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Use pharmacists to the full: Guild

AUSTRALIAN health policy makers are being urged to allow pharmacists to use their “training to the full”, following the release of the *Pharmacy Guild of Australia’s Community Pharmacies: Part of the Solution* policy paper.

The document released this morning in Sydney called for pharmacists to be given a bigger role within the health system to improve patients’ access to treatment services.

Guild National President, George Tambassis, noted half a million Australians have avoided visiting their GP because of concerns about costs.

“The policy basis is clear, the Australian health system is not adapting to our ageing and growing population, leaving Australian

families frustrated by long GP wait times and increasing out-of-pocket expenses,” he said.

“We found allowing pharmacists to perform to their full scope in the health system – including treating common ailments, dispensing medication for stable and ongoing medical conditions, and administering vaccines, could relieve pressure on GPs and Emergency Departments (EDs), freeing them up to spend more time with their patients.

“The policy paper found pharmacists are in a unique position to relieve the stresses and strains on the health system by fulfilling their scope of practice.

“They give more free health advice than any other health professional with more than



451 million visits to community pharmacies last year alone.

“This would see pharmacists use their training to the full.

“Pharmacists playing a bigger role in the health systems overseas has seen savings for consumers and government and made care more accessible.

“What we saw especially in Canada and the UK, where pharmacists practised at their full scope meant less pressure on GPs and EDs, better outcomes for patients, and a more affordable and accessible healthcare system.

“According to the policy paper pharmacists would only treat to the extent of their training and are quick to refer patients to their GP or an ED when their health issue was beyond their training or patients needed reassurance.

“Community pharmacies are the most accessible place to get health advice.

“It makes sense to make the most of pharmacists as part of the solution to the healthcare concerns of Australians.”

Today's issue of *PD*

Pharmacy Daily today has three pages of news including our weekly **Health & Beauty** feature.

Diabetes nutrition



GUILD Learning and Development has partnered with Abbott Nutrition in the development of a new online module titled *The role of medical nutrition therapy in managing blood glucose levels*.

This new module highlights the role of medical nutrition therapy in managing blood glucose levels, supporting pharmacists who counsel patients with diabetes mellitus.

Counselling topics include blood glucose management, diet and exercise.

To access this free accredited course call 1800 049 056 or email learninganddevelopment@guild.org.au.

Prescribing errors in children's meds

RESEARCHERS investigating the causes of prescribing errors with children’s medicines describe the issues as “highly inter-related” and make a series of recommendations across four categories.

The UK study drew on MEDLINE, EMBASE, CINAHL databases, grey literature and reference lists of included studies, filtered to 68 qualifying research papers.

Key distinguishing features of children’s medications were the number of individualised dosing calculations, the amount



of off-label prescribing, issues around working with children, communication with children and the possible medication formulations specifically suited to children.

Recommendations were made across the categories of research needs, policy and drug industry level, practice elements and education requirements.

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GP questions value of location rules

RESTRICTING schedule 2 and 3 medications to pharmacies is inflating prices, while restricting access, former Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) Expert Committee - Quality Care Chair, Dr Evan Ackermann, claims.

Responding to calls to loosen the pharmacy location rules to allow convenience stores to provide pharmacy services, Ackermann said that while he would not support prescription-only medicines being dispensed outside a pharmacy, he called for a review of S2 and S3 products, *newsGP* reported.

"A lot of them are [essentially] over-the-counter and should probably be allowed to have some wider distribution," he said.

"Limiting these sort of drugs to pharmacy- or pharmacist-only has just pushed prices up.

"Pharmacists are supposed to establish a diagnosis or establish a reason for people taking S2 or S3



medications, but they often don't and instead it's often the pharmacy staff that [facilitate the sale]."

A spokesperson for the Pharmacy Guild of Australia suggested the College may need to focus on GP overprescribing of benzodiazepines, before criticising pharmacists, following an *ABC 7:30* report on Mon night.

