



CWH 'behaving like a big corporate'

CHEMIST Warehouse is being accused of acting like a "big corporate that doesn't like the rules," in its campaign to loosen the Pharmacy Location Rules, the Pharmacy Guild of Australia believes.

Speaking on 3AW, Guild Victorian Branch President, Anthony Tassone, questioned the group's motivation for wanting to be able to provide Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) medicines without a patient contribution (**PD** yesterday).

"We have a pharmacy group behaving like a big corporate that doesn't like things as they are, because they don't suit its agenda or growth pattern," he said.

"Why should we be unravelling the system that has produced equitable access [to PBS medicines]?"

Chemist Warehouse Chief Operating Officer, Mario Tascone, told 3AW that the location rules "stifle competition", effectively locking the group out of regional parts of the country.

"We have these laws which prevent pharmacies from opening up next to one another," he said.

"There's no new licences, you have to buy an existing licence and once you do... you can only move it 1km every five years.

"It's not such a big issue for Australian capital cities, because you'll know there is a Chemist Warehouse on every corner in Melbourne, Brisbane, whatever, but if you go into regional Australia, where we've listed 60 regional



towns... we're blocked out from them, because we can't open a new pharmacy there and the only road to get into those towns is to buy an existing licence.

"No one is ever going to sell us their licence in those towns, because they want to maintain the status quo, they want to maintain high prices.

"If you go and have a look at those towns people are paying higher prices for their medications compared to people in the capital cities and that's not fair."

When asked about the prospect of free scripts similar to Chemist Warehouse's offer in New Zealand, Tascone said "we haven't really worked out a business model" for the proposal aired in an interview with *News Corp*, which was published earlier this week.

"We've never even contemplated looking at a business model,

because the laws prohibit discounting of co-payment, they only allow you to discount by \$1," he said.

"If the rules were [relaxed and] you could discount to whatever you like, free prescriptions are definitely an option we'd like to put on the table."

Tascone warned that comparisons between the PBS and New Zealand's system, failed to acknowledge the difference between the two models.

"From my understanding there might be a co-payment attached to the first prescription you get in NZ, the subsequent repeats of that prescription might not have that co-payment," he said.

"They've also got a capped scheme [and] they're having a lot of trouble listing new medicines.

"We'd have to look at the fine print [on any free script offer]."

Pharmacy Daily

on location at Pharmacy Connect 2019

Today's issue of **PD** is coming to you from the Sydney Hilton.

PHARMACY Connect kicks off this morning, with an extensive conference program and trade exhibition aiming to bring together the clinical, business and industry pharmacy sectors.

The program will feature an official welcome from Gleny Beauchamp, Secretary of the Department of Health, followed by a session discussing the 7th Community Pharmacy Agreement convened by Trent Twomey, Chair of the Pharmacy Guild's Pharmacy Viability Committee.

See Mon's **PD** for a full report from Pharmacy Connect.

New EP released

THE Council of Europe has released the 10th edition of the European Pharmacopoeia (EP), with 2,420 monographs, 374 general texts, and 2,780 descriptions of reagents.

Some chapters have been thoroughly revised and there are 114 new monographs - for details see edqm.eu.

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Contamination claims a beat-up: CMA

RESEARCH showing high levels of contamination of complementary and alternative medicines (CAMs), is an attempt to “sully the term traditional medicine”, according to Complementary Medicines Australia.

Responding to claims that 50% of CAM products purchased from Australian pharmacies, health food stores and online, tested by researchers from the University of Adelaide, Murdoch University and Curtin University, including products listed on the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods (ARTG) contained contaminants (**PD** 04 Sep), CMA CEO, Carl Gibson, stressed that stringent regulations are applied to the manufacture and distribution of Australian products.

“Be assured, where complementary medicine products, including herbal medicines are concerned if you see a product in your pharmacy which is registered on the ARTG the accurate identification of medicinal herbs is a legal requirement. It would not be possible to meet consumer



expectations without it.”

