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Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today has two pages of news.

FDA warns about chloroquine

THE US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has issued a drug safety communication regarding the use of chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine to treat patients with COVID-19.

"We are also aware of increased use of these medicines through outpatient prescriptions," the FDA statement said.

"Hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine have not been shown to be safe and effective for treating or preventing COVID-19.

"Hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine can cause abnormal heart rhythms such as QT interval prolongation and a dangerously rapid heart rate called ventricular tachycardia."

Patients taking the medications for FDA-approved indications should continue to use them as prescribed.

Jackson warns against McTelehealth

PHARMACISTS must grasp the opportunity of being able to deliver medication reviews via telehealth, but should not use the platform as the default setting for all consultations.

Speaking on a webinar last night, the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia's (PSA) lead negotiator for the Seventh Community Pharmacy Agreement (7CPA), Shane Jackson, welcomed the introduction of telehealth to support quality use of medicines.

"It is important to realise at this point in time this is to deal with the COVID-19 challenge that we have today," he said.

"The PSA maintains that these services are best delivered face-to-face, but delivery via telehealth - video conferencing and telephone - enable us to deliver those services.

"It shouldn't be the default - some of us who read the medical journalism, we're seeing reports around McTelehealth and through-put, it's a default that it's telehealth [for GP consultations]."

"What we can't have is a default to telehealth - patients need to know that this is an option, [and] patients need to consent to that process."



Jackson stressed the importance of maintaining access to medication management services, including MedsCheck, Diabetes MedsCheck, Home Medicines Reviews and Residential Medication Management Reviews, for at-risk patients during the COVID-19 crisis.

"In late Oct last year we had [Federal Health] Minister, Greg Hunt, and all the other [state and territory] health ministers agree for medicines safety to be a National Health Priority Area," he said.

"We don't want that to be neglected, and we don't want six months of low levels of medication reviews being done.

"This allows pharmacists to have

an alternative for those at people at risk."

He also urged pharmacists to pay close attention to the program rules and the recently released Professional Guidelines for Service Delivery, to ensure they are patients that meet the eligibility criteria for Home Medicines Review (HMRs) and Residential Medication Management Reviews (RMMRs).

"You don't want to fall foul of doing the wrong thing from a claiming and delivery point of view, so you're not delivering the service to someone you should have, or outside payment rules," he said.

"You don't want to have to pay back the money."

PSA/ADHA secure messaging survey

PHARMACISTS are being asked to take part in a joint Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) and Australian Digital Health Agency (ADHA) survey.

The poll aims to discover how pharmacists send and receive information to and from other health professionals to help strengthen inter-professional collaboration through digital



health platforms. [CLICK HERE](#) to have your say.

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Dispensary Corner

AUSTRALIA'S Chief Health Officer, Brendan Murphy, has become a familiar figure in the media over the last few months, with regular appearances in support of Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, and other politicians discussing the Government's coronavirus response.

And while he's highly respected, we're not sure that he's arousing the same devotion as his Swedish counterpart.

The country's official state epidemiologist, Anders Tegnell, has led Sweden's response to COVID-19 - with less stringent measures than in other countries - and in the process become a household name.

One devotee, 32-year-old Gustave Agerblad from Stockholm, has been so impressed that he decided to get a permanent memento of the scientist, by getting his face inked onto his arm (**below**).

Agerblad said "I like to have tattoos that represent something for me and, I mean, this COVID-19 will be a part of my life for the rest of my life," he told news agency *AFP*.



Pharmacy must reinforce its value

PHARMACY bodies must build on the profession's success in supporting health systems around the world during the COVID-19 pandemic to highlight the potential of pharmacists, International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) Vice President, Ashok Soni, believes.

Addressing a webinar last night, Soni noted that pharmacists have played a central role in the global response to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis.

"There's been a huge outflowing of gratitude and recognition of pharmacists and the role the pharmacists are playing," he said.

"But at the same time there's still this challenge about how well they're recognised by governments and by the public on an ongoing basis.

"As we move beyond this, part of the responsibility from an



organisational perspective is to make sure that we continue to tell the story of what pharmacists are doing, but also tell the story of what pharmacists can do and how they can make things better going forward."

Soni said that in the wake of comments about COVID-19 treatments such as hydroxychloroquine and

disinfectant injection, pharmacies are "going to be the place that people come to for true information... and to be able to deal with the fake news".

Closing the webinar Soni encouraged pharmacists to "believe in yourselves as pharmacists, recognise what a fantastic job you are doing, and most of all keep safe and keep well".

Pharmacists forgotten in UK scheme

BRITISH pharmacists are demanding that Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, include the pharmacy team the Government's new "death in service benefit" for health professionals who die as a result of COVID-19.

Under the scheme, the families of deceased health workers will receive a £60,000 lump sum.

However, the Royal Pharmaceutical Society (RPS) President, Sanrda Gidley, has flagged concerns that pharmacy staff may not be covered.

In a letter to Johnson, Gidley and the Chairs of the English, Scottish and Welsh Pharmacy Boards, called for urgent clarification on the issue.

"We were shocked by reports

that pharmacists in England will only be considered by the scheme in 'exceptional circumstances,'" they said.

"This news came without any prior engagement with the pharmacy profession and has been a bitter blow to the thousands of pharmacists who are putting themselves at risk every day when they care for patients.

"The profession has done everything it has been asked by your government.

"The news that pharmacists would only be covered by the scheme under exceptional circumstances has been seen as a kick in the teeth and has upset and angered the whole profession."

Doco marks pharmacy heroes

MONASH University has released a documentary to commemorate five of its former pharmacy students, who served during the First World War.

The film comes a year after the university awarded the posthumous degrees to the men, and provides insight into the history of the pharmacy profession, an overview of the project and a sense of the emotion of the ceremony held to honour the men, four of whom, Alan Couve, Eric Bisset, Gordon Jewkes and Malcolm Jorres, were killed in action.

CLICK HERE to view the doco.