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Pharmacy united on meds safety

LEADING pharmacy, consumer and Federal agencies want to see better use of existing funding and leverage digital health resources to improve quality use of medicines, discussions at the Medicines Safety Forum in Canberra revealed.

Convened by the Consumers Health Forum (CHF), Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA), Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA), NPS MedicineWise along with academic partners Monash University and the University of Sydney, the forum welcomed the recent Council of Australian Governments Health Ministers' decision to make medicines safety the 10th National Health Priority Area (**PD** 05 Nov).

Speaking after the forum, PSA National President, Dr Chris Freeman, noted medication-related harm costs the Australian health system an estimated \$1.4 billion a year.

"Medicine safety is a priority for us all and we each have a role to play," Freeman said.

"It was inspiring to see the sector work together today to proactively identify those measures we can cooperatively pursue to make a real difference and protect patients.

"Improving medicine safety is not just about spending more money but also about being more strategic with the money that is spent.

"Today there was deep discussion of the actions we can take to reduce harm from medicines.

"We will now take the feedback



and ideas we received from participants and develop a suite of recommendations and work with relevant stakeholders to implement as a matter of urgency."

Freeman thanked the more than 100 delegates who took part in the forum, saying medicine related-harm was one of Australia's biggest healthcare challenges.

"The depth and number of participants at today's forum shows how important this issue is and how committed the health care sector is to improving medicine safety," he said.

CHF CEO, Leanne Wells, said there was a need for greater patient engagement to boost their medicines knowledge.

"Discussions often returned to how vital it is to have patients actively engaged in their health care decisions and informed about the medicines they are prescribed,"

she said.

"Modern medication offers great benefits but the rate of hospital admissions caused by avoidable medication errors shows the importance of ensuring consumers are informed about their medicines, which is an integral part of broader quality use of medicines."

NPS MedicineWise CEO, Steve Morris, said there was a need to look back to the future "to cherish the ethos of quality use of medicines".

"While Australia's National Strategy for the Quality Use of Medicines requires an update, the principles of 20 years ago, including the primacy of consumers, is just as relevant today," he said.

A report on the outcomes of the forum, including recommendations is now set to be developed by the participant organisations.

Today's issue of *PD*

Pharmacy Daily today has three pages of news plus a full page from *SkinB5*.

ADHA CEO quits

AUSTRALIAN Digital Health Agency (ADHA) CEO, Tim Kelsey, will step down from the role on 17 Jan, after more than three years.

In a brief statement released yesterday, the ADHA's Board, noted the agency had reached a number of key milestones under Kelsey's tenure, with more than 22 million Australians now signed up to the My Health Record (MHR) and paperless prescriptions set to come online in early 2020.

However, a review of the MHR by the Australian National Audit Office found the agency had not properly managed or considered the cybersecurity and privacy risks.

The Guardian reported that as of last month the ADHA had not conducted an end-to-end privacy risk assessment of the system under the opt-out model, which came into force earlier this year.



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Essential oil exposure on the rise

CONCERNS are being raised over the misuse of essential oils widely available in pharmacies.

Researchers from the University of Sydney found more than 4,400 essential oil exposures were reported to the NSW Poisons Information Centre (NSWPIC) between 2014/15 and 2017/18.

The retrospective study, published in the *Medical Journal of Australia*, found there was a 5.3% annual increase in the number of incidents of essential oil poisonings in that timeframe.

During the study period 1,387 callers to the NSWPIC had symptoms of poisoning at the time of the call, with 14% of callers reporting they had consumed an essential oil mistaking it for a liquid pharmaceutical, usually a cough mixture, 2.4% said they took the liquid "with therapeutic intent", while 80% reported their exposure had been the result of



an accident.

In almost two out of every three cases, the patient was under 15 years of age.

Eucalyptus oil was the most frequent essential oil involved in poisonings, followed by tea tree (17%), lavender (6.1%), clove (4.1%) and peppermint (3.5%).

Eucalyptus oil exposures were most frequently reported between Jun and Aug, with 54.3 calls per month on average.

Expand aged care scope

PHARMACY services provided in aged care facilities should be expanded as part of the Seventh Community Pharmacy Agreement (7CPA), union group, Professional Pharmacists Australia (PPA) believes.

In its response to the Royal Commission into Aged Care's Interim Report, the PPA called on the Pharmacy Guild of Australia, Pharmaceutical Society of Australia and the Department of Health to adopt a "whole of pharmacy approach" to broaden the services provided by pharmacists in aged care settings.

