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Hunt provides answers

EMERGENCY measures announced by Federal Health Minister, Greg Hunt, will ensure patients retain access to essential prescription medicines at Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) prices under continued dispensing arrangements, during the COVID-19 crisis (**PD** breaking news).

Under the new arrangements pharmacists will also be empowered to substitute dose strengths and forms of prescribed medicines, without prior approval from the prescriber, where products are out of stock.

Welcoming the announcement, Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) National President, Dr Chris Freeman, called for the emergency provisions, which will remain in place until 30 Jun, to be implemented on a permanent basis.

"While this announcement is welcomed by PSA, we will continue to call for permanent emergency supply provisions of this nature," he said.

"Whether it be a bushfire, pandemic or any other emergency, Australians need to be confident they can access medicines in an emergency from the time they strike.

"We will continue to work with the Federal Government, in collaboration with its state and territory counterparts, after this crisis subsides, to permanently incorporate effective and nationally consistent emergency supply provisions.

"As front line health professionals, pharmacists continue to play a vital role during the current COVID-19 pandemic and it is important they receive all the tools necessary to ensure they can deliver services in a timely manner that meets the health care needs of their patients and the community."

Pharmacy Guild of Australia National President, George Tambassis, said the measures would improve access to medicines.

MEANWHILE, Tasmania became the latest state to introduce emergency supply measures, which will allow pharmacists to dispense certain PBS medicines without a prescription during the pandemic.

The move brings the state's emergency dispensing regulations into line with measures introduced in other states and the ACT, and they will remain in place until 30 Jun.

Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today has two pages of news plus a **front cover wrap** from **Sigma**, and full pages from:

- Australian Garlic Oil

BD Pen Needle

BECTON Dickinson (BD) is reintroducing its Ultra-Fine (UF) 4mm Pen Needle to the Australian market, as international demand for its UF PRO 4mm Pen Needle surges.

Use for the injection of diabetes medicines the needle will be listed on the NDSS Product Schedule from today (product code - 266).

Sigma soap

SIGMA Healthcare's Pharmacy Care brand has launched a new range of soap to help break the chain of infection.

The soap will come in three scents, Paw Paw, Milk and Honey, and Tea Tree Oil.

For more see the **cover page**.



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* Resolve Plus is indicated for inflamed fungal infections where bacterial infection may be present†

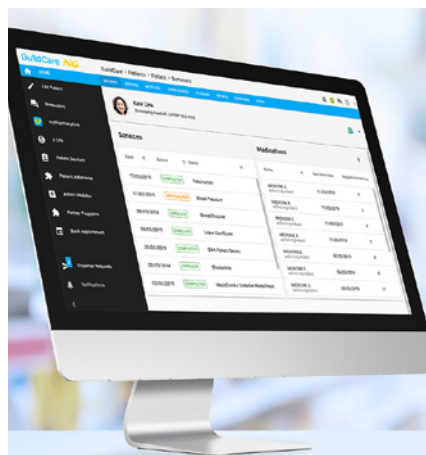
Recommend Resolve Plus 1.0, an Antifungal + Hydrocortisone.

For Pharmacists and Doctors: Resolve Plus 1.0 contains Miconazole Nitrate 2% w/w and Hydrocortisone 1% w/w. Directions: Clean and dry affected area thoroughly. Gently apply to affected and surrounding skin twice daily. Once inflammation has subsided continue treatment with an antifungal cream for 14 days after symptoms disappear to avoid recurrence. Do not use Resolve Plus 1.0 on children under 2 years of age.

Review full PI before recommending or supplying Resolve Plus 1.0. PI available on request from Ego Pharmaceuticals.

Reference: 1. Resolve Plus Product Information. Date of Most Recent Amendment 26 October 2018.

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Dispensary Corner

WISE sage, Homer Simpson, once said "Alcohol, the cause of and solution to all of life's problems".

Well it appears in this time of global crisis, Belarus President, Alexander Lukashenko, has identified alcohol as the solution to the biggest issue facing the world.

