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CHF welcomes emergency measures

MOVES to ease the financial pressure of accessing medicines for those affected by the ongoing bushfire crisis, are being welcomed by the Consumers Health Forum of Australia (CHF).

Responding to last week's emergency dispensing orders by the NSW, Victorian and ACT Governments, and the Federal Government's decision to provide Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) subsidies for medications dispensed without a script, CHF CEO, Leanne Well, said ensuring access to vital medicines was important, but added there was a need to maintain patient safety.

"The CHF supports exceptional assistance during bushfire and other community-wide emergencies to ensure patients can receive the medication they need," she told *Pharmacy Daily*.

"Provided there are reasonable



safeguards to protect patient safety and the integrity of the prescription system, CHF would support an automatic mechanism that ensures continued supplies for prescribed medicines during such emergencies."

Under the emergency dispensing orders announced last week, pharmacists will be able to provide Schedule 4 medicines to patients

who have lost, or are unable to immediately access a prescription, where they are satisfied there is an urgent need, with the measures expiring on 31 Mar in NSW and the ACT, and 01 Apr in Victoria.

Pharmacists will also be able to dispense subsidies PBS medicines to patients without a prescription until 31 Mar, under the Federal Government's emergency measures.

Today's issue of *PD*

Pharmacy Daily today has two pages of news.

Perx/AZ PSP

PERX Health and AstraZeneca (AZ) have launched a new app-based patient support program (PSP) designed to improve medication adherence among patients recovering from heart attacks.

The PSP uses Perx's existing technology platform to provide medication dosage reminders, a gamification-based points system, which provides rewards for adherence, fun-facts and a social platform.

AZ Country President, Liz Chatwin, said the PSP provided the opportunity to advance patient-centric care.

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*Consult a doctor before use on children under 2 years of age.

Ego the science of healthy skin



¹ Due to corticosteroid responsive skin conditions

DermAid 1.0% w/w: **ASK YOUR PHARMACIST – THEY MUST DECIDE IF THIS PRODUCT IS RIGHT FOR YOU.**

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Alliance Pharmacy bushfire appeal

THE Alliance Pharmacy group has launched a GoFundMe campaign to raise funds to support pharmacies affected by bushfires in NSW and Victoria.

The appeal has raised close to \$95,000 to date, with Arrotex Pharmaceuticals contributing \$40,000 and Pharmacy Alliance donating \$26,000.

Organisers of the campaign said eight pharmacies within the network have been impacted by the blazes, "with many others still at risk".

Fifty Alliance Pharmacies have also pledged to donate all non-prescription sales made on Thu 16 Jan to the appeal.

"We hope the list of pharmacies and communities [affected by the fires] does not grow, but if it does we will also extend our support," the organisers said.

CLICK HERE to donate.

MEANWHILE Queensland pharmacists have raised more than \$15,500 for pharmacists affected by the fires (*PD* 10 Jan).

CLICK HERE to donate.

New business features available

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Read the Summer edition of *Travel & Cruise Weekly*



Dispensary Corner

HAVING a beer at the end of the day can be a pleasant way to unwind after a busy day, but it is important to know when to stop, because turning up to the dispensary a little groggy can put others at risk.

This is a lesson learnt the hard way by one Kenyan hospital pharmacist, who was sacked over claims he arrived at work "totally intoxicated".

The drunken pharmacist, who was working in the town of Kangundo in Machakos County, 63km southeast of Nairobi, allegedly locked the hospital pharmacy and went home to recuperate from his excesses, which left a patient without vital medicines, contributing to her death, authorities alleged.

A spokesperson for the Machakos County Department of Health said the pharmacist had been called to a disciplinary hearing, but failed to appear.

"There has been a meeting at the facility concerning the issue," the spokesperson told local media outlets.

"It was wrong for him to come to work drunk and the management should have immediately called for a replacement when they dismissed him."



Down-scheduling slump

AUSTRALIAN pharmacists "are clearly ready" to safely and effectively manage a wider range of non-prescription medicines, but the profession appears to have lost momentum in pushing for medications to be down-scheduled, academics from Griffith University believe.

A research paper published in the *International Journal of Pharmacy Practice*, reported that Australia had fallen behind in terms of optimising the use of pharmacists' skills in quality use of medicines, by restricting the availability of certain medications to Prescription-Only, when international evidence had shown they were safe for over-the-counter sale.

A survey of pharmacists found close to three-in-four felt there was a need for down-scheduling of certain medicines, with antibiotics the most frequently proposed drug class to be moved into the Pharmacist-Only category.

"Justifications for potential down-scheduling included improved consumer access to medicines; the promotion of safe access to effective medicines for



acute conditions; alignment with other countries, and consumer and healthcare cost savings," the authors said.

"Some supported the concept of medication continuance without a new prescription for established medication regimens.

"Respondents prioritised medicines that would facilitate medication continuance for ongoing chronic or stabilised conditions, such as asthma, for example inhaled corticosteroids or hypertension, for example antihypertensives.

"Continuity of patient care was often discussed in qualifying text responses to support candidates for potential reclassification."

Ex-PSA Deputy CEO starts at Gilead

FORMER Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) Deputy CEO, Belinda Wood, has joined bio-pharmaceutical business, Gilead Sciences as Senior Director of Government Affairs for Australia and New Zealand.

Wood left the PSA in Oct 2019 shortly before the Society announced the appointment of former Australia Digital Health Agency Chief of Staff, Mark Kinsela as the in-coming CEO (PD 16 Oct 2019).

Prior to joining the PSA, Wood was CEO of the Generic and Biosimilar Medicines Association (GBMA).

In her new role Wood will be leading advocacy efforts with policy makers on the challenges facing patients living with HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis B and C and other liver related diseases, and cancer, as well as advancing important federal health policies to ensure patient access to the best available therapies.

Guild Update

Guild welcomes emergency medicine measures

GOVERNMENTS at all levels have responded admirably to the bushfire crisis in terms of expanding and streamlining access to prescription medicines in emergencies.

Where a person affected by bushfire may have lost or be unable to access their medicines or prescriptions, it just makes sense that a pharmacist can supply their medication without requiring them to seek and wait for a doctor's appointment.

The temporary measures announced in NSW, Victoria and the ACT last week allow pharmacists to supply a standard pack of most Prescription-Only medicines without a prescription provided that the pharmacist is satisfied that:

- the person is undergoing treatment essential to the person's well-being
- the medicine has previously been prescribed for the treatment
- the person is in immediate need of the medicine for continuation of the treatment
- it is not practicable for the person to obtain a prescription for the medicine from an authorised practitioner.

This is a great step towards permanently expanding and streamlining the capacity of pharmacists all over Australia to assist patients with their prescription medicines during and after natural disasters.