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New meds safety app

A NEW smart device app has been created to assist people with limited vision to increase their knowledge of drugs they are taking. The "Our Pills Talk Medication Safety App" can read prescription labels out loud and also translate labels into a patient's preferred language, thereby helping anyone with any communication difficulty.

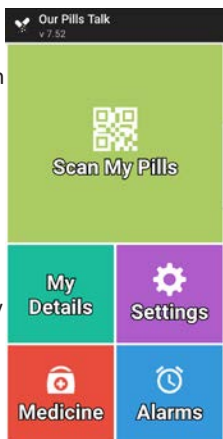
This can include patients who are visually impaired, dyslexic, autistic, elderly, ESL patients and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

The app was developed by pharmacists Steve Cohen, who said the Our Pills Talk Medication Safety App was designed to "fill an unfortunate void in our world" to support the disadvantaged by speaking out to them that they are taking the correct medicines.

The free app can be downloaded onto a patient's smartphone, with the pharmacist generating a personalised QR barcode on the prescription label.

The code is scanned using the phone, with the app then automatically converting the prescription information and instructions from text to speech.

The app also provides an alarm facility for patient reminders - more info at ourpillstalk.com.au.



Pharmacies smash 2018 flu

HEALTH Minister Greg Hunt has hailed the contribution of community pharmacies across Australia to reducing the incidence of flu last winter, with this year's successful primary care vaccination program helping deliver the lowest rates of influenza in the country since 2013.

Health Minister Greg Hunt confirmed a record 11 million Australians received the influenza vaccine this year, nearly a third more than the previous year.

To date, only 52,000 cases of influenza have been reported, one fifth of last year's 250,000 cases.

There was also unprecedented demand for influenza vaccine early in the 2018 season, which saw the Government secure an additional 1.3 million doses of the vaccine for the National Immunisation Program, state programs and the private market.

"Collaboration between GPs and other vaccination providers across Australia, including community pharmacies, encouraged the uptake of flu vaccinations this year," the minister said on Sat.

National President of the Pharmacy Guild of Australia, George Tambassiss, said community pharmacies were proud of the contribution they had made to this public health success story.

"And we can do more - National Immunisation Program vaccines for influenza high-risk patient groups are currently available through community pharmacies in only two States - Victoria and Western Australia," Tambassiss noted.

"These vital vaccines should

be available through community pharmacies in all States and Territories to provide equal access for all Australians through their local pharmacy and pharmacist vaccinator," he urged.

Pharmaceutical Society of Australia NSW Branch President Professor Peter Carroll commented, "The administration of vaccines by community pharmacists complements the excellent work done by GPs. It helps to increase the vaccination rate, and herd immunity within the community."

"As frontline health care professionals community pharmacists are able to offer vaccination services to those people who do not have a GP, or visit a GP only rarely, Carrol said.

"Allowing community pharmacists to vaccinate people against influenza has clearly resulted in a significant increase in the number of people vaccinated, and contributed to the dramatic and very welcome drop in the death rate caused by influenza".

New APC exam practice papers

THE Australian Pharmacy Council (APC) has released two new additional practice papers for candidates planning to sit the APC Intern Written Examination or the Competency Assessment of Overseas Pharmacist examination.

APC CEO Bronwyn Clark said the new papers were a valuable resource for pharmacy interns and overseas trained pharmacists, providing candidates with an opportunity to understand the format and content of a range of questions that closely match the style on exam day.

"The practice questions are from previous examinations and therefore will not be used again.

"However the practice cannot be underestimated for those wanting to familiarise themselves with this intense and essential part of their pharmacy journey," Clark said.

The PDF versions of the papers can be downloaded from the exam resources page of the APC website at pharmacycouncil.org.au.

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References: 1. The aftercare for fractionated resurfacing consists of applying a cooling, wound-healing gel supplemented with cooling thermal water. Crevits B, Tempo Medical April 2012. 2. Censabella et al., Management of radiotherapy-induced skin reactions: Retrospective comparison of a hydroactive colloid gel and a dexpanthenol cream on the development of moist desquamation in breast cancer patients. Eur J ON 18 (2014) 499-504.



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Cash-flow support

THE Federal Government has detailed measures in the 2018-19 Budget which aim to ease the burden on pharmacies stocking high-cost drugs.

Under the improved payment administration arrangements, the Government will continue to negotiate cost-effective prices with manufacturers for medicines with special pricing arrangements.

However rather than paying the list price for medicines to pharmacies and receiving rebates from manufacturers to achieve a lower effective price, the Government will instead pay the effective price direct to the manufacturer.

The change means pharmacies will not have to pay a potentially significant cost to stock the PBS medicine, while total remuneration for wholesalers and pharmacies for stocking and dispensing the medicines involved will not change.

The first phase of the new arrangements will be implemented from 01 Jul 2019 - pbs.gov.au.

BP anti-inflammatory treatment

LA TROBE University and the Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute are leading a major new study into the causes of high blood pressure (BP) and have found a possible link with chronic inflammation.

Inflammation-suppressing drugs, usually reserved for patients with autoimmune diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis, may prove to be at least part of the solution for the management of high blood pressure, researchers say.

