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Disaster dispensing reform required

PHARMACISTS should have the authority to dispense standard size packs of prescription medicines without a script in emergency situations, the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) Queensland Branch, believes.

The push to replace the current three-day emergency dispensing provisions is one of five recommendations the PSA is putting to the State Government as part of its pre-Budget submission.

PSA Queensland Branch President, Chris Campbell, noted similar provisions had been successfully implemented in NSW, Victoria, the ACT and South Australia, in response to the ongoing bushfire crisis.

“Over the past few months, our nation has experienced one of the worst bushfire seasons in history,” he said.

“During this emergency, many people have had to urgently evacuate their homes, leaving behind many of their personal possessions, sometimes including

life-saving medicines.

“This crisis has demonstrated the shortcomings of current legislation, which only allows pharmacists to supply three-days of medicines in an emergency situation.

“Those impacted not only find it exceptionally challenging to get a prescription, but should not have this additional worry at such a stressful time.

“In most cases, this would give people access to at least 30 days of medicine; a common sense change for a decentralised state such as Queensland.”

The PSA has also urged the Queensland Government to expand the range of vaccines that pharmacists can administer in the state, provide pharmacists with access to National Immunisation Program (NIP) and state-funded vaccine stock for eligible patients, empower pharmacists to administer “low-risk” travel vaccines, including for typhoid, cholera and rabies, and allow pharmacists to vaccinate children

Today's issue of *PD*

Pharmacy Daily today has three pages of news.



aged 10 and older.

“Pharmacists are already authorised to provide vaccinations, but there are some limiting restrictions,” Campbell said.

“If these are removed, we believe vaccination rates would increase.”

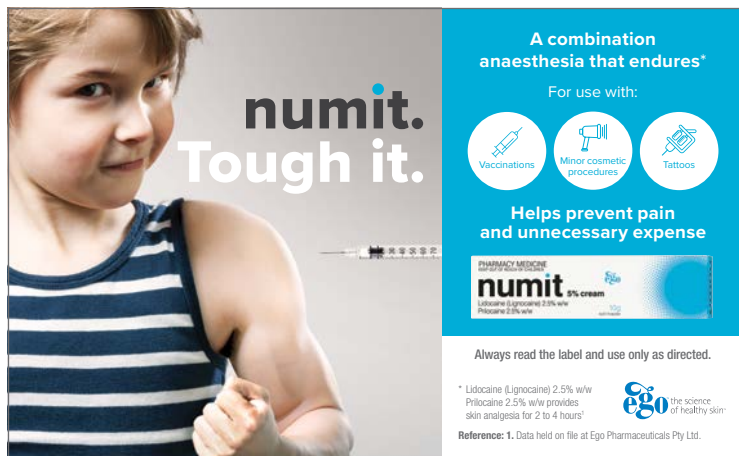
The PSA called on the Government to allocate \$26 million over four years to fund pharmacist-led self-care or triage, \$900,000 a year to employ pharmacists in the 16 Queensland Health operated aged care facilities to boost quality use of medicines in the sector, and funding to establish the role of Queensland Chief Pharmacist.

Engage pharmacists now

PHARMACISTS' clinical skills are needed now more than ever to combat the US's overmedication problem, a leading clinical professor of pharmacy believes.

In an article published by *The Hill*, University of Washington School of Pharmacy and Institute of Innovative Pharmacy Practice, Don Downing, called on Congress to support measures to provide Medicare funding for pharmacist-led interventions to boost quality use of medicines.

Downing said 77% of elderly people in the US would benefit from having a pharmacist involved in their care team.



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N95 masks the new baby formula

PHARMACISTS are reporting stocks of N95 face masks, hand sanitiser and alcohol swabs are being bought up by customers intent on shipping them overseas, as fears over the threat of coronavirus grow.

In an email to *Pharmacy Daily*, one Victorian pharmacist said she had handled hundreds of queries related to the products, noting "only 5% claimed it was for domestic use". "I spent a significant amount of my pharmacy work week responding to queries regarding the purchase of face masks, hand sanitiser gel and alcohol swabs that were being purchased to send overseas," she said.

The surge in demand for N95 masks has prompted some pharmacists to compare it to the bulk-buying of baby formula for resale in overseas markets, with Scottish pharmacists also reporting overseas tourists and student bulk-

buying masks to sent to family in affected areas.

A spokesperson for the Pharmacy Guild of Australia noted many pharmacies have come under pressure from consumers to supply face masks in response to the coronavirus outbreak.

"We are also aware that because of the high demand for masks, many pharmacies are out of stock, and wholesalers also report that they have no stock on hand," the spokesperson said.

"The Guild continues to receive many queries from members around availability of masks following requests from their patients and local community to purchase their own as a precaution."

The Chief Medical Officer (CMO), Professor Brendan Murphy, has previously said there was "no need for the Australian public to wear masks".



"The only people who should wear masks in relation to this virus are those who are unwell," Murphy said.

The Guild spokesperson said where a pharmacy has access to masks, pharmacists should use their own judgement in response to requests from members of the public who want to buy them.

