

Tue 17th December 2019

## AMA shy on why of pharmacy push

**CALLS** for pharmacy ownership rules to be reformed to allow doctors to own pharmacies fail to explain why it would benefit patients, the Pharmacy Guild of Australia says.

Responding to the Australian Medical Association (AMA) *Position Statement on the Ethical Guidelines on Ownership of Pharmacy and Dispensing by Doctors 2019*, a Guild spokesperson told **Pharmacy Daily** that the doctors' group had "missed the fundamental question: why?" in its push to access pharmacy ownership.

Announcing the new statement, which replaces the *AMA Position Statement on the Ethical Guidelines for Doctors on Addressing Potential Conflicts of Interest in Owning a Pharmacy 2010 - Revised 2015*, AMA President, Dr Tony Bartone, said enabling doctors to own pharmacies would be beneficial for patients.

"Relaxing pharmacy ownership laws would improve patient access

to medications," he said.

For instance, the AMA believes patient access and convenience in obtaining medications can be improved by doctors being permitted to own pharmacies, provided such ownership is managed ethically, addresses conflicts of interests, and maintains the clear distinction between prescribing and dispensing.

"The AMA guidelines have been updated to assist doctors who have a direct financial interest in a pharmacy to manage potential conflicts of interest, to maintain their patients' trust, and to preserve public confidence in the wider medical profession."

The Guild spokesperson suggested that the AMA should focus on issues that directly impact doctors rather than taking aim at the pharmacy sector.

"We categorically reject Bartone's assertion that 'relaxing pharmacy ownership laws would improve patient access to medications,'" the



### Today's issue of PD

**Pharmacy Daily** today has two pages of news plus a full page from **EllaOne**.

### Sigma shares fall after API sell-off

**PHARMACY** wholesaler, Sigma Healthcare, saw its shareprice slump by more than 9% during yesterday's trading, after rival Australian Pharmaceutical Industries (API) announced it had divested its interest in the company.

The stock sell-off followed last year's aborted merger between the two groups, and wiped out gains made on Fri, in the wake of Sigma's market update, forecasting accelerated growth for the 2021 financial year, following its agreement to become My Chemist/Chemist Warehouse's first line supplier of fast moving consumer goods (**PD** 16 Dec).



spokesperson said.

"Australian patients trust their local pharmacist and there is widespread documented support for the requirement that only a pharmacist can own a pharmacy.

"The pity is that any Tom, Dick or Harriett can own a medical practice – how about producing a paper on that, AMA?"

Pharmacists on Twitter have suggested the AMA should support pharmacists to open pharmacies in GP clinics to aid collaboration and improve medicines safety.

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## Dispensary Corner

**CHRISTMAS** is a magical time of year. Tis the season to be jolly and all that... but in the northern hemisphere it's also peak flu-season.

So with that in mind, one British doctor has issued a blunt warning to families looking to bring the tiny tots into contact with their aged relations - get the flu jab or risk having a nightmare holiday season.

NHS National Medical Director, Stephen Powis, told parents that unvaccinated germ-plagued toddlers could spread the virus to infection-prone grandparents, leading to hospitalisations, or fatalities.

"We know that children are 'super spreaders' of flu, particularly around the holiday season when they're more likely to see elderly relatives," he said.

"So our message is simple: the flu season is here, get your jab now."

"It might be the difference between a Christmas to remember, and one to forget."

Public Health England reported a 24% increase in the number of GP appointments made by patients with flu-like symptoms last week, while the hospitalisation rate jumped from 4.01 admissions per 100,000 two weeks ago, to 5.06 per 100,000 last week.

For pharmacists with patients they know are planning to travel north for the festive season it might be worth suggesting a booster shot, because no one wants the flu for Christmas, especially when you're overseas.

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## PSA's Vic Budget plea

**PHARMACISTS** in Victoria are urging the State Government to provide funding to boost access to Medication Assisted Treatment for Opioid Dependence (MATOD).

In its 2020/21 pre-Budget submission the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia Victorian Branch President, Ben Merchant, called for funding to be provided to support drug rehabilitation.

"Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data suggests 298 people in Victoria lost their lives last year due to opioid induced deaths," he said.

Merchant added close to 14,000 Victorians currently use MATOD programs, but he noted "cost is a significant barrier" to access for many patients.

"While the medicines are free, the cost for safe, witnessed dosing is currently met by the patients,"



Travel & Cruise  
Weekly

he said.

"This is out of step with other states where these services can be fully government funded.

"We are proposing a co-payment model. The Victorian Government would provide funds for this service in order to reduce out of pocket costs - making access more affordable - while ensuring pharmacists are adequately remunerated and able to offer this important service."

The PSA also called on the Government to establish the role of Victorian Chief Pharmacist, allocate \$500,000 to provide mental health first aid training to pharmacists, and to expand the range of vaccines that trained pharmacists can administer in the state.

**CLICK HERE** to review the PSA's submission in full.

## Guild Update

### Pharmacist Support

THE summer holiday period can be the busiest for many community pharmacies, and therefore a stressful time of the year for community pharmacists and their staff.

Work pressures in pharmacy over the holiday period can be substantial with the end-of-the-year rush, skeleton staff over public holidays and population increases in tourist areas.

Access to other health services such as private medical practices also may be limited with many people turning to their local pharmacist for advice.

The Pharmacists Support Service (PSS) will be available to provide a listening ear throughout the holiday period if usual support systems are not available.

More information about PSS and some useful resources for pharmacists can be found on the PSS website at [www.supportforpharmacists.org.au](http://www.supportforpharmacists.org.au).

PSS is available to all pharmacists, pharmacy interns and students in Australia and is confidential and anonymous.

The service is provided by trained volunteers who are all pharmacists or retired pharmacists on 1300244910 every day between 8am and 11pm AEDST.

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1. Brache, V. et al. Ulipristal acetate prevents ovulation more effectively than levonorgestrel: analysis of pooled data from three randomized trials of emergency contraception regimens. Contraception 2013; 88(5): 611-618.

2. Glasier, A. F. et al. Ulipristal acetate versus levonorgestrel for emergency contraception: a randomized non-inferiority trial and meta-analysis. Lancet. 2010 Feb 13;375(9714):555-562. Erratum in: Lancet. 2014;384(9953):1504.

3. Glasier A. et al. ISGE Statement of Emergency Contraception. Gynecological Endocrinology Informa Healthcare. 2014; 30(10): 681-682

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