

ACT pharmacies into administration

TWO pharmacies trading under the Amcal and Guardian brands in the ACT have been placed into administration, with a key factor being "significant rent expenses" for the stores which are located in a Westfield shopping centre.

According to documents filed in the Federal Court in relation to the administration, Sigma Healthcare is a major creditor, owed \$2.6 million for "inventory supplied" to the pharmacies.

Administrators of the pharmacies applied to the Federal Court for approval to extend the date for a second creditors' meeting while they explored the possible sale of the pharmacies or their assets.

Other creditors include Westpac, with a loan guaranteed by Sigma, and the landlord.

The pharmacies had unsuccessfully attempted to negotiate reduced rental arrangements prior to being placed into administration.

However under the administrator, rents have been discounted and the pharmacies have been able to continue trading.

The Court approved a delay to the next creditors' meeting which will now take place in Feb 2019.

Opioid dispensing concerns

THE rate of opioid medicines dispensed increased by 5% between 2013 and 2017, according to the third Australian Atlas of Healthcare Variation which was formally released this morning.

Designed to reveal trends in public health that require attention, the Atlas is produced on an annual basis by the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Healthcare in partnership with the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

In this edition, the rise in opioid medication use is one of the leading trends revealed.

PBS data showed 15.5 million prescriptions for opioid medicines were filled between 2016 and 2017.

During 2016 to 2017 there were 58,595 prescriptions dispensed per 100,000 people, representing an increase from 2013-14, when it was 55,900 prescriptions per 100,000.

More than twice as many people died from overdose associated with an opioid medicine compared to those who died from an overdose of heroin (2,145 compared with 985) between 2011 and 2015.

The report reinforces the growing concern that opioids are being prescribed beyond the acute pain period and for chronic non-cancer

pain, despite little evidence to show any benefit of long term use, said PainAustralia CEO Carol Bennett.

"We need better awareness among consumers and doctors about pain management treatment options – and we need to ensure those options exist," Bennett said.

The Atlas highlighted high rates of antibiotic dispensing for children aged 0-9 years, with overall dispensing rates triple those in some similar countries.

A more detailed exploration of data on antipsychotics, ADHD drugs and antimicrobials will be published in 2019, the Commission said.

See safetyandquality.gov.au.

Early PBS payments

THE Department of Human Services has advised that pharmacists may be able to get their PBS Online payments early this month due to the Christmas holiday period.

Payments due on Fri 28 Dec will be released a week early, while claims lodged between Thu 20 and Wed 26 Dec 2018 will be processed as normal, with payment to be made on Fri 04 Jan 2019.

Compounding quality

THE US Food and Drug Administration has released further details of its 2018 Compounding Priorities Plan, with a key focus being to ensure the quality of compounded medications.

New draft guidance contains a series of recommendations for protecting patients from the risk of contaminated or substandard products produced by compounding pharmacies.

A particular concern is ongoing "unsafe activity in the compounding sector," including at facilities which are not registered with the FDA as outsourcing facilities but which continue to distribute "office stock" for health providers to give to patients.

Domestic violence leave entitlement

LEGISLATION has passed both Houses of Parliament which will change the Fair Work Act 2009 to include an entitlement to unpaid family and domestic violence leave.

Under the updated law, workers under all industry and occupation awards (including part-time and casual staff) will be entitled to five days of unpaid family and domestic violence leave each year.

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Dispensary Corner

THERE truly is goodness in the world, if the random act of kindness of a business traveller in the USA is any indication.

The unnamed Good Samaritan was travelling in First Class on an American Airlines flight from Orlando to Philadelphia last week when he must have noticed a struggling mother and her infant daughter who was travelling with an oxygen machine to an appointment to treat the little one's chronic lung disease.

Unbeknownst to the little family, the man gave up his seat up the front so they could enjoy the comforts of the premium cabin.

The mother, Kelsey Rae Zwick, only spoke to him briefly on board, but later recorded her thanks in a Facebook post, saying she was overcome with emotion when a flight attendant told her she could move seats.

"Not able to hold back tears I cried my way up the aisle while my daughter Lucy laughed.

"She felt it in her bones too... real, pure goodness. I smiled and thanked you as we switched but didn't get to thank you properly," the mother's post said.

The story continued, with the man later making contact after the post went viral and telling Zwick that the incident had taken place on his birthday.

"He was thanking me for a birthday to remember...he said 'I am so glad we were on the same flight,'" she wrote.

Zwick told *Yahoo News* the baby enjoyed flying First Class before her first birthday - particularly the extra room in seat 2D along with a cheese plate and other luxuries!

Natralus in Priceline

AUSTRALIAN natural skincare brand "Natralus My Little One" has launched into 255 Priceline stores nationally.

Natralus MD John Rowe said the rollout was a major development for the brand which highlighted the growing demand for all natural children's products in Australia.

A selected group of 19 stores will hold the entire My Little One range, while the remainder will carry a subset of the products.

For more info see natralus.com.au

Save the Date app

NSW Health has released a new version of its "Save the Date to Vaccinate" smartphone app, which aims to assist parents and carers keep up to date with their children's vaccinations.

The free app is available for both Android and Apple devices, and allows users to set up family profiles before it automatically creates the recommended immunisation schedules, along with reminders for when jabs are due.

AHPRA to cooperate with WA Police

THE Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency has announced a new Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Western Australia Police, with the aim of boosting coordination and communication between the agencies in the interest of protecting the public.

The MoU formalises existing processes for the release of information by AHPRA when it identifies information relating to criminal offences including physical harm, sexual offending, production of exploitative material and/or drug offences.

It also documents the mechanism for WA Police to share information with AHPRA about practitioners who they suspect may pose a risk of substantial harm to the public, or individuals illegally posing as registered health practitioners.

The development of the Western Australia MoU follows a similar agreement established by AHPRA with Victorian Police earlier this year (**PD** 17 Jul 2018).

Halaven correction

THE Health Department has advised of an amended price for eribulin (Halaven) in the 01 Dec Schedule of Pharmaceutical Benefits, saying the dispensed price for items 10140Q and 11199K should be \$853.74, not \$1,492.56.



Guild Update

Guild ITP – get with the strength

THE Guild Intern Training Program (ITP) is attracting growing interest this year, with enrolments up significantly across most Branches. It's very important to us to build on this momentum and ensure Guild ITP takes its rightful place as the premier community pharmacy intern training program.

A reminder that all Guild Intern Training Program (ITP) enrollees in 2019 will have free access to the Guild Vaccination Course for Pharmacists.

Interns undertaking the Guild ITP will be able to complete their accreditation to provide pharmacist-administered vaccination services as a free benefit of the program.

We're committed to ensuring that early career pharmacists are skilled, ready and able to deliver vaccination services, and are also given the best possible grounding in the full range of Community Pharmacy Agreement programs.

Interns can enrol in the program at www.internpharmacist.com.au.

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