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## AMA issues COVID testing warning

**PROPOSED** pharmacy-based COVID-19 testing could be Queensland's *Ruby Princess* moment leading to a surge in community transmission, Australian Medical Association (AMA) Queensland President, Dr Chris Perry, warns.

Speaking during a Queensland Parliament Economics and Governance Committee hearing Perry said he could not "understand how a chemist shop is safe to conduct COVID testing".

"This could be the *Ruby Princess* and the quarantine debacle of Victoria coming to Queensland if we have an uptick in the number of cases," he said.

"I think it is crazy to even think of this at the moment.

"It is going to open the Government and people who push this line to Slater and Gordon and Shine Lawyers in the future."

Perry noted that Professional Pharmacists Australia (PPA), has

voiced opposition to the planned trial (**PD** 17 Aug).

Responding to the AMA's concerns over the pilot, Pharmacy Guild of Australia Queensland Branch President, Trent Twomey, told the committee that the addition of pharmacy-based testing was about "making sure that a Queenslanders gets to access a service and that it complies with the same clinical guidelines regardless of where they get to access it from".

"This is not about people who have, because of their travel history, come into contact with somebody who is at an increased risk," he said.

"This is just saying that for those people who get their Telfast, Nasonex or Codral Cold and Flu this will just provide that extra level of protection, that extra level of certainty that is consistent with the advice of the Chief Health Officer and is happening in other First World jurisdictions, both domestically and internationally.

"If we are going to have a mature conversation about keeping our economy open, keeping people as free as they possibly can be and decreasing risk, we have to ensure



that we acknowledge this is both an economic crisis and a health crisis and that we utilise all of the resources we have at our disposal.

"That is the infrastructure and that is the private-public partnership that is the community pharmacy network in the state of Queensland.

"We are not here to fearmonger. We are here to offer our services.

"We will ensure that we comply with the same clinical guidelines that every other piece of the primary healthcare infrastructure needs to comply with."

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## Today's issue of PD

**Pharmacy Daily** today features three pages of news, plus a full page from **Direct Chemist Outlet**.

## Hydrochlorothiazide cancer link: TGA

**THE** Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has reported product information (PI) and consumer medicine information (CMI) for medicines containing hydrochlorothiazide are being updated to include details about an increased risk of non-melanoma skin cancer.

Epidemiological studies have found that there is an increased risk of non-melanoma

skin cancers associated with medicines containing hydrochlorothiazide.

The TGA is working with sponsors of products that contain hydrochlorothiazide to include a warning about the increased risk of non-melanoma skin cancers, together with advice about avoiding ultraviolet exposure and getting regular skin checks, in their PI and CMI documents.

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## Blackmores profits down 66%

**HEALTHCARE** supplement brand, Blackmores, has reported a net profit after tax of \$18.1 billion for the 2020 Financial Year, down 66% on the company's 2019 results.

Announcing its full year results, CEO, Alastair Symington, said the business had seen strong growth in international markets, with the Australian and Chinese markets stabilising despite the impacts of COVID-19.

Symington reported BioCeuticals revenue was up 7%, while Blackmores had strengthened its leadership position in Australia with a 16.4% share of the vitamin and dietary supplement market.

"This is despite the unprecedented disruption due to COVID-19 and highlights the strength of our brands in meeting consumer health needs," he said.

Blackmores did not provide a profit outlook for FY21 in its full year results.

## Pharmacy disadvantaged in COVID

**PHARMACIES** are being locked out of COVID-19 financial support programs for dispensing high-cost, low-volume medications that skew stores' turnover, Pharmacy Guild of Australia Queensland Branch President, Trent Twomey, reports.

Addressing a Queensland Parliament Economics and Governance Committee hearing last week, Twomey raised concerns about the rules governing JobKeeper and eligibility for rental relief.

"The mandatory code of conduct nationally relies on two particular measures," he said.

"One is a reduced turnover of 30% and the second is being eligible for JobKeeper.

"The Guild has made recommendations to the Australian Taxation Office because we believe this is too much of a blunt instrument to truly assess whether or not a tenancy in the community pharmacy space is under undue pressure.

"What we mean specifically here is the fact that many of the molecules we dispense, which traditionally

may only have been made available through the hospital network, are high-cost, low-volume drugs.

"We have HIV medicine and Hep C medication that can cost \$22,000 a month.

"This is skewing the turnover of community pharmacy.

"We are paid \$99 for dispensing something that may cost \$22,000.

"If we removed these from our turnover figures, which would normalise our profit-and-loss statements, it would show that we would be eligible in any other circumstances for rental relief.

"What we are seeing is community pharmacists being placed in an awkward position.

"We do not want to say no to these patients who are presenting to our pharmacies for this important treatment.

"We do not want to send people back unnecessarily for potentially preventable hospital presentations when they can receive this treatment from the community pharmacy network.

"Unfortunately, our members are being unduly penalised financially



because they are ineligible for things like JobKeeper or even rental relief."

Twomey added pharmacy staff have the skills and knowledge to perform more tasks to support the primary care network in reducing pressure on secondary and tertiary health systems.

