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## Price disclosure delivering savings

**CLOSE** to one-in-three prescriptions dispensed for medicines listed on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) is subject to price competition between pharmacies, new data reveals.

Figures released by the Department of Health earlier this week, showed close to 94 million under co-payment prescriptions were supplied for PBS and RPBS (Repatriation Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme) listed medicines in the 2018/19 financial year, costing patients a total of \$1.4 billion.

The figure of 94 million below co-payment scripts reflected 31% of all PBS/RPBS prescriptions dispensed over the 12 months to 30 Jun, up from 77 million in 2014/15 (26%).

Antibiotic preparations accounted for the top three most frequently dispensed below co-payment



products, with cefalexin (capsule 500mg - as monohydrate) topping the list with a total of 2.3 million scripts filled, at a cost of \$28.8 million to patients, or an average price to consumer of \$12.50.

Highlighting the impact price disclosure has had on PBS-listed medicines, rosuvastatin (10mg) was the fourth most dispensed medicine, with close to 1.9 million scripts dispensed, at an average cost of \$12.88, while atorvastatin

(40mg) was the 10th most frequently dispensed products with 1.15 million scripts filled, at a total cost to patients of \$12.67 million or \$11 per prescription.

Scripts for birth control medication, levonorgestrel and ethinylestradiol in packs containing 21 tablets 150 micrograms-30 micrograms, and 7 inert tablets, accounted for \$19 million of unsubsidised medicines, with an average price of \$15.36 each.

Today's issue of *PD*

*Pharmacy Daily* today has two pages of news.

## PBS changes

**CHANGES** to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) restrictions for growth hormone (GH) treatment (adult use), which set out the eligibility requirements for PBS subsidy, are being introduced on 01 Jan 2020.

The adult listing will be amended to improve clarity and access for patients with childhood onset growth hormone deficiency (CO-GHD) due to congenital, genetic or structural cause.

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## Bulk bill bonus?

**SUGGESTIONS** that pharmacists' payments for providing MedsCheck services amount to bonuses, have been challenged by Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) South Australia and Northern Territory Branch Vice President, Samuel Keitaanpaa.

Responding to a tweet by medical journalist, Michael Woodhead, reporting that responses to parliamentary questions on notice had shown pharmacists received up to \$9,000 for "showing customers how to use their medicines correctly", Keitaanpaa, noted "it's a rebate for a service... we do hundreds of times a month by can only get paid for 20 of them".

"Does a GP get a \$35 bonus for their bulk billed consultation?" he asked.

The average payment for service provider was \$5,700 for MedsCheck, \$2,900 for Diabetes MedsCheck, and \$160 for Chronic Pain MedsCheck.



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## Dispensary Corner

**EMPLOYEE** pharmacists calling in sick came under the spotlight earlier this year, with one locum recruiter suggesting it was less common in days gone by.

However, one British pharmacist has produced a blog outlining the phenomenon of 'pharmacy guilt', which prevents her (and others) from calling in sick.

"How, as a pharmacist can you ring in knowing there won't be a replacement for you, or there will be an almighty struggle to get a locum and in the meantime the staff will have to signpost patients because the pharmacy can't operate in your absence?" Laura Buckley asked.

"You're terrified to get a sick note, knowing full well you shouldn't be working but the guilt of leaving your colleagues without you is keeping you at work.

"Pharmacy guilt is real. The guilt of being ill and being unable to support your team is really quite frustrating because when you do have to be off work or you just can't make it in that day, it really is hard to rest.

"The guilt is not fair but we in pharmacy feel it because we care about each other and we care about the patients.

"Nobody wants to shut their pharmacy because the pharmacist is sick and a replacement cannot be found.

"Nobody wants their colleagues to work extra to make up for their absence."

## Community campaign

**SIGMA** Healthcare's pharmacy retailers, Amcal and Guardian, have collaborated on a new marketing campaign, which the brands say is designed to foster "meaningful community connections" during the holiday period.

The joint Christmas Ties campaign will boast a range of co-branded marketing assets, including an online video focusing on the themes of peace, love, joy, family and health.

The production will run across both brands' social media channels, and will also be supported through in-store activations such as the offering of gift wrapping services.

Head of Amcal and Guardian Kurt O'Brien said the crux of the marketing push was to remind consumers how lonely Christmas time can be for some Australians and of the positive social benefits that can be achieved when communities come together.

"The aim is to amplify a positive message that brings the community

together online particularly during a time where isolation can be at its highest," O'Brien said.

"Amcal and Guardian continue to remain at the front line of community healthcare and advice, and Christmas is no exception... our campaign this year celebrates the true meaning of Christmas and supports our franchise partners to celebrate within their communities and success this year for us is certainly based around engagement metrics," he added.

O'Brien also said campaigns such as this were important, not only to promote customer loyalty, but to invoke meaningful community messages.

"Christmas means something different to all of us, but it's important to engage in campaigns at this time of year that not only drive business results but engage the community in the importance of joy, love, peace, family and health," he said.

Watch the campaign video [HERE](#).

## Wizard Pharmacy magic lands another

**WESTERN** Australia's Wizard Pharmacy, has announced a former Friendlies Pharmacy in Mosman Park, has joined the group.

The addition of the new store brings the group to 28 stores, a 16% increase over the last 12 months, with three other former Friendlies Pharmacies joining the brand last month (*PD* 21 Nov).

Wizard Pharmacy Mosman Park Owner, Dianne Armstrong, said the group's customer-centric focus allied with the strength of the back-office support were key factors that drew her to the franchise.



**Pictured** is Wizard Pharmacy Chief Operating Officer, Sally Parker, with Wizard Pharmacy Mosman Park Proprietor, Dianne Armstrong.

## Travel Specials

**WELCOME** to *Pharmacy Daily's* travel feature. Each week we highlight a couple of great travel deals for the pharmacy industry, brought to you by *Travel & Cruise Weekly*.

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#### Chill-out in the Arctic

**WITH** the mercury set to top 40C this afternoon in Sydney, the thought of getting away somewhere a little cooler will be tempting.

Adventure Canada and Australian small cruise specialist, Cruise Traveller, are offering savings of more than \$18,000 per couple on an Arctic cruise.

Departing on 19 Jul, the 12-night Heart of the Arctic cruise will take guests from Iqaluit in northern Canada to Kangerlussuaq in western Greenland.

[CLICK HERE](#) for more.

#### Sail Sri Lanka

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G Adventures is offering a 30% discount on bookings made by 31 Dec for the 09 Feb departure.

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