In a statement the CMA noted that one of the researchers involved in the study Dr Ian Musgrave, was “an active member” of Friends of Science in Medicine, which CMA described as a “minority group” and “anti-complementary medicines”.

Gibson noted that Australian-made CAMs are highly regarded around the world.

“It is of zero benefit for the industry to intentionally adulterate products and damage this important and blossoming industry in this country,” he said.

“Our quality control is world-class. Our reputation relies on it.”

Mundipharma backs Tu Scholarship

MUNDIPHARMA will donate \$5,000 to support the Andrew Tu Scholarship in Pharmacy to mark R U OK Day on 12 Sep.

The fund, was established to honour the memory of community pharmacists and husband of Mundipharma Product Manager, Eva Tu, Andrew (pictured), who passed away in Apr 2017, and aims to raise \$135,000 to provide an endowed scholarship to support pharmacy students at the University of Sydney to pursue research into mental health.

“I hope Andrew’s legacy will be to raise awareness and reduce stigma around mental health,” Eva Tu said.

“Most importantly, encourage those who may be struggling to reach out and seek help.”



Mundipharma staff have organised a fundraising bake sale for R U OK Day, while a group of Andrew’s friends and family have formed a fundraising running team, and will take part in the Blackmores Sydney Running Festival on 15 Sep.

CLICK HERE to donate.

RPHA slams discounters

RURAL pharmacists believe discounters and high-volume-low-care pharmacies threaten the viability of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS).

The Rural Pharmacy Network Australia (RPNA) and Small Pharmacies Group (SPG) claimed discounters were making “a mockery of the current remuneration arrangements by claiming the PBS dispensing fee, but failing to provide the care that claiming the fee requires them to provide,” in response to allegations that the Federal Government has been propping up community pharmacies.

In a joint statement from the RPNA and SPG, Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) Pharmacist of the Year, Peter Crothers, flagged concerns over flaws in the PBS system, as patients go to one pharmacy for cheap medication, before going to another store for quality advice.

“It is pretty obvious who is propping up whom,” he said.

“We have some pharmacies routinely overlooking their professional responsibilities in a very calculated way while nevertheless collecting Commonwealth payments, with another group of pharmacies acting in the spirit of the PBS by providing a quality service and being paid less than they deserve.

“This isn’t the only damage being done by the discount model.

“We are also seeing increasing dispensing errors. In August alone,



my small, rural pharmacy picked up four separate cases of prescriptions that had been dispensed for the wrong patient – all from pharmacies promoting themselves as discounters.

“With the dispensing technology we have today, these sorts of errors should be next to impossible and it can only indicate that people are cutting corners big time.”

RPNA Chair, Fredrik Hellqvist, added that low-service pharmacies were commoditising the provision of Community Pharmacy Agreement (CPA) services, including MedsCheck and Home Medicines Reviews, while the funding was failing to cover the cost of delivering care in pharmacies in rural and disadvantaged communities.

“We need a system that ensures that funding is being allocated to the patients who need it the most, and pharmacies providing this care are fairly remunerated for the important work they are doing”.



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Jobs of the Week

- **2nd Pharmacist** - Tamworth, NSW (Job# 200033067)
Join a dynamic, fun team who are reaching new benchmarks in healthcare.
- **Pharmacist Manager** - Mandurah, WA (Job# 200032963)
1 hr south of Perth; growing pharmacy group; genuine partnership potential.
- **Pharmacist In Charge** - North of Melbourne CBD (Job# 200033158)
9am-3pm every Sat (or alt.); low script trade; well-established in community.

Your Pharmacy Recruitment Experts



Dispensary Corner

A **BRITISH** pharmacist is facing the prospect of losing her job, after posing as the mother of an 11-month-old boy so he could be circumcised, without the child's parents' consent.

The boy had been left in the care of Martina Obi-Uzom, 70, for a weekend in Sep 2017, when she sought to engage the services of a mohel, who carried out the procedure, believing she was the mother, having signed a parent consent form.

The pharmacist was acquitted of causing "wounding with intent to cause grievous bodily harm", but convicted of "unlawful wounding" at the Inner London Crown Court.

