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Today's issue of *PD*

Pharmacy Daily today has three pages of news.

Guild clarifies AMAQ's script errors

LAST minute efforts by medical organisations to encourage Queensland State MPs to pull the pin on a state-wide trial of pharmacist prescribing are seeking to deliberately misinform and mislead, the Pharmacy Guild of Australia believes.

In a letter to State MPs, Queensland Guild President, Trent Twomey, sought to clarify confusion caused by a recent communication from the Australian Medical Association Queensland (AMAQ) (*PD* 31 Jan), which tied two separate recommendations from the Queensland Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee, one being the trial of pharmacist prescribing for urinary tract infections (UTIs), and the second, that the oral contraceptive pill be made available over-the-counter for Queensland women after an initial prescription has been made by a GP or sexual health nurse.

Twomey warned politicians from across the spectrum that the AMAQ was seeking to stall progressive steps to improve healthcare.

"When you strip out all the emotion, the AMAQ's ongoing political campaign against advances in primary health care is not driven by patient need or service but an old and tired us vs them mentality which is preventing patients from receiving world class primary health care where and when they need it," he said.

"We want to see everyone in primary health care do more given the ever increasing demand for services and the increased number of unnecessary hospitalisations.

"The AMAQ also raised baseless concerns regarding pharmacist provision of the contraceptive pill alongside the UTI trial in a deliberate attempt to mislead stakeholders by conflating these two separate issues.

"The UTI trial is specifically evaluating the management of



uncomplicated UTIs by pharmacists and does not include pharmacist dispensing of the contraceptive pill claimed by AMAQ."

Twomey took aim at the AMAQ's claim that the expansion of the scope of practice for non-medical health professionals would fragment clinical care and result in poor health outcomes, was "unsubstantiated" and urged politicians to seek advice from Queensland Health to "sort fact from fiction".

CSIRO weight loss digital diet

AUSTRALIA'S national science agency, the CSIRO, has found a scientifically backed 'digital diet' for as little as 12 weeks resulted in clinically significant weight loss.

Almost 60,000 Australians following the CSIRO Total Wellbeing Diet from 2015 to 2019 were studied to understand how the scientifically formulated eating plan translated to the digital age.

The research showed that participants who completed the online program lost an average of 5.3% of their starting weight, three times more than those who did not reach the end.

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AUSTRALIAN MEDICINES HANDBOOK

FIP APAC conf

THE International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) will host its inaugural South East Asia and Asian Pacific regions conference in Bali on 01-03 Apr.

The theme for the three-day event is "Achieving health for all: Pharmacy optimising primary health care through digital technology".

The conference is FIP's third regional event, following the launch of similar meetings for pharmacists in the Eastern Mediterranean and Europe last year.

The event will be co-hosted by the Indonesian Pharmacists' Association.

CLICK HERE to register, and **HERE** to view the program.

States and Territories need RTPM now

RISING numbers of opioid-related deaths highlight the need for state and territory governments to introduce real-time prescription monitoring (RTPM), Pharmacy Guild of Australia Victorian Branch President, Anthony Tassone believes.

Responding to a tweet posted by Victorian Health Minister, Jenny Mikakos, hailing the success of the state's \$29.5 million investment in SafeScript, which will become mandatory in Apr this year, Tassone urged other Australian governments to implement similar systems.

"We are overdue for action on real-time prescription monitoring for the sake of patient safety," Tassone said.

"The Victorian Labor Government has shown leadership with the introduction of SafeScript that has already seen a reduction in the proportion of patients taking higher risk doses of opioids by 25% in the first six months of its state wide roll out.

"Once it becomes mandatory in Apr, we can expect further benefits for patient safety with more doctors and pharmacists making



more informed decisions about prescribing and dispensing.

"It's time for other State and territory governments, particularly the NSW Government, to step up and introduce a real-time prescription monitoring system for the benefit of patient safety."

Alongside Victoria, the ACT and Tasmania have implemented RTPM systems, however, their use has yet to be mandated.

In Sep, Queensland Minister for Health and Ambulance Services, Steven Miles, announced a RTPM system will be introduced in the

state in the second half of this year (**PD** 19 Sep 2019).

A spokesperson for NSW Health Minister, Brad Hazard, confirmed work was underway in the state to develop a RTPM system (**PD** 19 Jul 2019).

Pharmaceutical Society of Australia South Australia and Northern Territory Branch President, Robyn Johns, has previously raised concerns over delays in implementing a RTPM system in SA, noting funding had been allocated in the state's 2018/19 Budget.

CHF seeks health insurance probe

THE Consumers' Health Forum of Australia (CHF) is urging the Federal Government to establish an independent review into private health insurance.

Australian Prudential Regulatory Authority board member, Geoff Summerhayes, said there needed to be a rethink of taxpayer subsidies and the Medicare levy, given the declining uptake of health insurance.

CHF CEO, Leanne Wells, urged the Government to "bite the bullet and launch a thorough inquiry" into the sector.

"The falling membership and the frustrating crunch of rising premiums and shrinking benefits provide the Government with compelling grounds to initiate a far-reaching inquiry into private insurance," she said.



