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## Use pharmacy to boost vax rates

**PHARMACIST** immunisers should be engaged to support efforts to ensure children in Victoria receive vaccines as scheduled, Pharmacy Guild of Australia Victorian Branch President, Anthony Tassone, believes.

Tassone was responding to a Victorian Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) statement noting two-in-three families in the State had delayed or cancelled appointments to have their children vaccinated since Jun as a result of the COVID-19 crisis in the state.

The DHHS warned disruptions to routine childhood immunisations put individual children at increased risk of contracting vaccine-preventable illnesses.

"It's essential that pharmacist immunisers are fully utilised to the full scope of their training, and this includes for vaccination of children against the preventable diseases we have received training in," Tassone said.

"It is of concern that two out

of three families have delayed or cancelled an appointment for their child to receive a scheduled vaccination.

"The Guild and the pharmacy community at large would encourage patients and their families to not hold off on important medical and health care during the COVID pandemic.

"It is understandable that some families may feel hesitant to visit hospitals or other health care facilities during the COVID pandemic - and these organisations are taking every step they can to assure patient safety and limit the risk of infection.

"Community pharmacies have also taken a significant number of steps and measures to maintain the safety of their teams and patients visiting their practices during the COVID pandemic.

"In saying that, the Victorian community have shown their strong support and satisfaction for pharmacist immunisation and the Guild strongly believes that



community pharmacy is part of the overall solution in increasing vaccination rates amongst the public.

"Historically, previous approaches to childhood immunisation in Victoria have delivered high vaccination rates which is pleasing, but if there is a risk of those levels decreasing and losing our grip on 'herd immunity' then we must simply re-look at our approach to delivering this vital public health policy, and that may very well include utilising community pharmacy."

Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today has three pages of the latest pharmacy news, including our Weekly Comment from TerryWhite Chemmart.

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## Guild lawyers scoop industry award

**MERIDIAN** Lawyers has claimed the Insurance Specialist Firm of the Year title at the Australasian Law Awards.

Originally founded as Guild Legal in 2004, Meridian has strong ties to the pharmacy sector, offering advice on insurance, corporate and commercial, workplace relations and safety, commercial litigation and dispute resolution,

and health law.

*Australasian Lawyer*, the publication behind the Awards, noted Meridian reported a 12% increase in revenue in the last 12 months, with the firm being appointed to a number of panels including Liberty Specialty Markets (NSW and WA), Allianz (WA), and the Victorian Managed Insurance Authority.

## Unlawful masks

**WESTERN** Australian company, Medical Sales and Service Pty Ltd, has landed a \$12,600 fine for the alleged unlawful importation of anaesthetic face masks.

The masks were not included on the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods at the time of the importation, the TGA reported.

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## Trading halt

**LISTED** pharmacy software provider, Corum Group Ltd, has requested a trading halt pending an anticipated announcement regarding a proposed non-renounceable rights offer.



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## Australia needs an overdose strategy

**NO STONE** should be left unturned in developing a national strategy to combat the rate of overdose-related deaths in Australian, the Penington Institute believes.

Commenting on the findings of the Penington Institute's *Australia's Annual Overdose Report 2020*, which revealed there were more than 2,000 overdose deaths for the fifth year running, CEO John Ryan, called on the Federal Government to implement three policies to tackle the issue.

"We simply can't accept that 2,000 of our sons and daughters, mums and dads, and brothers and sisters die every year from a drug overdose," Ryan said.

"Over 400 more Australians die of unintentional overdoses than on the roads every year – and the gap is widening.

"Concerted campaigning, investment in evidence-based policies and community education

has done a great job of bringing down the road toll.

"We must tackle our overdose crisis in the same way.

"That is why today, which is also International Overdose Awareness Day, Penington Institute is calling on the Commonwealth to bring down the overdose toll by committing to the following policies:

"Firstly, it must commit to a National Overdose Prevention Strategy. This strategy must leave no stone unturned. It should examine the drivers of overdose risk, access to proven interventions, and the adequacy of our existing efforts.

"Secondly, it must – as a priority – expand the current pilot of Take Home Naloxone from NSW, SA and WA to every state and territory. Naloxone is a safe, proven intervention that saves countless lives.

"Thirdly, the Commonwealth must be realistic about the planned



roll-out of national real-time prescription monitoring."

Of the 2,070 drug induced deaths across Australia in 2020, 1,556 were classified as unintentional, of which 900 involved opioids, 684 were linked to benzodiazepines, with 442 associated with stimulants.

