

## Today's issue of PD

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

## Profession under COVID pressure

**WITH** pharmacy staff under sustained pressure as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Pharmacists' Support Service (PSS) will host a webinar focused on giving pharmacists a "pandemic survival toolkit" and how to keep workplaces safe.

Hosted by pharmacist and counsellor, Helen Lowy, the hour-long webinar will take place streamed live on Tue 07 Apr from 8pm (AEST).

**CLICK HERE** to register your interest in attending the webinar.

## Pharmacy needs certainty: Bowen

**SIGNING** the Seventh Community Pharmacy Agreement (7CPA) is more urgent than ever, with Australia facing the threat of COVID-19, Shadow Federal Health Minister, Chris Bowen, says.

In an open letter to Federal Health Minister, Greg Hunt, the Labor MP stressed the need to deliver certainty for the pharmacy sector, with less than three months until the 6CPA expires.

"Successive CPAs have ensured a strong partnership between the Commonwealth and community pharmacy since the Hawke-Keating Government signed the First Agreement," he said.

"CPAs provide much-needed certainty for Australia's 5,800 community pharmacies, their staff, and most importantly their millions of patients.

"With just three months until the 6CPA expires, and having missed

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your Government's deadline to sign a new Agreement in 2019, I am concerned that this certainty is now being undermined.

"My firm view is that COVID-19 makes settling a 7CPA more urgent, not less.

"I also note that elements of the 7CPA may need to be legislated, and that the Parliament may only sit once more before the 6CPA expires."

Bowen added the new agreement must address issues around the affordability of Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) medicines and funding to support the role of pharmacies within the primary healthcare setting.

A spokesperson for the Department of Health told **Pharmacy Daily** that while the signatories of the 6CPA had agreed "to use their best endeavours to ensure that negotiations for the



new CPA concluded by 31 Mar", talk were continuing throughout the COVID-19 crisis.

"Consultations and negotiations have covered a wide range of topics including aged care, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, primary care, digital health opportunities, and rural and remote pharmacy, amongst others," the spokesperson said.

## AHPRA launches COVID sub-register

**PHARMACISTS** who have not practiced in the last three years are being urged to join the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency's (AHPRA) new pandemic sub-register to fast-track their return to the profession.

Responding to a call from the Federal Government, AHPRA set up the short-term sub-register, which will operate on an opt-out basis, to meet the growing

demand for qualified frontline health professionals.

Pharmacists who choose to stay on the register will be required to comply with the Pharmacy Code of Practice, hold professional indemnity insurance and work within their scope of practice.

AHPRA said the register will return more than 40,000 health professionals to the workforce.

It is expected that the register will be in place from 06 Apr.

## Rural pharmacies feeling COVID strain

**PHARMACIES** across rural and remote parts of Australia are being pushed to breaking point in the face of workforce shortages and rising costs, the Rural Pharmacy Network Australia (RPNA) believes.

In a statement released this morning the group reported that the COVID-19 pandemic has been stretching pharmacies to their limits.

"Community pharmacies are on the frontline of this pandemic yet their contribution and more importantly their needs are being overlooked," a spokesperson said.

"Staff are off sick, some unable to work because they are now home-schooling their children, and some even resigning due to the stress and risk of COVID-19.

"The biggest issue that many single pharmacist pharmacies are facing now is how do we keep the doors open if the pharmacist has to isolate due to exposure to the virus or coming down with the virus themselves.

"Rural pharmacies have been assured that there will be pharmacists available through the Emergency Locum service, which will now provide 14 days cover to match the quarantine period.

"But is this going to be enough? While GPs have been thrown a \$700 million dollar lifeline to conduct telehealth consults, single pharmacist owners if required to isolate must somehow find the funds to cover wage costs (possibly up to \$90 per hour for COVID-19 relief) plus accommodation for two weeks or more – perhaps under conditions where turnover has dropped.

"None of these costs are covered by any of the measures announced so far.

"What rural pharmacies want more than anything else is long term security and an equitable deal in the Seventh Community Pharmacy Agreement – but none of this will matter if we go broke before that happens."

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## Give us access to NIP flu vax stock

**PHARMACISTS** across the country should be allowed to administer influenza vaccinations funded through the National Immunisation Program (NIP), as part of a campaign to boost vaccine uptake, the Pharmacy Guild of Australia believes.

Guild National President, George Tambassis, backed calls made by Federal Health Minister, Greg Hunt, urging Australians to contact their pharmacists, GPs and other immunisation providers to arrange to get the flu jab, to minimise the virus's impact on the health system during the COVID-19 pandemic (**PD** breaking news).

Currently, pharmacists in Western Australia and the ACT have access to NIP vaccines on a trial basis, while pharmacists in Victoria are also eligible to administer vaccines under the program.

"The ongoing COVID-19 crisis highlights how critical it is to remain as healthy as possible

to have a stronger resistance to catching it, or to recover quickly if you do catch it," Tambassis said.

"Australia is in the unenviable situation of having to deal with the crisis at a time of the year when we usually face the onset of the flu season.

"There is no vaccination for COVID-19 as yet, but there is for the flu and protecting yourself from this disease has never been more important. You need to remain as healthy as possible to reduce the likelihood of contracting COVID-19."

Speaking on a webinar hosted by the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) last night, Royal Australia College of General Practitioners Chair, Dr Charlotte Hespe, urged pharmacists to focus on encouraging employers who would traditionally have had in-house vaccinations services, to send their staff to pharmacies to get their annual flu jab.