"We stand here not with an arm out asking for a handout but with an arm extended in partnership to ensure that you know we are not asking for any world firsts or any Australian firsts; we are just asking for you to remove all the unnecessary red tape and regulatory burdens that prohibit us from practising to our full scope of practice," he said.

## Hunt troubled by youth e-smoking

**INCREASING** evidence linking the marketing of e-cigarettes and use to addiction, lung disease and smoking uptake among young people is troubling, Federal Health Minister, Greg Hunt, believes.

Responding to a petition calling for the House of Representatives to reject legislation banning the importation of vaporised nicotine, Hunt said there was insufficient evidence to support the use of e-cigarettes for smoking cessation.



However, he noted that while nicotine for use in e-cigarettes is not currently available for sale in Australia, it may be lawful for health practitioners to access this substance on behalf of their patients for smoking cessation in specific circumstances.

## Pharmacy link to COVID-19 case

**NSW Health** has reported that a patient who visited Auburn Ramadan Pharmacy last Wed 19 Aug, has tested positive for COVID-19.

The State Health agency has advised people who attended the pharmacy between 1.30pm and 2.30pm to monitor for symptoms "no matter how slight and immediately get tested if they appear", however, they have not been advised to self-isolate.

Queensland Health has also warned patients who visited



the Chemist Warehouse on Waratah Drive, Crestmead, in the afternoon on 18 Aug, to monitor their health and get tested if they develop "even the mildest of COVID-19 symptoms".

**7CPA: What does it mean for your health service offer?**

As we begin the 7th CPA agreement period, ask yourself: **Did you really make the most of the 6th CPA? How can you ensure that you maximise the benefits this time around?**

**This webinar will cover:** • Details of the 7CPA agreement and how they impact you and your Pharmacy business • Practical implementation advice on meeting your 7CPA goals • Planning and delivering your health service offer beyond 7CPA

**Webinar date:** Thursday 3rd September  
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## Dispensary Corner

**IN A** desperate attempt to avoid the long arm of the law, a suspected pharmacy bandit gave himself a less than convincing haircut as a disguise.

Justin Tayman allegedly robbed prescription medicines from a CVS pharmacy in New Jersey, last month and made his way to a motel where he changed his clothes and trimmed his hair in a bid to avoid being caught, *York Daily Record* reported.

However, the self-grooming thief fooled no one, as police swooped charging him with robbery, theft, receiving stolen property and drug act violations.

Local police reported that Tayman had entered the pharmacy and handed staff a note demanding controlled substances.

"The pharmacist handed over two bottles of prescription drugs and Tayman ran away," the paper said.

"About 10 minutes later, officers located Tayman in a Motel 6. Although Tayman had changed his clothes and cut his hair, it did not fool police."



## Hazard pay petition

**FEDERAL** Assistant Treasurer, Michael Sukkar, has acknowledged the role community pharmacies have played during the COVID-19 crisis, in response to a petition calling for hazard pay for essential health workers, tabled in the House of Representatives yesterday.

The petition sought specific support for pharmacy workers in the form of a "tax holiday" and a "hazard allowance" noting "the Government has supported others [excluding us] since the very beginning of this pandemic".

Responding to the petition, Sukkar said the Government had "acted decisively to support households and businesses" during the pandemic, with a series of stimulus packages worth \$259 billion.

"The package is designed to support businesses across all sectors to retain jobs and manage short-term cash flow challenges, provide support to individuals, severely affected communities

and regions, and to ensure the continued flow of credit in the Australian economy," he said.

"Community pharmacies have played a central role in supporting their community during the recent bushfires and have kept their doors open to support patients during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"In Jun the Government finalised the Seventh Community Pharmacy Agreement (7CPA), which is expected to provide \$18.3 billion over five years and ensure Australians have access to more than 200 million subsidised prescriptions each year through their community pharmacy of choice.

"The 7CPA demonstrates the Government's ongoing support for patients and community pharmacy.

"It also acknowledges that Australia's community pharmacies will continue to be crucial to the Government's efforts to improve the health of all Australians."

## COVID vax update

**THE** Pharmacy Guild of Australia will host a webinar with Oxford University COVID-19 vaccine lead, Prof Sarah Gilbert tonight.

## Guild Update

### Orderly change essential

**A MAJOR** change coming to pharmacy is the introduction of electronic prescriptions which will affect doctors, pharmacies, and above all patients.

This change will offer a welcome convenience for patients, which is one of the reasons the Guild has supported this transition.

But it is very important the change is orderly and does not put patients at risk of missing their medicines because of confusion about the process.

The introduction of electronic prescriptions is a major change management undertaking and it is inevitable that unforeseen issues will arise. The testing hubs will allow technical issues, patient impacts and clinical and workflow management considerations to be identified early and addressed in a safe and contained environment.

This is a change we welcome, but it must be done with the patient's welfare and medication adherence as a clear priority.

For information on this change go to the Guild's electronic prescriptions [webpage](#).

## Win with Plunkett's

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