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Vic 'simply must fund' MATOD fees

VICTORIAN patients requiring access to medication addiction treatment of dependence (MATOD) have been forced to bear the cost for "far too long", Pharmacy Guild of Australia Victorian Branch President, Anthony Tassone, believes.

Tassone told *Pharmacy Daily* that the Andrews Government "simply must invest in funding MATOD, including the opioid replacement program to recognise the services undertaken by pharmacists to ensure safe and witnessed dosing by patients along with coordination of care with prescribers".

The Guild leader's comments followed Victorian State MP, Dr Tim Read's call for the Government to "step in" and fully subsidise the program (*PD* 14 Dec).

"Whilst the medication is provided at no-charge to pharmacies, the payment for the pharmacy's professional services is left to the patient," Tassone said.

"We do not expect other patients with other chronic health

conditions in our system to bear these sorts of costs themselves and nor should we of those receiving MATOD.

"Why should Victorian patients seeking MATOD be treated so differently to their fellow Australians in other jurisdictions?"

Under the current arrangements, Tassone said pharmacy owners have taken a financial hit to ensure patients have access to MATOD services.

"Why are Victorian pharmacies expected to continue to carry the can, endure recurring bad debts and late payments and be relied on for their goodwill to provide this service that saves lives, keeps patients out of the justice system and improves their chances of contributing to their communities and society?" he asked.

"Whether appropriate funding of MATOD would increase participation by more community pharmacies is hard to know – with almost half of the network already providing services.

"We should be focused on at



least ensuring those pharmacies currently participating will continue in the future and encouraging more prescribers to participate with only a small percentage currently doing so.

"The world has changed a lot in the last 12 months, but not so for the past 25 years in the provision of MATOD by community pharmacies in Victoria who have effectively frozen their daily dosing fee so that patients can afford treatment."

Today's issue of *PD*

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

Board guidelines

REVISED Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) guidelines to support responsible advertising by registered health practitioners came into effect yesterday.

The guidelines were designed to help explain the advertising requirements under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, and help practitioners, AHPRA CEO Martin Fletcher said.

"Responsible advertising about regulated health services helps to keep the public safe from false or misleading claims and supports the public to make informed choices about their healthcare," he said.

The revised guidelines are available through AHPRA's advertising hub.

Patients show interest in pharmacy jobs

TERRYWHITE Chemmart (TWC) is bracing for high levels of demand for pharmacist administered influenza vaccines in 2021 after receiving more than 5,000 expressions of interest in the first 24 hours of its direct to consumer campaign.

The group launched its 2021 flu vaccination program earlier this week, providing patients with the opportunity to sign up to be among the first to receive next winter's flu vaccine.

TWC Chief Pharmacist, Brenton Hart, said the group will host a virtual vaccination training event in early Feb, with practical training provided through its Masterclass Forum in Mar.

"Our comprehensive training and engagement plan will help us prepare for what we believe will be the biggest vaccination season ever," he said.

"Our network of pharmacists will be updated on the latest vaccines, be trained on vial vaccine administration and learn about best-practice workflow management for the upcoming vaccination season.

"Pharmacist-administered vaccination is one of the most successful public health initiatives in Australia in recent years with the number of pharmacist-administered vaccinations increasing to three million this year, up from two million last year.

"It's something our industry should feel very proud of and continue to grow.

"We have the most experienced and accessible pharmacy vaccination network in the industry and are already well-equipped to meet anticipated demand next year and beyond."

Go with the Flo

IF YOU are travelling to see loved ones this Christmas break, now is a good time to grab a Flo Travel Nasal spray for your trip.

The saline solution helps to wash allergens away so you can breathe easy.

See **page three** for more.

Look back at 2020

PHARMACISTS have risen to the challenges of bushfires, floods and the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

The *Pharmacy Daily Year in Review* looks back on the trials, changes and opportunities that have been presented to the profession during a year like no other.

The *Year in Review* is available in **flipbook** or **PDF** formats.

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Dispensary Corner

ASSUMING you do not have a health condition is seldom a guarantee that you are free from infection, particularly when it comes to sexual health.

