Galbraith, as outgoing Branch Presidents, for their enormous contribution to the Guild and our members.

A warm welcome and congratulations also to other incoming National Councillors in Catherine Bronger and Paul Jones from NSW, Chris Owen from QLD, Helene O'Byrne from TAS, Arn Doan from SA, and Natalie Willis from WA. It is exciting to have a group of new National Councillors who combine such real life expertise and experience with a sense of enthusiasm and vitality for the future of community pharmacy.

Thank you also to our other outgoing National Councillors in Mario Barone from NSW, Angelo Pricolo from VIC, Joe O'Malley from TAS, Ian Todd from SA and Lenette Mullen from WA for your hard work, camaraderie and, most of all your commitment to Guild members.

## WIN WITH PLAQUEAWAY

Each day this week, Pharmacy Daily and PlaqueAway are giving away one bottle of PlaqueAway capsules valued at \$37.95.

PlaqueAway is a new and unique food supplement in Australia with significant oral health benefits. The capsules contain organic *Ascophyllum nodosum* (seaweed) powder which reduces plaque and tartar on teeth. Oral health benefits include a reduction in bad breath. As plaque is often stained, teeth will be whiter.

For more info visit [www.plaqueaway.com.au](http://www.plaqueaway.com.au).

To win, be the first from QLD to send the correct answer to the question to [comp@pharmacydaily.com.au](mailto:comp@pharmacydaily.com.au)

How many capsules are in a PlaqueAway bottle?

*Congratulations to yesterday's winner, Carly Hanson from Saatchi & Saatchi Wellness.*

