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Pharmacy the answer to GP shortage

AUSTRALIAN pharmacists need to be empowered to work to their full scope of practice to avert a healthcare crisis in the years ahead the Pharmacy Guild of Australia believes.

Commenting on the findings of the Deloitte *General Practitioner Workforce Report 2019*, which has forecast a shortfall of 9,298 GPs over the next 10 years, Guild National President, George Tambassis, warned patients' out-of-pocket costs are likely to increase.

"With Deloitte forecasting such a severe GP shortage, it highlights the need to better use resources already in our health system to improve affordability and accessibility for all Australians," he said.

"Empowering pharmacists to take on a greater role in the healthcare system by doing things like giving more vaccinations, issuing repeat prescriptions for things like blood pressure and treating common ailments like asthma and migraine would relieve some of the pressure



on already overworked GPs.

"In countries such as the UK and Canada, pharmacists are playing a greater role in their healthcare systems, which has reduced strain on overworked GPs and overcrowded emergency departments, made access easier and more affordable, while improving health outcomes.

"We've been saying for some time Australians are waiting longer and paying more to see a GP. Our health system just isn't adapting as effectively as possible to our aging and growing population.

"Deloitte's report underlines why we need to make better use of pharmacists to help relieve some of the stresses and strains on our health system just by using our training to the full."

The Deloitte report forecasts that Victoria will be the most severely impacted by the shortages, with a shortfall of almost 3,900, followed by NSW (3,400), with the Northern Territory the only region expected to see an increase in GP numbers over the coming decade, with 155 extra GPs due to join the Territory's workforce by 2030.

Today's issue of *PD*

Pharmacy Daily today has two pages of news.

10T of codeine

ASX-LISTED pharmaceutical manufacturer Palla Pharma has announced a purchase order for a minimum of 10 tonnes of codeine phosphate to be delivered in 2020 to "a major European tablet producer".

Palla Pharma describes itself as a "low-cost producer of Narcotic Raw Materials," and is one of three fully integrated opiates manufacturers supplying to the global pain relief market, ranging from poppy straw growing right through to tableting.

The contract is worth over US\$3 million "and is indicative of our underlying ability to supply the volumes our customers need at competitive pricing," the company said.

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Dispensary Corner

RESIDENTS of a small town in France have been officially banned from dying on weekends or public holidays.

The mayor of La Gresle on the outskirts of Lyon has introduced the unusual regulation in response to an acute shortage of health workers in the area.

Mayor Isabelle Dugelet cited the recent death of an elderly nursing home resident, where no doctor could be found to record the official details.

Eventually a medico was found who was willing to drive from a neighbouring region to certify the deceased.

Dugelet acknowledged that the "death ban" was a publicity stunt, saying the "absurd order is a response to the absurdity of the healthcare system".

A STUNT organised by US beer maker Anheuser-Busch may not be the ideal activity for influenza season.

The germ-spreading festive season event aimed to break the Guinness World Record for "kissing under the mistletoe".

A total of 896 couples simultaneously locked lips in St Louis Missouri, Merrimack New Hampshire and Fort Collins Colorado.

The successful attempt set a new mark for "most couples kissing under the mistletoe (multiple venues)," while the St Louis gathering also broke the Guinness World Record for "most couples kissing under the mistletoe (single venue)," with 480 couples besting the previous record of 448.

Chemists' Own winners

FIVE pharmacies across Australia have been named the winners of the Chemists' Own 2019 'Help Us Help Our Local Community' initiative, which helped raise funds for early learning centres.

A total of 338 pharmacies participated in the annual event which this year raised more than \$15,000 through in-store donations and sales of the Chemists' Own Children's Range.

Chemists' Own Brand Manager, Stephanie Calapa, said the program was designed to support organisations that do meaningful work and play a caring role.

"Early learning centres were an obvious choice to be the beneficiaries of 'Help Us', in light of all the wonderful work they do in caring for the next generation.

"As a trusted cornerstone in communities, we are delighted to see that so many pharmacies are keen to participate in the initiative

and raise funds for their local centres," Calapa added.

The five category winners included Mansfield Pharmacy, Vic named as 'Overachiever Store'; Chemist King Mount Gambier, SA, awarded for 'Children's Sales'; Dongara Guardian Pharmacy, WA which received the 'Social Media Engagement' award; Great Lakes Pharmacy, NSW awarded for 'Community Engagement'; and Yea Pharmacy, Vic which won the 'Best Display' category.

Each winning pharmacy has received a \$1,000 Educational Experience voucher to donate to the early learning centre of their choice, plus a \$200 Visa Gift card for pharmacy employees to share.

Chemists' Own has also released a children's activity book as part of the initiative, which has been gifted to more than 1,000 early learning centres and participating pharmacies nationally.

Methadone stolen in early morning raid

SOUTH Australian Police are investigating a pre-dawn break-in at a Whyalla pharmacy, which saw a thief escape with half a bottle of methadone.

Police attended the crime scene after reports of an alarm activation at 4:40am, local news website *Whyalla News Online* reported.

The thief had fled the pharmacy by the time the police arrived, however, SA Police Operations Inspector, Mark Hubbard, suggested the suspect may have injured themselves during the break-in as drops of blood were found at the scene.

Speaking to the local press, Hubbard warned of the dangers



of misuse of methadone.

"Methadone is a controlled drug and misuse can cause addiction, overdose or death," he said.

"Anyone overdosing on methadone should seek urgent medical attention and call the Poison Help Line."

API director out

GERARD J Masters, who has been a non-executive director of Australian Pharmaceutical Industries since 2010, has announced his intention to retire effective from the end of the 22 Jan annual general meeting of the company.

API Chairman, Mark Smith, said Masters had contributed enormously to the company's Board, "bringing his extensive experience in retailing to assist the Group build its retail Priceline business over more than nine years".

Prior to becoming involved with API, Masters was MD of The Reject Shop, before which he had an extensive career within then department store and supermarket giant Coles Myer.

TGA export input

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) is seeking comments from interested parties on an update to guidance relating to the export of medicines and medical devices from Australia.

Potential changes proposed would allow documents to be provided in electronic form rather than as a hard copy, and whether the TGA should provide traceable postage for all hard copy certificates.

The consultation document is now available at tga.gov.au, with responses due by 03 Feb.

As well as exporting for commercial purposes it covers guidance for sending medicines abroad for personal use, plus export of unapproved drugs for use in clinical trials.