

Pharmacy testing concerns flagged

QUEENSLANDERS with COVID-19-like symptoms are being urged to avoid community pharmacies, despite the State Government announcing a pharmacy-based testing trial.

Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) Queensland Branch President, Shane MacDonald, said the trial was designed to pick up patients who have come into the pharmacy that the pharmacist believes should be tested.

"We don't want people with COVID-19 symptoms specifically coming into the pharmacy just to get tested," he said.

"We ask people with these symptoms to get tested at one of the many designated testing stations.

"Pharmacies are health centres where people with chronic health conditions regularly visit, so we don't want to be exposing these at-risk groups or the

pharmacy workforce to COVID-19 unnecessarily."

The PSA has also previously raised concerns about the availability of personal protective equipment (PPE) for pharmacy staff.

Royal Australia College of General Practitioners (RACGP) Queensland Chair, Dr Bruce Willett, welcomed the Government's decision to boost the State's testing capacity, but stressed the safety of patients and the community need to be the top priority.

"Testing sites need considerable infection control procedures in place, including the correct use of PPE and environmental cleaning," he said.

"Doctors and nurses are experienced in the use of PPE which requires training and is not a simple task.

"There are genuine concerns about whether retail pharmacists could meet these requirements



and ensure the safety of patients coming in for COVID-19 tests, the safety of their other customers, and pharmacy staff.

"We seek reassurance from the state government that the pharmacists involved in this trial will meet the necessary safety standards and receive the necessary training, and can provide a safe environment for any patients coming in for tests, as well as customers and staff," Willett said.

Capital internship

CAPITAL Chemist Group is seeking expressions of interest for intern positions across the network in 2021, to follow in the footsteps of Pharmacy Guild of Australia 2019 Intern of the Year winner, Lucinda Kenny (*PD* 19 May).

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S3 melatonin

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) is inviting interested parties to make submission regarding the interim decision to down-schedule modified release melatonin formulations to Pharmacist Only, from 01 Oct.

The closing date for submissions related to the proposed down-scheduling is 28 Aug.

CLICK HERE for more.

GPs urged to hold off on e-scripts

DOCTORS operating outside of the Australian Digital Health Agency's (ADHA) Communities of Interest (COIs) are being asked to refrain from issuing electronic prescriptions.

A spokesperson for the ADHA told *Pharmacy Daily* the Agency has been working with GP and pharmacy bodies to support the phased roll-out of e-scripts through the COIs, rather than taking a "big bang approach".

"We've seen strong demand to use this technology," the spokesperson said.

"Some prescribers outside the initial geographies have started issuing e-scripts and there were a small number of cases where a

pharmacy was unable to process the e-script.

"While these cases were dealt with promptly by the pharmacy and their software provider, the Agency is working to maintain an orderly approach to the roll out which limits these issues, as pharmacies get prepared.

"We'd prefer to ensure this occurs without general practice having to 'find' local pharmacies to reduce any burden on general practice but are working through options with peak associations to get a sensible, orderly approach that also recognises the enthusiasm of the sector and community to use this technology."

Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features two pages of news, plus a full page from Pharmacy Guild of Australia.



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Dispensary Corner

SAFE sex campaigns are moving to the next level in the era of COVID-19.

With various health organisations around the globe giving their two cents from finding a COVID "love-buddy" to taking intimacy online, there has been plenty of advice for those looking to satisfy their lusty needs during the pandemic.

The latest guidance on how to be COVID-safe with your partner comes from British sexual health charity, The Terrence Higgins Trust, which strongly recommends "not kissing, wearing a face mask during sex and favouring positions where you're not face-to-face".

The Trust also advises people to discuss COVID-19 and get a brief medical history of any new partner and others in their household, to gauge their COVID risk, before letting passion get the better of you.

Married life seems pretty good right now!

Impact of COVID unseen

TIME will tell what impact Victoria's Stage Four COVID-19 restrictions are having on community pharmacies, Australian Pharmaceutical Industries (API) CEO, Richard Vincent, believes.

Vincent told *Pharmacy Daily* that the company's Priceline Pharmacy network in Victoria was continuing to play an integral role in supporting the health needs of patients in the state.

"All Priceline Pharmacies in Victoria remain open and are important to their local communities," he said.

"It is too early to tell what impact Stage Four restrictions will have.

"We're communicating regularly with all our pharmacists, providing support and guidance, particularly around how to keep themselves, staff and customers safe in these dangerous times."

Responding to concerns flagged in relation to pharmacy home delivery services, with Australia Post and other logistics businesses being ordered to reduce their capacity by 33% in Victoria (*PD* 10 Aug), Vincent said API has worked with pharmacies to maintain services.

"They are doing a vital job extremely well and we're ensuring



that they have timely delivery of medicines and other essential products," he said.

Sigma CEO, Mark Hooper, told the *Sydney Morning Herald* that the wholesaler had been in discussions with the State Government regarding its distribution centres, adding he expected it to be able to maintain normal stock levels during the lockdown period.

"It just highlights how critical medicine distribution infrastructure is," he said.

Meanwhile, the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that Australia Post has confirmed it will be prioritising its medicines delivery capacity in Victoria, to ensure patients retain access to vital products, in response to the restrictions.

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