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PSA updates practice guidelines

NEW practice guidelines for conducting medication management reviews and providing quality use of medicines (QUM) services to residential aged care facilities are now available.

The *Guidelines for comprehensive medication management reviews*, produced by the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA), provide pharmacists with best practice guidance when providing medication management review services, such as Home Medicines Reviews (HMRs) and Residential Medication Management Reviews (RMMRs).

PSA National President, Dr Chris Freeman, said the updated guidelines were timely following the introduction of telepharmacy services in Australia and the Federal Government's decision to fund additional follow-up consultations to boost QUM.

"The revised guidelines are designed to support pharmacists in providing quality medication



management services and improve the quality use of medicines in the community," he said.

"Pharmacists have an important role to play in reducing medication-related harm and ensuring medicines are used safely and appropriately.

"These guidelines will also provide guidance and support for pharmacists in implementing program changes in practice, such as the utilisation of follow-ups after

the initial HMR or RMMR."

The guidelines provide advice on considerations when recommending and undertaking follow-ups after the initial review, as well as highlighting the importance of collaboration and communication with the healthcare team and the role of pharmacists as part of this team when providing medication management review services.

CLICK HERE for more.

Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today has three pages of news plus a full page from **Sigma Connect**.

Gunston named new Sigma chair

SIGMA Healthcare Chair, Brian Jamieson will retire from the Board next month, with the company's Risk Management and Audit Committee Chair, Ray Gunston assuming the position.

Jamieson will step down at the conclusion of Sigma's Annual General Meeting (AGM) on 13 May, after almost a decade in the role.

Michael Sammells, who joined the Board in Feb, will succeed Gunston as Chair of the Risk Management and Audit Committee, while Directors, Christine Bartlett and David Bayes are set to seek re-election at the AGM.



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Inappropriate prescribing a threat

EFFORTS to prescribe unproven treatments to tackle COVID-19 outside of clinical trials should be avoided until evidence is available to support their use, academics believe.

In an article published in *Australian Prescriber*, by researchers including Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital Pharmacy Department Director, Ian Coombes, and ASCOT study investigators, Jason Robers and Andrew Redmond, urged prescribers against the use of "medicines with putative benefit for COVID-19".

"There are no medicines with any robust evidence of clinical benefit, including the antimalarial hydroxychloroquine, the antibiotic azithromycin and the antiretroviral combination of lopinavir with ritonavir," they said.

"Indeed, now is the time to investigate which drugs may improve clinical outcomes in COVID-19 by conducting well-designed clinical trials, rather than making assumptions based on preliminary data and low-quality clinical studies.

"Some clinicians and consumers may believe that hydroxychloroquine should be



available on compassionate grounds for patients with COVID-19 who are not eligible or do not give their consent for recruitment into a clinical trial.

"Hydroxychloroquine should only be prescribed after the patient or their carer has been made aware of the drug's potential toxicities and its lack of proven efficacy in COVID-19, and consent has been given."

However, the authors flagged concerns that inappropriate prescribing of hydroxychloroquine could adversely impact patients who have been prescribed the drug for approved conditions.

"Due to inappropriate prescribing and dispensing,

hydroxychloroquine is now in short supply in Australia and globally," they said.

"This has caused serious challenges for patients receiving ongoing treatment for chronic diseases such as lupus for which there often is not an effective alternative, and even temporary withdrawal can lead to serious harm.

"It is encouraging that pharmacy and medical professional organisations are also conveying similar messages regarding the limited evidence of drug efficacy and safety in COVID-19, as well as the importance of ongoing access to essential treatments for chronic diseases."

Defence joins COVID-19 fight

AUSTRALIA'S Department of Defence is partnering with a South Australian company to produce face shields for frontline health professionals.

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, Axiom Precision Manufacturing is set to produce 1,000 of the Defence Science and Technology Group-designed shields a day.

Defence Minister, Senator Linda Reynolds said the arrangement would deliver a consistency supply of PPE.