"They're obviously not going to



be doing their mass vaccinations on site at their own premises this year, so there's going to be a large number of employees whose bosses will fund it, but this year it might be funded out in community pharmacy," she said.

Responding to a question during the webinar, Hespe and PSA National President, Dr Chris Freeman, voiced support for the entire population to be given access to Government-subsidised flu vaccinations this year.

## SA emergency dispensing rules

**SOUTH** Australia has joined the list of States where emergency dispensing rules enabling pharmacists to dispense prescription medicines without a script have been implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The State Government announced the indefinite extension of emergency measures brought in during the bushfire crisis (**PD** breaking news) yesterday.

Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) SA/NT Branch President, Robyn Johns, welcomed the decision, saying it would provide patients with certainty when they cannot access their usual prescriber as a result of increased demand for health services.

The authority excludes S8 medication and other restricted products.

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## Dispensary Corner

**THERE'S** been a tragic accident in the US overnight.

Nobody was injured, but the cargo carried by a truck which ran off a Texas highway was completely destroyed when the vehicle caught on fire.

What was inside? A massive shipment of toilet paper.

According to the Texas Department of Transportation, the truck crashed at about 4am and burst into flames on Interstate 20 near Dallas.

The driver says he lost control, smashing into a highway barrier before the vehicle overturned.

Firefighters attending the scene managed to extinguish the flames, but weren't able to save any of the toilet rolls - although the driver and his faithful dog were unhurt.

**NATIONS** around the world are ramping up their testing for COVID-19 - but unfortunately British authorities have hit a glitch when some kits on order were found to be contaminated by - you guessed it - coronavirus.

The UK Government is hoping to boost the rate of testing by enlisting private suppliers to help ramp up production.

The tests were being produced by Luxembourg-based Eurofins, which has informed laboratories in the United Kingdom that deliveries would be delayed because COVID-19 had been detected in components due for delivery in the next few days.

Government sources said the issue shouldn't significantly impact the UK's overall testing efforts, reports the *Telegraph*.

## Celebrations on hold for PotY winner

**CELEBRATIONS** will have to wait for the 2020 Pharmacy Guild of Australia Pharmacy of the Year (PotY) winner, Capital Chemist Chisholm, as the team focuses on supporting its community through the COVID-19 pandemic.

With the announcement of the winner put on hold until yesterday, as the traditional awards ceremony at the Australian Pharmacy Professional (APP) Conference fell victim to the public health crisis, proprietor, Rebecca Young, told *Pharmacy Daily* the team was "proud, humbled and very honoured to be recognised in this way".

"It's difficult to get too excited with the challenging times at the moment," she said.

"But we will certainly celebrate when the time is right, and our team are all very proud of what we've achieved."

The ACT-based pharmacy also claimed the Excellence in Business Management Award (**PD** 10 Mar), while Wizard Pharmacy Kalgoorlie



Central won the Excellence in Professional Innovation title (**PD** 17 Mar) and Wheatbelt Health Centre Pharmacy took out the Excellence in Community Engagement prize (**PD** 12 Mar).

Speaking with *Pharmacy Daily*, Capital Chemist Group Business Manager, Andrew Topp, praised Young's focus and determination in developing the pharmacy.

"She has built an extremely strong, vibrant, successful, professionally satisfying and - dare

I say it - financially rewarding business."

Topp noted the win was the Capital Chemist Group's fourth major national pharmacy title in the last seven years.

"It's good for all of us that we have high-flyers and exceptionally good performers, because it drive us all to be better," he said.

**Pictured**, Capital Chemist Chisholm owner, Rebecca Young.

**Insert**, the 2020 PotY team celebrate the win.

## Madrid mourns five fallen pharmacists

**SPAIN'S** "nightmare"

COVID-19 crisis has claimed the lives of five pharmacists in the country to date, with pharmacies in Madrid stopping at midday yesterday for a minute's silence.

In a post on Facebook, International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) Community Pharmacy Section Executive Committee Member, Jaime Acosta Gomez, said the profession wanted to recognise the efforts of the colleagues who had lost their lives as a result of the pandemic.

"It tries also to give some comfort and affection to their families, who have been hit so hard," he said.

Gomez paid a special tribute to husband and wife pharmacists, Jose Tomas Mijimolle and Carmen Cuadrado, who lost their battles with the virus on Sat and Mon.

"They pioneered orthopedic pharmacy in Spain, and set an example of commitment, joy and character for many of us," he said.

"True pharmacists and excellent people."

## Ruby bounce

**PHARMACISTS** are being warned to expect a return to rising numbers of positive test results for COVID-19, in the coming days as the impact of passengers disembarking from the *Ruby Princess* cruise ship filters through.

Speaking on a Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) webinar last night Royal Australian College of General Practitioners Chair, Dr Charlotte Hespe, said the recent decline in new cases was likely to be reversed as infections from the ship emerge.

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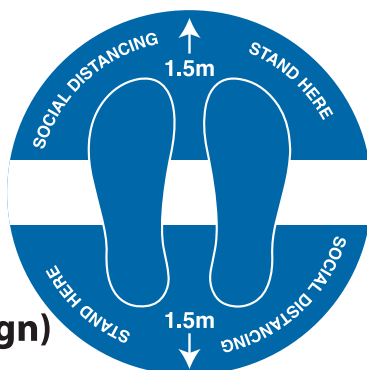
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