The PPA backed the Government's \$25.5 million funding boost to support medication management programs, including the 6CPA-funded Residential Medication Management Review (RMMR) program, aimed at improving quality use of medicines (QUM).

The union said the profession should "advocate in collaboration with other stakeholders for increased funding of the residential aged care sector to ensure sufficient skilled and knowledgeable staff are supporting residents".

"The cap on medication reviews should be abolished, better collaborative processes between reviewing pharmacist and prescriber should be instituted, the reviewing pharmacist should be responsible for monitoring and providing a hand



over to another pharmacist if there is a transition of care," the PPA said.

"To ensure individual accountability, the reviewing pharmacists providing this service should be allocated a Medicare billing number and be subject to the same auditing standards as other Medicare service providers.

"[The profession should] utilise the current 7CPA negotiations to broaden the services that should be available to aged care residents, but also look outside the CPA package for the profession to be an active partner in a health wide collaborative approach to improving the quality of care.

"This will need a whole of pharmacy approach to broaden our outlook away from the four walls of community pharmacy."



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Dispensary Corner

WITH many pharmacists reportedly disillusioned with sub-par salaries and restrictions on their ability to practice to their full scope, it's not uncommon to hear of people dropping out of the profession.

Often its to pursue a career in medicine or to study the sciences.

However, it appears former UK *Love Island* contestant, Anna Vakili, has ditched her career as a pharmacist to become a full-time Insta-star, with little sign of her "15-minutes of fame" coming to an end any time soon.

Since leaving the show, the 29-year-old has faced a number of challenges, with internet trolls attempting to "body-shame" her.

However, the pharmacy graduate does not appear to be taking the attacks to heart posting several bikini-clad shots on Instagram, including one with a message to "All the fat shamers can kiss myyy FAT a** stretch marks and all", during a recent getaway in Dubai.

Having failed to find love during her time on *Love Island*, she told the *Daily Mail* her relationship with fellow "islander", James Hames, which ended after he attempted to woo another woman, left her with "trust issues".

She added that she was taking a break from the dating scene "for the foreseeable future", as she focuses on herself, adopting a new motto, "inner peace is the new success".

Such enlightenment!

DoH's prescriber note

THOUSANDS of General Practitioners will receive a letter in the coming days from the Department of Health (DoH) aimed at cutting inappropriate prescribing of psychotropic medicines, the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners' (RACGP's) *newsGP* revealed.

However, RACGP President, Dr Harry Nespolon, said GPs did not need a reminder of the role the drugs play in aged care patient management.

"GPs know that chemical restraints in aged care facilities are the last resort. Those aren't my words, they're what GPs who work in these facilities every day have told me," he said.

"While there has been significant attention on this practice in the wake of the Royal Commission, it's

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pharmacy group, Capital Chemist, will sponsor the city's first Sleepbus.

The Sleepbus will provide safe and secure crisis accommodation for women.

important to note that chemical restraint is not the norm – it is rare."

Commenting on the article, Dr Peter James Strickland, accuse "some of those in the DoH" of being ill-placed to make decisions about psychotropic medication use in aged care.

"Responsible relatives of demented patients are the ones who best know if their loved one need psychotropic medications in conjunction with the doctor and nursing home staff," he said.

"Any experienced and ethical GPs do not need distant bureaucratic DoH personnel telling them how to treat patients, nor relatives who have failed to properly acquaint themselves of the sometimes difficulties in some elderly patient's care."

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Guild Update

Christmas Trading Hours Poster

THE Guild has a range of Member Only resources available to download and use in your pharmacy as needed.

For the holiday season later this month, there are Trading Hours posters available to download.

Member resources are available to download (Member login required): www.guild.org.au/resources/in-home-care/ask-your-pharmacist.

Peanut vaccine

RESEARCHERS from the University of South Australia believe peanut allergies could become a thing of the past with the development of a vaccine.

The vaccine uses a virus-based platform to rewrite the body's natural response to peanut allergens, causing it to elicit a non-allergic immune response rather than an allergic one.

Project lead, Dr Preethi Eldi says the new peanut allergy vaccine has the potential to change lives.

"The impact peanut allergy can have on a family is all-consuming, especially given the very real risks to a child's health," Eldi said.

"Parents are constantly protecting their child from being exposed to peanuts in all forms... whether at home, school or in social situations.

"It means being vigilant and imposing stringent dietary restrictions.

"If we can deliver an effective peanut allergy vaccine, we'll remove this stress... and dangers of peanut allergy."



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