The report also found Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were almost three-times as likely to suffer an unintentional fatal overdose in 2018, with 17.3 deaths per 100,000, compared with six deaths per 100,000 in the non-Indigenous population.

## TGA substitution notice for estradiol

**THE** Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has issued a Serious Shortage Medicine Substitution Notice for Estradot (estradiol) 25 and Estradot 100 hormone replacement therapy transdermal patches.

Under the notice pharmacists will be allowed to provide patients with same strength of either Estraderm MX or Climara patches until 31 Dec, where they believe the patient is suitable for

substitution.

Patients who are switched must be counselled on the difference in the patch size, aware that dosing intervals may be different and be provided with a Consumer Medicine Information leaflet and informed of any possible adverse events.

Patients not suitable for substitution should be referred back to their prescriber to discuss alternative treatments.

## SHPA Virtual

**REGISTRATION** for the Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) Virtual Congress is now open.

SHPA President, Peter Fowler, said the shift from a live event to an online format was the right option for the profession, "particularly for members living and working in Victoria."

The event will take place on 21 and 22 Nov.

**CLICK HERE** to view the program or register.

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## Dispensary Corner

**TRUST** your wholesaler is the lesson coming from the College of Pharmacists of British Columbia disciplinary hearing.

Canadian pharmacy owner, Laurent Pierre Roy, has landed a year-long ban and a C\$25,000 fine after being found to have stocked up his store with medication and supplies stolen from the Shuswap Lake General Hospital.

In a decision handed down last week, Roy confessed that between "at least 2011 and 2018" he had purchased pharmacy supplies from a hospital employee, who had "diverted" the goods from the hospital's pharmacy.

"Evidence in the form a communication suggested the registrant [Roy] was aware of the diverted nature of the supplies he purchased, and that some of the cash he paid for supplies to the hospital employee were diverted away from hospital accounts," the College reported.

"The registrant may have benefited financially by purchasing the supplies from the hospital employee and then reselling the supplies from his pharmacy."

On top of a 365-day ban from practicing as a pharmacist and the C\$25,000 fine, Roy has been barred from acting as a pharmacy manager or director until 24 Aug 2024, and will be unable to be a preceptor or supervisor of pharmacy students.

He will also have to pass an ethics course if he wishes to return to practice.

## Kelly entitled to views

**LIBERAL** MP, Craig Kelly, is free to express his opinions on the use of hydroxychloroquine, but the Australian public should rely on evidence, Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) National President, Dr Chris Freeman, believes.

Kelly issued an attack on rules restricting the prescribing of the anti-malarial and rheumatoid arthritis treatment after commentators, including US President, Donald Trump, promoted its use for the treatment and prevention of COVID-19.

Speaking in the House of Representatives on Tue 25 Aug, Kelly claimed the National COVID-19 Clinical Evidence Taskforce had based its recommendation to limit access to hydroxychloroquine on research that did not assess how the medication "should be used".

Responding to Kelly's comments, Freeman told *Pharmacy Daily* that the PSA stood by its calls for limits to be placed on the prescribing on hydrochloroquine.

"The Therapeutic Goods



Administration (TGA) has put in restrictions regarding the health practitioners who can initiate therapy with hydroxychloroquine, and we fully back the TGA and the COVID clinical guidelines committee," he said.

"Until evidence suggests otherwise, hydroxychloroquine should not be used for the treatment or prevention of COVID-19 outside of a supervised clinical trial.

"Craig Kelly is entitled to his views, and the Australian public is entitled to rely on the evidence, the role of the regulator and health professionals in this area."

## Chempro Chemists hits milestone

**SOUTH-EAST** Queensland and Northern NSW-based pharmacy group, Chempro Chemists, is celebrating the opening of its 100th store at Loganholme Village.

Chempro Chemists Founder and CEO, Steven Probert, said the new pharmacy marked a "major milestone" for the banner group.

"We would like to thank all of our team for their dedication and commitment to Chempro, and most importantly we would like thank all of our customers for their loyalty to our brand," he said.

"Chempro Chemists are focused on being industry leaders in providing healthcare solutions to everyday Australians.

"We are excited to reach the milestone of 100 pharmacies and are looking forward to continuing to bring our health and wellness offering to more communities as we continue to grow."

Probert said the group was focussed on delivering a broad range of professional services and health-related products to support improved and more cost-effective health outcomes for local communities.



## Weekly Comment

Welcome to Pharmacy Daily's weekly comment feature. This week's contributor is **Tanya Maloney, TerryWhite**



**Chemmart Network Partner at TerryWhite Chemmart Coffs Harbour, NSW.**

### Being a leader in your pharmacy

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