

Pharmacies brace for more bushfires

FIRES are continuing to threaten pharmacies across Australia with temperatures forecast to soar over the weekend.

On New Year's Eve, a number of pharmacies along the NSW south coast closed their doors early to allow staff to return home as the sky turned black and ash rained down upon towns.

Pharmacy Guild of Australia NSW Branch President, David Heffernan, told **Pharmacy Daily**, a pharmacy owner in Ulladulla had closed his store at 3pm on Tue to ensure his staff could get away safely, and went out into the street with supplies of Ventolin.

Heffernan added that the owner of the Cobargo Pharmacy, which was under threat on Tue (**PD Breaking News**) has been unable to assess the damage, with photos showing a number of buildings along the street had been burnt to the ground, while a wall with the word "Chemist" had remained standing.

With temperatures set to hit highs of 40 degrees on Sat, the Bureau of Meteorology has issued severe fire warnings for much of the state, with extreme warnings for the Illawarra/Shoalhaven and Southern



Ranges.

Residents of areas around Sussex Inlet, are being urged to evacuate before Sat, due to the rising fire threat.

Heffernan said St George's Basin Pharmacy is advising locals it will be shut on Sat, noting one of the pharmacists had been unable to get home on New Year's Eve because of the fire threat and had to ring in 2020 at another local pharmacist's home.

Fires in Victoria have seen the state branch of the Guild collaborate with the Victorian Department of Health and Sigma Healthcare to ensure supplies of vital medicines have been able to get to pharmacies in fire-affected

areas.

Speaking with **Pharmacy Daily**, Guild Victorian Branch President, Anthony Tassone, said Ventolin supplies were delivered to Mallacoota Pharmacy, in East Gippsland, on New Year's Eve by boat, while air-ambulance services were able to get medicines to the Orbost Pharmacy, as fires closed off road access to the towns.

Tassone also expressed concerns for the town of Corryong in northern Victoria, where 14 homes have been destroyed as fires spread across the NSW border.

He said the Guild was working with the local pharmacy owner in Corryong to provide support, as the fire threat continues.

Today's issue of **PD**

Pharmacy Daily today has two pages of news.

Script theft leads to conditions

THE Western Australian State Administrative Tribunal has reprimanded, fined and placed conditions on a pharmacist's registration for "stealing and unlawfully supplying a prescription".

According to an update on the Pharmacy Board of Australia website, Huynh Kim Dat Ngo held provisional registration as a pharmacist and was practicing as an intern in WA in Nov 2016 when he stole a package containing 28 escitalopram tablets to provide to a female friend who was a minor, who subsequently self-administered an overdose.

Ngo pleaded guilty to charges of stealing in Feb 2017, but failed to notify the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency within seven days.

In Oct last year the tribunal found the pharmacist had behaved in a way that constitutes professional misconduct, including failing to safely dispense medication, failing to safely label the drug and failing to provide a good pharmacy service. It also found Ngo did not follow the Pharmacy Board of Australia Registration Standard: Criminal History, imposing a \$1,550 fine and ordering he complete a board-approved program of education on appropriate dispensing, ethical decision making and record-keeping.

PBS safety net thresholds cut for 2020

PHARMACEUTICAL Benefits Scheme (PBS) safety net thresholds have been cut by \$73.20 for concession card holders - down from \$390 to \$316.80 - and \$63.90 for general patients - down from \$1,550.70 to \$1,486.80 from 01 Jan.

Under the new arrangements concessional patients/families will require 12 fewer PBS prescriptions to be filled each



year to qualify for the safety net.

Pharmacists will need to apply the lower threshold amounts when issuing safety net entitlement or concession cards.

GH adult update

THE Department of Human Services has released details of changes to PBS restrictions for growth hormone (GH) treatment in adults.

Effective 01 Jan, the aim is to provide more clarity and improved access to growth hormone treatment, following revised paediatric GH prescribing arrangements introduced last Feb.



