

Vic assisted dying

DYING With Dignity members in Victoria (DWDV) have hailed the passage of assisted dying legislation in the lower house of the Victorian parliament, a move supported by the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP).

DWDV president Lesley Vick said the public support expressed by RACGP president Dr Bastian Seidel showed that terminally ill people and their families would receive comfort and care from their general practitioners.

Under the proposed legislation, pharmacists would supply lethal drugs in a "locked box" under procedures initiated by the person living with a terminal illness.

The bill now moves to the upper house of the Victorian parliament.

The legislation was developed following the release of a report by a panel led by former AMA president Brian Owler (**PD 24 Jul 2017**) which recommended guidelines and procedures to implement Voluntary Assisted Dying.

Location rules bill tabled

PHARMACY location rules will be protected beyond 2020 under the provisions of legislation tabled in Federal Parliament late last week.

The explanatory statement for the *National Health Amendment (Pharmaceutical Benefits - Budget and Other Measures) Bill 2017* says it will "remove provisions that would otherwise cease the operation of the Australian Community Pharmacy Authority and the pharmacy location rules on 30 June 2020 (that is, removing the sunset clauses)".

The proposed amendments would implement undertakings in the compact agreed by the government with the Pharmacy Guild of Australia, which forms part of the PBS Medicines Package announced along with the 2017-18 budget.

Federal Treasurer Scott Morrison unveiled the move along with the budget (**PD 09 May**), promising the government would "ensure the ongoing legislative basis for

Pharmacy Location Rules" in order to give pharmacy owners ongoing confidence that approval to supply pharmaceutical benefits at particular premises will continue to be regulated.

Unless the legislation is passed by Parliament the existing functions and operations of the Australian Community Pharmacy Authority and pharmacy location rules will lapse on 30 Jun 2020.

Other measures enshrined in the bill tabled last week included measures around statutory PBS price reductions, achieving "significant savings while providing five years of clarity and stability for the medicines supply sector".

Rural health priority

AUSTRALIA'S Federal Government is claiming fresh ground in its battle for supremacy in the rural vote with the appointment of the first ever National Rural Health Commissioner Emeritus Professor Paul Worley (**pictured**).

His primary remit will be to address the shortage of country doctors but the Assistant Minister for Health David



Gillespie has emphasised that the impact of the role will equally apply to allied health professionals including pharmacy and others.

"Whatever health profession you can pick there is always a metropolitan preponderance of their distribution," Gillespie said.

The move has been strongly hailed by both the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) and the Pharmacy Guild of Australia.

PSA national president Dr Shane Jackson said, "Pharmacists warmly welcome Prof Worley's appointment and his important commitment to improving access to quality health services and care in rural and regional communities".

Guild national president George Tambassis, said: "The Pharmacy Guild has a strong record in developing and administering programs that focus on rural health needs delivered through community pharmacy, and we look forward to working with Professor Worley in the interests of patients across Australia."

Preventive health failure

THE amount of money and attention on preventative healthcare on Australia is going backwards instead of forwards, and it's coming at a great cost, according to a new report from the McKell Institute, launched at the World Self Medication Industry (WSMI) General Assembly in Sydney last week.

The report, 'Picking the low-hanging fruit – achieving a more equitable and sustainable health care system', notes that Australia has hit an unwanted milestone – in 2014-15, health care expenditure reached 10% of GDP for the first time, according to AIHW data.

Expenditure on health currently takes up around 25% of State and Commonwealth revenue according to the Grattan Institute, with the trend rising, the report said.

A point echoed through several sessions at the WSMI General Assembly is the need for the self-care to go beyond the management of minor and common ailments and move more into preventative

measures to maintain health.

Increasing the use of complementary therapies that have a strong evidence was considered one of the "low-hanging fruit" for Australians to use in the self care to help protect their health.

The report used vitamin D and calcium as examples where supplementation can reduce the prevalence of a number of chronic diseases, and where a dollar value had been placed on this through studies.

A strong recommendation from the conference was for Australians to become "the ceo of their own health", driving the direction of their health through their own actions and collaboration with their health professionals.

Nevertheless for its number one recommendation, the report says that Australia should re-establish a National Preventative Health body to evaluate the evidence of the cost effectiveness of new health interventions.

NZ health review

THE newly elected Labour govt in NZ will undertake a review of the country's primary care funding "to further reduce barriers to primary care and ensure the financial sustainability of practices," as part of its health policy platform.