Australian Defence Force personnel have also been provided to Victorian manufacturer, Med-Con to boost production of surgical face masks, during the crisis.

UK pharmacies get security advice

BRITISH pharmacy owners are being urged to take steps to protect their staff from potential criminal activities stemming from the COVID-19 crisis.

The Metropolitan Police Service has issued specialist advice for pharmacies to take during the pandemic to minimise threats to staff and property.

The five-page document recommends that staff should "not divulge when deliveries are expected" and urged owners to ask staff to "remove identification lanyards when leaving the premises" and to secure computer log in cards.

The Met also encouraged pharmacy owners to remove obstructions or reposition merchandise to ensure staff

have a clear view around the pharmacy to entrances and "if possible, outside your premises".

Pharmacy staff have also been told to restrict the number of people entering the store.

"Remember criminals and opportunist thieves are sophisticated in their ability to deceive staff," the Met said.

"Remain alert and try not to stereotype what a criminal looks like, as they can take any appearance.

"Be mindful of criminal distraction techniques, especially during deliveries."

The police added that pharmacies should ensure that at least two staff members are on site to open and close the store.

CLICK HERE for more.

Dispensing error earns player ban

A DISPENSING mix-up has landed Irish rugby player, James Cronin, with a month-long ban.

The 29-year-old tested positive for banned steroid, prednisolone, and corticosteroid, prednisone, after a club match in Nov 2019.

In a statement European Professional Club Rugby said Cronin had been prescribed an antibiotic in the lead-up to the match, however a pharmacist had inadvertently dispensed the medication to the thrice-capped Ireland international.

The disciplinary panel ruled that anti-doping violation was "entirely unintentional" and due to the dispensing error.

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Dispensary Corner

THE inclusion of miniature bottles of cognac in special COVID-19 care packages issued by authorities in Kenya has attracted quite a backlash.

Nairobi Governor, Mike Sonko, has confirmed the inclusion of Hennessy in food parcels given out to the community, saying the alcoholic beverage would act as a "good throat sanitiser".

"I think from the research conducted by the World Health Organization (WHO)...it has been believed that alcohol plays a major role in killing the coronavirus," Sonko said in a video to the Nairobi public.

However the local distributor of the tippie has moved to debunk Sonko's suggestions.

"Hennessy would like to stress that the consumption of our brand or any other alcoholic beverage does not protect against the virus," said a statement by country manager Anne-Claire Delamarre.

"In line with the WHO and Ministry of Health Kenya, Hennessy advises on washing hands regularly with soap and water or hydro-alcoholic gels, wearing face masks, practicing social distancing and staying at home," the distiller added.

The WHO has also warned against the measure, saying "during the COVID-19 pandemic we should really ask ourselves what risks we are taking in leaving people under lockdown in their homes with a substance that is harmful both in terms of their health and the effects of their behaviour on others, including violence".

Medicines shortages still a concern

AUSTRALIA'S COVID-19 threat may have stabilised, but ensuring medicines supplies to hospitals remains critical to patient safety, the Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) warns.

SHPA CEO, Kristin Michaels, told *Pharmacy Daily* that the organisation is using pharmacists' frontline data to inform national emergency policy around medicines supply, as it briefs the Therapeutic Goods Administration on drug shortages in hospitals.

"Through our representation on the Department of Health's Medicines Shortages Working Group we are providing weekly updates on prevalent shortages and hospital pharmacy capacity to ensure our hospitals remain resourced to handle COVID-19 cases, as well as elective surgeries



coming back online," she said.

"While Australia's COVID-19 caseload has stabilised, we remain vulnerable to an increase and ensuring sufficient supply of medicines to our hospitals is a critical component of national preparations."

Michaels said managing medication shortages was key to

maintaining hospital bed capacity in the current environment.

MEANWHILE more than 70 hospitals in Australia and New Zealand are set to participate in the screened Australasian COVID-19 Trial (ASCOT) of hydroxychloroquine and antiretroviral combination lopinavir/ritonavir.

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