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Dispensary Corner

PHARMACY employees were forced to pluck up the courage to take on a particularly disgruntled chicken in Kentucky over the weekend.

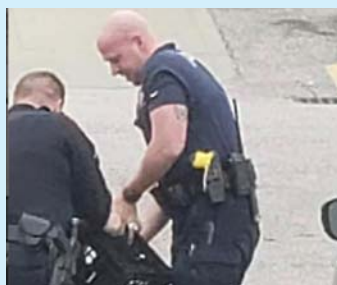
The origins of the nefarious fowl are still to be determined, but reports suggest the bird terrorised patrons of the CVS pharmacy in Elizabethtown with incessant clucking and flapping, ultimately forcing the store owners to call 911 for back up.

"Responding officers were pecked viciously by the uncooperative fowl fiend, and he made some adept use of vehicles for cover," the Elizabethtown Police Department said in a statement.

"Some quick thinking, unflappable bravery, and some MacGyver-like ingenuity involving a milk crate led to the swift apprehension of the peevish poultry."

The maximum jail sentence for a chicken in Kentucky is three years in a free-range farm, but charges are yet to be laid.

However, given this incident took place in Kentucky, it has led some to speculate the punishment for this daring pharmacy raid could involve 11 secret herbs and spices.



Time to innovate on Pill

AUSTRALIA must move with the times and allow pharmacists to improve access to oral contraceptives, Pharmacy Guild of Australia ACT Branch President, Simon Blacker, believes.

In an opinion piece published on *The Canberra Times* website on Christmas Day, Blacker noted that Australia was the second country to legalise "the pill", but has failed to innovate since.

"Despite some 80% of Australian women having used the pill at some time - many for decades at a time - and our proud history of giving women greater control over their healthcare, we are an outlier among comparable countries in just how difficult it is for women to access the pill," he said.

"Australian women are not just denied a choice in how they access the pill - it's costing them \$170 over five years in GP visits, money women in other countries don't have to spend.

"It's time to innovate again. Let's give Australian women greater and more convenient access to their contraception.

"In Australia, pharmacists have had some scope in being able



to continue supply of the pill, for women who have already stabilised on it without evidence of any adverse outcomes. However, pharmacists are currently only allowed to give patients one month's continued supply of the pill every 12 months, and only for variants listed on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) - excluding about 40% of Australian women who take a variant not listed on the PBS.

"Community pharmacists in Australia have both the training and the expertise to do more.

"For those women who have stabilised on the pill, it makes sense for pharmacists to have the ability to continue to renew their prescription."

PPA claims due

THE Pharmacy Programs Administrator has advised that Clinical Interventions claiming for the Oct-Dec 2019 quarter is now open, with submissions able to be lodged in the next two weeks.

In accordance with the Program Rules, submissions cannot be submitted after 14 Jan, with pharmacies advised to log into ppaonline.com.au to check eligibility.

Measles alert

PHARMACIES in Sydney are being urged to be on the lookout for patients showing measles symptoms, after an infected man travelled around the city's inner west, northwest and east on public transport just after Christmas.

NSW Health said the man had no links to any previous measles cases, and had not travelled prior to contracting the disease.



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*.

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Sail the South Pacific

SAIL into 2020 with some incredible deals from Royal Caribbean, such as a nine-night South Pacific cruise aboard *Voyager of the Seas*.

Interior rooms begin from just \$1,099 per person twin share, with the cruise departing from Sydney on 22 Jan, and visiting Mare Island, the Isle of Pines and Lifou in New Caledonia, and Port Vila in Vanuatu, before returning to Sydney.

Call 1800 754 500 for more.

Fireworks on Aus Day

ENJOY the City of Perth Skyworks on Australia Day with views across the Swan River and downtown Perth from your private balcony at Metro Hotel Perth.

Rooms start from \$125 per night, with \$349 per night for a standard room, and \$449 for a Superior Riverview room.

Complimentary car parking is also available per room - call (02) 9357 7775 for more.



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