"It is worth noting that fund profitability persists while the experience of patients and families struggling with high out of pocket costs for private care are turning people away from insurance.

"Private insurance in Australia has become a 'lose, lose' proposition: having paid ever-increasing premiums, members are exposed to yet further out of pocket costs when they do get private care."

Putin's threat

RUSSIAN President, Vladimir Putin, is threatening to strip pharmacy licences from stores that have been found to have increased their prices for N95/P2 face masks, amid concerns over the spread of the coronavirus.

Speaking at a Government meeting, Putin, said profiteering from the spike in demand for the masks was wrong, adding pharmacies that engage in price gouging should be punished the *New Straits Times* reported.

Deputy Prime Minister, Tatyana Golikova, said some pharmacies had increased by between 70 and 100 rubles (\$1.65 - \$2.35) per mask, following the outbreak, whereas they had previously been selling for 1.5 rubles.



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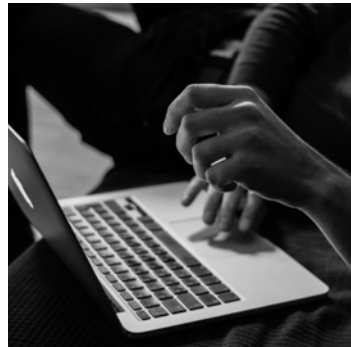


Dispensary Corner

SEX sells and the members of the hit investment show the Australian *Shark Tank* will be hoping their combined \$5 million gamble on a miracle drug doesn't prove to be a flop. In a first for the show, the five Sharks each gave \$1 million to Christopher and Michael Williams, to support the re-branding and re-packaging of their wonder pill, Velofel. The brothers claim the drug is "a great step forward in men's sexual health", promising bigger and longer lasting erections, maximum pleasure and intensified orgasms, increased sexual confidence, and a surge in sex drive and energy. The manufacturer's website reports the all natural product contains "powerful ingredients for bigger results" including, monkey's head hericium, maca dry extract, horny goat weed extract, long jack extract, Korean ginseng powder and tribulus terrestris. The company's website notes that while it believes in the efficacy of its products, "you understand, however, that the statements on the website, promotional materials and the product have not been evaluated by any local or international regulatory bodies, and the product is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease". The site also urges pregnant patients seeking a longer lasting erection to speak with a health practitioner before using it... we're still trying to work out why they would be using it!

Instant Script worries


PHARMACISTS are better placed to provide patient care than an algorithm, Pharmacy Guild of Australia Queensland Branch President, Trent Twomey, believes. Speaking to the ABC about the emergence of disruptors in the healthcare space, particularly online prescription service, Instant Scripts, Twomey, expressed concerns about the focus on convenience over quality service. The Instant Scripts service allows patients to identify a health issue, fill out a digital questionnaire, which is reviewed by a GP, with a prescription emailed to a pharmacy selected by the customer, where it can be filled. Twomey said he was worried about the lack of direct patient interaction with the prescriber. "While I have frontline clinical concerns, I'm heartened that there is a pharmacist who is ultimately dispensing that medication and having contact with that patient, even though the GP function is virtually non-existent," he said.



"One company came to the asking whether we'd endorse it — naturally we did not — and we've had multiple and regular conversations with Queensland Health about the legitimacy of this particular service." Royal Australian College of General Practitioners Queensland Chair, Dr Bruce Willett, also voiced concerns about the service, warning of the potential for misdiagnosis. "Often people do know what they need, but very often they don't - they get it wrong," he said.

Irish pharmacists getting political

VOTERS in the Republic of Ireland will head to the polls on Sat, and the Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU) is getting politically active, calling on individual candidates in each constituency to pledge their support for the profession, rather than seeking letters of support from parties. Using the hashtag #SupportPharmacy, the IPU is outlining the impact pharmacies have on each region, providing data on the number of pharmacies, direct jobs, indirect jobs and the impact



the profession has on the local economy. The campaign also notes "Irish Pharmacists are underutilised - we can play a greater role in the health service".

Travel Specials

WELCOME to *Pharmacy Daily's* travel feature. Each week we highlight a couple of great travel deals for the pharmacy industry, brought to you by *Travel & Cruise Weekly*.

Travel & Cruise Weekly

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Island resort special

ZEAVOLA Resort, a sustainable Phi Phi Island luxury resort located Laem Tong Beach in Thailand, is offering guests 22% to 30% off the regular retail rate on Village and Garden Suites. The offer can be applied to stays between 01 Mar and 31 Oct excluding blackout periods; for bookings made by 26 Feb. [CLICK HERE](#) for bookings.

Riviera cruises deal

CRUISERS can get an onboard spending credit of up to of 400 euros per couple, or up to 200 euros for solos, on Riviera Travel River Cruises' sailings. Guests can choose from 12 different itineraries of eight or 15 days in length featuring rivers such as the Rhine, Danube, Rhone, Seine and Moselle and the canals of Holland. The onboard credit can be used to buy drinks, spa treatments, boutique purchases or extra optional shore excursions ships. Call 1300 561 001 to book.