The findings, published in the journal *Cardiovascular Research*, relate only to mice at this stage but offer considerable hope in terms of finding the root cause of hypertension and may lead to more treatment options.

Lead author Dr Antony Vinh said the team was testing the idea that lifestyle factors such as high salt and high fat diets directly activate an enzyme found in the kidneys and blood vessels – known as the inflammasome - [CLICK HERE](#).

Carmen get it!



THE team from Carmen Drive Pharmacy in the Sydney suburb of Carlingford (**pictured**) recently met with NSW Pharmacy Guild Senior Membership Manager Sonia Moss, who congratulated Yvonne, Lois and Chris for being an integral part of their local health district.

Carmen Drive Pharmacy is currently involved in several trial programs including Minor Ailment Services, Asthma & Rhinitis and Health Care Homes, with the aim of becoming a central health hub for the community.

Deferasirox not a-flag

THE Health Department has highlighted to prescribers that the deferasirox (Jadenau/Exjade) 'N'mg dispersible tablet and 'N'mg film coated tablet are equivalent for the purposes of substitution, but are not a-flagged to permit pharmacist substitution in the dispensary.

The Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme website details the issue, noting a change will be made to clinical criteria in the PBS Schedule on 01 Feb 2019 - pbs.gov.au.

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Dispensary Corner

AN UNUSUAL case reported in the *New England Journal of Medicine* last week has created a confronting picture of the phrase "coughing up a lung".

Doctors at UC San Francisco Medical Centre reported the incident which occurred when a 36-year-old man with end-stage heart failure coughed up a massive blood clot (**below**) in the shape of his right bronchial tree.

Unfortunately the patient died a few days later despite the best efforts of the medical team.



JUST in time for New Year's Eve fireworks, a new animal medication has been approved by the US Food and Drug Administration to help pets deal with loud noises.

Pexion is indicated for use in cases of animal anxiety, and is to be given to dogs twice daily starting a couple of days before an expected "noise event".

Side effects of the drug can include difficulty standing and walking, increased appetite and vomiting, and Pexion will only be available in the US with a prescription from a vet.

\$30m DoseMe deal

BRISBANE-BASED precision medication dosing provider DoseMe is set to be acquired by US-listed firm Tabula Rasa Healthcare, in a deal reportedly worth up to US\$30 million.

The company's DoseMeRx system is a tool which helps doctors and pharmacists accurately dose hospital patients' high-risk parenteral medications based on individual needs.

DoseMeRx is available in more than 100 hospitals and infusion providers worldwide, and Tabula Rasa plans to integrate it with its own proprietary Medication Risk Mitigation technologies to enhance medication safety in hospitals.

Adverse drug events are the fourth leading cause of death in the USA, with Tabula Rasa CEO Calvin Knowlton saying the addition of DoseMe would further the shift towards precision prescribing.

Tailoring doses to individual needs would have a "profound impact on safety, quality and costs, such as medication-related increased hospital length of stay," he said.

API "tough market"

AUSTRALIAN Pharmaceutical Industries says it expects the retail market to continue to remain tough, with consumers cautious in their spending habits.

The API Annual Report for 2018, released on Fri, included an update on the company's outlook, with CEO Richard Vincent saying the company had experienced these conditions over the last two years.

"Our business is geared to this environment and we have trimmed our operating cost base to meet this challenge," he wrote.

Going forward Priceline Pharmacy remains a key focus for growth, with a major upgrade planned for the Sister Club loyalty program.

Also in the works is an investment in an inventory management system which will facilitate the trial of a "click and collect" solution during the second half of the financial year.

This system will enable customers to purchase products online and pick them up from the nearest physical store location.

Vincent said API's Consumer Brands business in New Zealand was also seeing significant growth, with expansion expected through a mix of in-house manufacturing and an expanded network of off-shore product suppliers.

API is upbeat about the prospects of its newly-acquired Clear Skincare business, and is already reaping the benefits of its common customer base with Priceline Pharmacy.



Welcome to Pharmacy Daily's weekly comment feature.

This week's contributor



is **Peter Marshall, Managing Director - Pharmacy Solutions Australia.**

What do Pharmacy buyers look for?

EVERY pharmacy that is sold is unique. The mix of sales - dispensary v retail, the mix of drugs sold in the dispensary, the lease situation, is there nursing home work, and so on. So what are the facets of a pharmacy business that are considered most desirable by buyers in the current environment?

In terms of security of the business - the lease and rent are obviously very important, equally important however is having a complete understanding of the competitive forces surrounding the business - these are the key factors that drive rate of return.

There are however numerous other aspects of the business that can have a positive bearing on a buyer's perception of opportunity - some of these positive influences include;

- An increasing turnover is highly desirable
- Gross profit percentage is not high with no large fluctuations in previous years
- The wage percentage is not low
- Low generic substitution
- Little or no external business (e.g. nursing home)
- Low stock levels per square metre represents a great opportunity for a pharmacist with retail skills.

Simply put, obtaining a pharmacy that has multiple avenues for growth is the key to what is desirable to buyers.

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