"It's pretty rich for the RACGP to be focussing constantly on pharmacy and medicine schedules when their President Dr Harry Nespolon has admitted GPS

are rampantly over-prescribing benzodiazepines," the spokesperson said.

"And what is the RACGP response? "Run up the white flag, admit doctors are overprescribing, and then cravenly ask for more money to undertake longer consultations with the victims. Disgraceful."

Speaking to the *ABC*, Nespolon conceded GPs were still over reliant on benzodiazepines despite being aware of the well-documented risks associated with long-term use of the medicines.

Blackmores runs

BLACKMORES is teaming up with Saturday morning jogging group, parkrun, to encourage Australians to keep moving.

The ongoing partnership will kick-off with four activations across four parkrun events in NSW, Victoria and Queensland.

Blackmores Australia and New Zealand interim Managing Director, said parkrun was a perfect partner in promoting wellbeing.



iHUB

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To win, be the first from WA to send the correct answer to the question to comp@pharmacydaily.com.au

Name one use for Plunkett's Vita E Natural Vitamin E Quick Dry Oil.

Congratulations to yesterday's winner, Tamara Guthrie.



FIP on FMD

THE International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) has focused its most recent edition of the *European Industrial Pharmacy Journal* on the Falsified Medicines Directive (FMD).

Taking the pharmacy perspective, articles discuss getting started with the FMD and how it has impacted on pharmacies.

There is also an article exploring optimised cyclone systems in powder recovery and emission control.

Members can access the document at fip.org.

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Dispensary Corner

NOT so long ago the very thought of contraceptives being available in an Irish pharmacy seemed farfetched, but times have changed.

The Emerald Isle may have been a late comer to the sexual revolution, but Irish pharmacists are now seeking the right to dispense oral contraceptives without a prescription and free to women.

The Irish Pharmacy Union has proposed the move following a recent public consultation aimed at improving access to contraception in the wake of the country's referendum to repeal anti-abortion legislation.

"Not all barriers to contraception are financial, and free contraception alone may not necessarily lead to increased use," an IPU spokesperson said. "Financial and non-financial barriers to access are often connected; a woman who can't afford to take time off work can't access a free consultation with a GP, but she can often see a pharmacist in her free time.

"If the Government is sincere about improving access for all, the prescription-free element of our proposal is at least as important as the free-of-charge component."

The Health Minister of the once conservative nation has revealed plans to distribute free condoms across university campuses in the coming months, as part of the Government's strategy to reduce the number of crisis pregnancies and improve sexual health.

NICE puts cannabis on ice

THE National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has published its draft recommendations on the use of cannabis-based medicinal products, holding back from recommending cannabidiol (CBD) for epilepsy.

The draft guidance looks at most of the cannabis-based medicinal products for treating intractable nausea and vomiting as a result of chemotherapy, chronic pain, spasticity, and severe treatment-resistant epilepsy.

The UK medicines authority propose eight recommendations for adoption.

Among them, the recommendation around managing severe treatment-resistant epilepsy, were rigorously dependent on sufficient evidence



including cost-effectiveness.

Under certain conditions, nabilone was ticked as an add-on treatment for chemotherapy induced nausea and vomiting while Sativex was dismissed for treating spasticity unless part of a clinical trial.

CBD was not recommended for chronic pain - see nice.org.uk.

Polypharmacy concerns

A COLLABORATIVE study of the prevalence of polypharmacy among Australians aged 70 years or more has revealed it to be as high as 36% to 46%.

Melbourne, Sydney and Perth researchers analysed 2017 PBS data relating to almost one million people.

Authors said their estimations were low because they did not allow for complementary medicines.

"Polypharmacy can be appropriate, but there is substantial evidence for its potential harm and the importance of rationalising unnecessary medicines, particularly in older people," researchers said - mja.com.au.

HEALTH & BEAUTY

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