Yes, the long-time leader of the former Soviet Republic, believes the cure to the COVID-19 pandemic lies not in the discovery of a vaccine or a medical breakthrough, but in the bottom of a bottle of vodka.

While countries around the world are urging their citizens to stay at home and restricting social gatherings to curb the spread of the virus, Lukashenko has prescribed going to banya (a Russian-style sauna) and a generous dose of vodka to keep COVID-19 at bay, the *Times of London* reported.

"When you come out of the sauna, not only wash your hands, but also your insides with 100 millilitres [of vodka]," he said.

Despite evidence to the contrary, Lukashenko also believes the hard work can also defeat the virus.

"Tractors will cure everyone," he said.

"The field heals everyone."

It all feels a little bit like he's quoting from George Orwell's *Animal Farm*.

Having held the Presidential office since it was founded in 1994, Lukashenko is set to seek a sixth successive term when the nation goes to the polls in Aug.

Rural pharmacists' supply fears grow

PHARMACISTS working in rural and remote parts of the country are calling on the Federal Government to nationalise medicines "as soon as they enter to the country in order to ensure stability of supply" during the COVID-19 crisis.

The call from the Rural Pharmacy Network Australia (RPNA) came after the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) granted interim authorisation for Community Service Obligation (CSO) wholesalers to collaborate on medicine supply across the country.

The RPNA has previously flagged concerns over potential breaches of the CSO by wholesalers (**PD 17 Mar**), and in a statement released this morning it reported that "rural pharmacists are being stonewalled by authorities and feeling anything but assured about their ability to secure life-saving medications for their patients", despite reassurances that there were no critical medicines shortages.

"Many pharmacies around the country, irrespective of which wholesaler they use, are still reporting out of stocks, items on back order, shortages of some medications etc," a spokesperson said.

"Some pharmacies are on a drip feed of five Ventolin a day regardless of need.

"Many pharmacies have been dumped by their second line wholesalers.

"In some instances wholesalers have explicitly stated that they cannot meet their CSO obligation."

However, the National Pharmaceutical Services Association (NPSA), which represents CSO wholesalers, said the ACCC's interim authorisation would "support the continuous, fair and equitable supply of medicines across Australia, in response to COVID-19".

NPSA Chair, Mark Hooper, said the measure would offer the ability



to collaborate and would enable wholesalers to manage the supply of medicines to pharmacies.

"This is an important development, which will build on emergency measures taken by each wholesaler, government and other stakeholders to appropriately calibrate and optimise the medicines supply chain as we respond to increased demand for both medicines and pharmacy products during this crisis," he said.

GC pharmacies raided in night of crime

QUEENSLAND Police have made a series of arrests following a night of crime on the Gold Coast, which saw a number of break-ins at pharmacies.

Between 10:30pm on Mon night and 1:30am on Tue morning, police arrested 10 individuals, including a man and teenage boy who "smashed the front entry of a Bienvenue Drive business in Currumbin Waters before the duo allegedly stole a quantity of drugs".

In a separate incident two men allegedly used a sledgehammer to break into a pharmacy on Ashmore Road, with one of the pair entering the store before

making off with a sum of cash.

At 12:45am police observed a Black Mazda 323 sedan, which was allegedly the subject of multiple pharmacy break-ins, travelling at high speeds along Ross Street, evading police along Bermuda Street and Markeri Street.

Approximately 30 minutes later, the vehicle was sighted again on Somerset Drive Mudgeeraba where a tyre deflation device was used on Robina Parkway and the occupants abandoned the vehicle near the Robina Town Centre; one man was arrested hiding near the shopping centre.

In store hand sani

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has moved to cut red tape stymieing pharmacies efforts to compound their own hand sanitisers.

On 28 Mar, specified hand sanitiser formulations were excluded from TGA regulation, provided they only contain particular ingredients in particular quantities in the final formulation, and comply with certain manufacturing practices, and conditions.

This exclusion will facilitate the urgent and continued supply of large volumes of hand sanitisers in Australia.

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