Menarini NCE added

ADD-ON therapy for the symptomatic treatment of stable angina pectoris, Menarini's Ranexa (ranolazine) has been the only new chemical entity (NCE) added to the ARTG by the Therapeutic Goods Administration in Oct.

The drug is indicated for angina pectoris patients taking maximum tolerated doses of a beta-blocker or a calcium channel blocker but have inadequate symptom control.



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Dispensary Corner

OMEGA-3 advocates often claim people need to get more fish into their diets, but one man appears to have taken that advice to the extreme when he swallowed an entire Dover sole whole while fishing in Bournemouth, UK.

The unnamed angler didn't do it on purpose, with the fish he had just caught jumping off his hook (probably as he was puckering up to give it a kiss) and diving non-consensually down his throat - causing the man to seek urgent medical treatment.

The offending fish had caused a complete obstruction of the airways, and paramedics were forced to use forceps to grab hold the fish's tail and yank it back out.

The man is said to be recovering well but we are betting this was a rare occasion where he would be happier to regale his mates about the "fish that got away".



AMAZON is a retailing sensation, but not everything the internet phenomenon does is a success.

A couple in Florida called the police recently after receiving almost 30kg of cannabis as part of their order.

They had purchased four plastic storage bins, but when they arrived they were significantly heavier than expected.

Officers seized the drugs and are currently investigating, with Amazon saying its customer service division is cooperating with law enforcement officials.

Hammer time in WA

POLICE in Perth have arrested a man who allegedly used a hammer to threaten staff during a robbery of a pharmacy in Midland on Sat.

According to a report of the incident, officers will allege a man brandishing a hammer entered North Street Pharmacy at around noon, demanding cash and prescription drugs before leaving the scene in a red Holden Commodore which was located a short distance away.

Two people have been arrested and are assisting Midland Detectives with their investigation.

Antibiotic Rx targets

AUSTRALIAN research published today in the *Medical Journal of Australia* has called for monitoring of antibiotic resistance rates in the community so that targets can be set for reducing prescriptions of antibiotics by general practitioners.

Author and GP Professor Christopher Del Mar at Bond University said treatable resistance was approaching "apocalyptic" proportions in Australia.

Activate or miss out

ALMOST 1,000 pharmacies across Australia have activated their membership of the Guild's pharmacy.com.au "Click and Collect" online platform which is becoming one of the largest such networks in the country.

Guild members are able to register to participate at no cost.

"We want to see members ready and active in the digital economy," said Pharmacy.com.au's Aaron D'Souza, who said the platform worked with all banner brands, even the ones with their own click-and-collect services.

"Suppliers have a serious commerce barrier - they want to market to consumers but don't want to or can't sell directly.

"Often their websites generate thousands of consumer visits a week...they want to channel that consumer traffic to the pharmacies who stock their product," he said.

D'Souza said pharmacy.com.au allowed consumers to collect their online purchase within three hours via their local pharmacy.

Ego Pharmaceuticals has connected its full product range, and MedActive will be live in the next month offering its niche range of medicine transport bags and devices ideal for patients with temperature sensitive medicines.

D'Souza also confirmed the imminent addition of two major pain relief, specialty vitamin and eye care brands.

More info on 1300 286 880.



Welcome to PD's weekly comment feature.

This week's contributor is Associate Professor

Claudine Bonder, Chief Investigator at University of South Australia, NBCF funded researcher



Preventing breast cancer progression

EVERY day in Australia, 48 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer and 8 women will die from this devastating disease. My team and I at the University of South Australia are determined to prevent the progression of breast cancer.

My previous research had successfully showed that an individual protein - interleukin-3 (IL-3) plays an important role in the vascularization and growth of aggressive breast cancer.

My current study now aims to demonstrate that IL-3 contributes to the initial growth of breast tumours and ultimately a factor for the metastasis of breast cancer. I'm hoping to repurpose a blocking antibody that targets IL-3 to allow the development of a potential treatment for breast cancer patients.

If our research is successful, we may have a new treatment option for patients with the most difficult to treat breast cancer.

This October, join the National Breast Cancer Foundation (NBCF) to raise funds to continue the work of researchers such as myself and change the odds of breast cancer survival.

Register to host a Pink Ribbon Breakfast at www.pinkribbonbreakfast.org.au.

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