Consumers should be informed of the CMO's advice that they do not need to be wearing masks at this time unless they fit the at-risk criteria around recent travel or contact with the virus.

coronavirus factsheet update

THE Federal Department of Health has today released updated information sheets in both English and Chinese about the coronavirus - [CLICK HERE](#).

UK pharmacists fear Brexit shortages

PHARMACISTS across Britain have considered stockpiling medicines as they fear the impact the country's departure from the European Union (EU) will have on supplies going forward.

A survey published by Medicspot found 87% of pharmacists said they were concerned that shortages could be caused by Brexit, while 84% said they believed pharmacy would be impacted by the decision to leave the EU.



Having officially left the EU on 31 Jan, the British Government revealed more than 200 medical products faced supply issues in 2019, with 10 being classified as have stock issues for at least 10 months, *Pharma Times* reported.

MSW launched

THE Department of Health has launched a medicines status website (MSW), that will allow consumers to monitor the status of medicines as they progress through the process of being listed on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS).

The MSW will include information on submitted considered by the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee from July 2019 - [CLICK HERE](#) for more.



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APOTEX CONSUMER PRODUCTS

Dispensary Corner

US PHARMACY chain, Walgreens, has learned a valuable, if costly lesson about the importance of checking would-be employees' references before hiring them.

The pharmacy giant agreed to pay \$7.5 million to settle with Californian authorities after an employee was charged with impersonating a pharmacist and illegally dispensing hundreds of thousands of prescriptions, including more than 100,000 for opioid medications.

Prosecutors have alleged that Kim Thien Le (*PD* 02 Aug 2019) used the license numbers of registered pharmacists to bluff her way behind the dispensaries at Walgreens stores in Santa Clara and Alameda counties.

Following the announcement that the pharmacy group will pay penalties, costs and remedial payments totalling US\$7.5 million, Alameda County District Attorney, Nancy O'Malley, said "the burden is on the company to make sure its employees are properly licensed and to complete a thorough background check".

Le has issued a not guilty plea to the charges of impersonating a pharmacist.



RACGP quits Qld trial

CONCERNS over pharmacists misdiagnosing patients are behind the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) Queensland Branch's decision, to abandon its role in the states pharmacy prescribing trial advisory group.

As part of the trial, pharmacists who have signed up to take part will be able to prescribe antibiotics for urinary tract infections (UTIs) and oral contraceptives.

RACGP Queensland Chair, Dr Bruce Willett, cited flaws in the monitoring of misdiagnosis or delayed diagnosis and the potential for increase antibiotic resistance, as the reasons for the group's withdrawal, the College's *newsGP* website reported.

"As overseas experience has demonstrated, pharmacist-initiated antibiotics reduce neither health system costs nor GP workloads," Willett and RACGP Queensland council member, Dr Paul Bryan, said in a letter sent to the head of the trial.

"We believe [the trial] represents an unacceptable departure from current medication scheduling arrangements conducted by the



Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA), and carries risks in the form of fragmentation of care, misdiagnosis and delayed diagnosis, antibiotic resistance, financial costs to patients, and opportunity costs in the form of missed preventive care."

Willett and Bryan noted UK pharmacist indemnity insurance provider, Pharmacists' Defence Association, had issued a warning about a number of serious medical incidents linked to pharmacists prescribing.

The RACGP's withdrawal from the trial followed the Australian Medical Association's call for the State's parliamentarians to push for the trial to be cancelled (*PD* 31 Jan).

CHP backs pharmacy ailment scheme

CONSUMER Health Products Australia (CHP) is calling on the Federal Government to consider funding a common ailments scheme for community pharmacy, in its pre-Budget submission.

The group highlighted the findings of University of Technology Sydney evaluation of a pilot of a minor ailments scheme piloted by the Western Sydney Primary Health Network,

with estimated up to 21% of GP consultation and 11.5% of all emergency department services in Australia could be safely transferred to a community pharmacy.

CHP called on the Government to investigate regulatory mechanisms that encourage "an appropriate and progressive 'switch' environment" to promote down-scheduling of medicines to Pharmacist-Only.

Guild Update

APP Highlight

A HIGHLIGHT of the annual Australian Pharmacy Professional Conference (APP) is the announcement of the Guild's Pharmacy of the Year, a nation-wide competition which recognises excellence in the profession and acknowledges those pharmacies which excel in innovation and adaptability.

APP2020, which marks the 30th anniversary of the conference, will be held on the Gold Coast from 19-22 March with early bird registrations available until 31 January.

The Pharmacy of the Year announcement will be a feature of the opening plenary on 19 March.

The Pharmacy of the Year competition's principal sponsor is Care Pharmaceuticals, whose General Manager Jonathan Biddle said the company's strong belief in supporting the industry it did its business in was the determining factor behind its ongoing sponsorship of the awards.

"At Care Pharmaceuticals we are committed to excellence in all aspects of our business and the Pharmacy of the Year's focus on excellence aligns naturally with how we work," he said.

"We are a consumer healthcare company so being involved in this award to recognise the best community pharmacy in the country is a perfect fit."