Yet a survey by British online pharmacy, Medicine Direct, found close to two-thirds of adults across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland had never been screened for sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

The results were revealed as concerns that a drop in the number of cases of chlamydia, gonorrhoea and syphilis, in the UK could be the result of a drop-off in testing due to COVID-19-related restrictions.

With the COVID virus pandemic seemingly taking a festive break, allowing the British to mingle once more this month, Medicine Direct Superintendent Pharmacist, Hussain Abdeh, warned lusty locals to take steps to protect their sexual health.

"While the run-up to Christmas in 2020 is looking markedly unlike previous years, the relaxation of some restrictions will no doubt encourage different groups of people as well as potential partners to reconnect as we head into the festive season," he said.

"It's crucial that if you do choose to meet up with a potential partner that you take the appropriate precautions... we don't want to see a spike in STI rates in the run-up to Christmas following such a lull over previous months as a result of lockdown."

Low dose CBD goes S3

PHARMACISTS will be able to provide cannabidiol (CBD) products containing a maximum daily dose of 150mg to patients over-the-counter from 01 Feb 2021, following a move to down-schedule it.

The announcement made this morning sees the maximum dose more than double the 60mg/day flagged in the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) interim decision (**PD 10 Sep**).

The delegate of the Secretary of the Department of Health, said the decision to increase the maximum daily dose for S3 CBD was based on the view that the "proposed dose is potentially sub-therapeutic and may present a barrier for sponsors to register an S3 preparation on the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods (ARTG)".

The delegate noted that the original maximum dose had been based on a body mass of 60kg, significantly lighter than the average Australian adult female (72kg) or male (87kg).

"Many of the submissions



provided references supporting a higher dose, while still maintaining a safety profile that aligns with an S3 medicine," the delegate said.

"Accordingly, I have considered these submissions alongside a number of reviews detailed below and I have resolved that a maximum daily dose of 150mg is consistent with the expected safety profile of an S3 medicine."

The delegate added that there was no need to delay the rescheduling until 01 Jun 2021, as originally planned.

FIP YPG launches career toolkit

A CAREER toolkit released by the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) Young Pharmacists Group (YPG) aims to provide pharmacy workers with the resources they need to reach their full potential, with its career development toolkit.

Released yesterday, the new resource has been designed to help early career pharmacists "in making sound career decisions and navigating the ever-changing landscape of pharmacy and pharmaceutical sciences".

In the toolkit's foreword, FIP

CEO, Dr Catherine Duggan, said the pharmaceutical workforce was an indispensable component of the healthcare system.

"The capacity to deliver high-quality healthcare depends on having a sufficient, competent and flexible pharmaceutical workforce who can deliver pharmaceutical and medicines-related services," she said.

"This toolkit will help individuals develop ideas, set goals and build a sense of self-awareness and understanding of what they need to do to reach their full potential."



Guild Update

Guild honours

THE Pharmacy Guild has bestowed top honours on two of its long-standing elected officials.

National President of the Guild George Tambassis has been made a life member of the Guild – the organisation's highest award - in a ceremony during which the honour was presented by the Federal Minister for Health, Greg Hunt MP, in Canberra.

Mr Hunt congratulated Mr Tambassis on his significant contribution to the Guild, to pharmacy and to the nation, particularly through the COVID pandemic crisis, when pharmacies stayed open to serve patients.

"George, you couldn't have achieved more, and you couldn't have given more to the nation."

The Guild's Queensland Branch awarded the Queensland President's Award to the branch's Vice-President Chris Owen for his outstanding commitment to community pharmacy.

Branch President Trent Twomey said: "Chris has been a community pharmacist for over 15 years. He has not only represented Queensland Guild members for many years but has supported Australian community pharmacies as National Councillor for more than three years."



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*References: Cabin air filtration: helping to protect occupants from infectious diseases. Bull, K. Travel Med. Infectious Diseases 2008. Vol 66 pp142-144. Efficacy and safety of an antiviral Iota-Carrageenan nasal spray: a randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled exploratory study in volunteers with early symptoms of the common cold. Eccles et al. Respiratory Research 2010, 11:108. Aerobiology and its role in transmission of infectious diseases. Fernstrom, A et al. Journal of Pathogens Vol 2013 Article 493960