



Medical costs outpacing inflation

PATIENT spending on medical and hospital services is rising three times faster than pharmaceutical products and the consumer price index (CPI), data from the Pharmacy Guild of Australia reveals.

Research conducted by the Guild's Chief Economist found consumer medical expenses have surged by more than 650% since 1987, while patient spending on pharmaceuticals and the CPI increased by between 200% and 250% respectively, in the same time period.

The data highlighted concerns that rising medical costs have impacted patient access to health services, noted in the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) *Health Expenditure Australia 2017-18 Report (PD yesterday)* and on *SBS's Insight* program on Tue.

The Australian Medical Association (AMA) has rejected suggestions that medical costs were a key driver of rising out-of-pocket healthcare spending, with National President, Dr Tony Bartone, pointing the finger of blame at pharmacists.

"Medical services are not the highest or even second highest area of expenditure for an individual," he



claimed earlier this week.

"The greatest contributor to patient out-of-pocket costs is over the counter medications, vitamins, and health-related products, many of which have no proven efficacy."

A Guild spokesperson refuted Bartone's claims saying, "I am pretty sure consumers are more affected by obligatory unforeseen medical gap costs than they are about discretionary complementary medicine purchases".

The spokesperson noted that the Guild data showed that patient spending on pharmacy items had remained in-line with, or below, CPI

growth since 1987, and consistently below CPI since the introduction of PBS Price Disclosure in 2007.

Meanwhile, figures from the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) released yesterday, revealed PBS spending is set to fall by 0.2% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2020/21 and is expected to remain steady at 0.5% of GDP over the medium-term.

The PBO data also forecast continued growth in Medicare spending as a proportion of GDP, when the freeze on indexation is lifted on more Medicare items over the next 18 months.

Today's issue of PD

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

Cannabis laws

CHRONIC pain patients living in the Australian Capital Territory should not view moves to legalise cannabis for recreational use, as an alternative to accessing medicinal grade products.

Under the new law Canberrans, 18 years and older, will be allowed to grow two plants and possess 50g of cannabis for personal use.

However, in a statement Cannabis Access Clinics Managing Director, Dr Sanjay Nijahawan, said, "this is a separate issue from access to cannabis for medical purposes and recreational use should not be seen as a substitute for those with legitimate medical needs."

Dr Nijahawan called for a nationwide framework to be rolled out to ensure access to medical products.

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British pharmacists' morale at a low

MORE than 70% of British pharmacists would not recommend working in the sector, with close to half of community pharmacists reporting that their morale was "low" or "very low".

The data published in the Royal Pharmaceutical Society's *The Pharmaceutical Journal*, found morale was highest among those working in industry, followed by primary care pharmacists.

The results of the survey conducted between May and Jun, showed a significant rise in the proportion of pharmacists who said their morale was low, up 5% on the 2018 survey.

While a significant number of pharmacists said they would not recommend the profession to others, the rate of dissatisfaction among community pharmacists (77%) was disproportionate compared to other sectors of pharmacy, with just over one-in-five hospital pharmacists saying



they would not recommend it.

The survey also found that almost three-quarters of community pharmacists had considered leaving the profession in the last 12 months, with 76% reporting a lack of support staff as a factor.

One pharmacy owner told the publication that the decline in morale in community pharmacy was "not just about money, it's about recognition... people don't feel valued".

Another pharmacist said that many pharmacists have become "so ingrained in the supply function" that they no longer felt valued or respected.

Guidelines set for MHR

NEW My Health Record guidelines for pharmacists have been launched by the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) this week.

The document provides pharmacists with an outline of the rules surrounding their use and access to a patient's electronic health record.

The guidelines stress that "a patient's My Health Record (MHR) should not be considered as a complete source of patient health information".

Pharmacists accessing a patient's MHR must use conformant software, or the National Provider Portal (however, this does not allow for documents to be uploaded to the record).

Pharmacies must be able to identify each person who accesses an individual's record, and provide that information to the System Operator when requested.

The guidelines note that patient privacy must be upheld, however in emergency situations pharmacists may be able to disclose information if they reasonably believe that access is necessary to prevent a serious threat to the patient or another individual's life.



Speaking at the launch of the guidelines in Darwin this week, Northern Territory Federal MP, Luke Gosling, voiced his support for pharmacists having access to patients' MHRs.

"The work of pharmacists is so important and anything that we can do that is preventative, that helps people to manage their medications is going to mean better health for everyone," he said.

"And the people who have that expert knowledge are pharmacists."

To date close to 5,000 community pharmacies have registered to use the MHR, with more than half of those actively using the system, the Pharmacy Guild of Australia revealed.

Smith and Nephew come on line

WOUND care company Smith and Nephew have joined the party to make it easier for customers to purchase their products in community pharmacies, by connecting their website to the *Pharmacy Click and Collect* platform.

Smith and Nephew Pharmacy Channel Manager, ANZ, Bradley Miller, said, "wound care customers are looking for specialised advice and products".

"If they cannot quickly obtain high quality wound dressings their path to wound healing can be compromised," he said.



Pharmacy Click and Collect is free to Guild members: access at pharmacyclickandcollect.com.au.



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Jobs of the Week

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- **Pharmacist** - Coastal Beachside QLD (Job# 200032794)
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Dispensary Corner

FALLING firmly into the “only in America” category comes the results of a new survey which finds a surprising number of US citizens think chocolate milk comes from brown cows.

The Innovation Center of US Dairy polled 1,000 adults aged 18 and over earlier this year, with 48% of respondents saying they were unsure about the origin of chocolate milk.

About 7% thought it came only from brown cows.

Authors of a report on the study said extrapolating the results implies that about 1.64 million Americans were unaware that it was a manufactured product using normal milk and cocoa.

JUST in time for the annual Oktoberfest beer festival, a German court has ruled that hangovers can be formally classified as an “illness”.

The Frankfurt case involved a company selling anti-hangover remedies, which was taken to court by someone claiming the products were making illegal health claims.

The magistrates said “by an illness, one should understand even small or temporary disruptions to the normal state or normal activity of the body”.

They said that included the tiredness, nausea and headaches associated with having a few too many drinks, which the makers of the remedy claimed its products could cure.

They also noted that doctors had coined the word “veisalgia” as a specialist medical term for the condition.

Qld Guild set for new era



THE Pharmacy Guild of Australia Queensland Branch, celebrated the end of an era and the start of a new one with the opening of Guild House in Brisbane this week.

The ceremony offered an opportunity to celebrate the career of the branch’s outgoing Director, Robyn Ede, after 25 years with the organisation.

Speaking at the event, Guild National President, George Tambassis, noted Ede’s “vital role” in “ensuring safe, affordable and easy access to medications for all

Queenslanders.”

“I know she is particularly proud to be part of the team that initiated pharmacist administered vaccinations; developed the Guild’s first Reconciliation Action Plan” he said.

Pictured, Guild Qld Branch President, Trent Twomey; Guild Executive Director, Suzanne Greenwood; Local Government Councillor, Vicki Howard; MP, Jennifer Howard; and Guild National President, George Tambassis

FIP NCD pledge

PHARMACISTS from around the world have renewed their commitment to tackling non-communicable diseases (NCDs) at the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) Congress in Abu Dhabi this week.

The organisation pledged to focus on the prevention and treatment of NCDs.



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; for details visit: www.pharmacyalliance.com.au

14 - 16 Nov: SHPA Medicines Management 2019 (MM2019); GCCEC, Gold Coast; register now at: www.mm2019shpa.com

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