Judge, Freya Newbery, issued a 14-month prison sentence, suspended for 18 months, noting there was a "vanishingly small risk of re-offending".

She was ordered to pay £1500 in prosecution costs and a £140 court fee.

The court heard Obi-Uzom had lived an "upstanding life" and contributed to the community, building her pharmacy business in Clacton-on-Sea, Essex, since moving to the UK from Nigeria, however the judge said she had committed a "massive violation".

Prosecutor, Louis Mably, told the court that the boy had suffered an "irreversible and lifelong injury" as a result of the circumcision.

Obi-Uzom now faces the prospect of professional disciplinary action following her conviction.

Sigma restructuring pain

SIGMA Healthcare says its current business transformation program is "on track," after announcing a significant fall in profit as it adapts to a new environment without the My Chemist/Chemist Warehouse business (**PD** breaking news).

The company's statutory net profit of \$2.86 million for the six months to 31 Jul was just a fifth of the \$13.77m result for the previous corresponding period, with CEO, Mark Hooper, saying the figures reflected some of the one-off restructuring costs under the company's Project Pivot revamp, as well as only five months of sales to the Chemist Warehouse group.

Excluding Chemist Warehouse and Hepatitis C medicines, revenue from the company's "ongoing business" was up 6.9%, while the figures were also impacted by a reduction in wholesale supplier rebates due to the loss of Chemist Warehouse volumes.

"Sigma has made significant progress in implementing the program of work to deliver the \$100+ million efficiency gains.

"The changes implemented to

date occurred towards the back end of 1H20, and therefore there is minimal benefit realised in the 1H20 results," Hooper said.

Annualised costs worth over \$33 million have already been removed from the business, relating to the loss of about 375 jobs.

Sigma's pharmacy brands "performed ahead of the market on a like-for-like basis," Hooper noted, with sales up 7.8% (excluding Hepatitis C) as the company helped members build their businesses.

Member numbers remained steady during the six month period "however a strong pipeline of prospective members brings greater optimism for growth for the next 12 months and beyond".

Hooper said the hospital pharmacy market as well as the dose administration aids services market continued to be focus areas.

"Sigma is entering a growth phase where we have few business constraints," he said, with the company well placed to actively pursue new distribution opportunities, hospital pharmacy and retail pharmacy customers.

Shen Neng recall

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration has advised of the recall of all batches of Jin Gui Shen Qi Qan pills from Shen Neng Herbal Medicines Group due to the risk of "potential toxicity".

The pills are used in traditional Chinese medicine, and are marketed to help or treat a range of complaints including mild bronchitis.

Events Calendar

WELCOME to *Pharmacy Daily's* events calendar, opportunities to earn CPE and CPD points.

If you have an upcoming event you'd like us to feature, email info@pharmacydaily.com.au.

09 Oct: 2019 Annual Conference & 20th Annual Industry Awards; Doltone House, Sydney; register here: www.cmaustralia.org.au

11 - 13 Oct: Pharmacy Assistant National Conference; Sofitel Brisbane Central; for more info and to register see: www.pharmacyassistants.com

27 - 30 Oct: Pharmacy Alliance Members' Forum; Pullman Cairns International; early bird ends 31 Aug: www.pharmacyalliance.com.au

14 - 16 Nov: SHPA Medicines Management 2019 (MM2019); GCCEC, Gold Coast; early bird registrations close 16 Sep: www.mm2019shpa.com

Win with ULTRASENSITIVE

This week Pharmacy Daily and ecostore are giving readers the chance to win a prize pack of products from ecostore's ULTRASENSITIVE home and body range, valued at over \$50.

Convert your home to an asthma and allergy-aware space with ecostore's ULTRASENSITIVE home and body range, approved by Sensitive Choice for Australians with sensitivities. **CLICK HERE** for more.

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

Which consumers are the ecostore ULTRASENSITIVE home and body care ranges safer for?

Congratulations to yesterday's winner, Vicki Whalland.

