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SA issues regional dispensing order

EMERGENCY dispensing provisions announced by the South Australian Government yesterday (**PD** breaking news) will only apply to patients affected by the Kangaroo Island bushfires, the Pharmacy Guild of Australia reveals.

The emergency provisions, which followed similar orders by the governments of NSW, Victoria and the ACT, will allow pharmacists to dispense Schedule 4 medications to patients from the bushfire ravaged island without a prescription, where they are satisfied there is a need to access the medicines and that it would not be practical for the patient to obtain a prescription.

Pharmacists will also be able to dispense medications listed on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) with the usual subsidy to patients impacted by the Kangaroo Island fires without a prescription

(**PD** 13 Jan).

However, the South Australia Government's emergency dispensing orders will not apply to patients affected by the fires in the Adelaide Hills and blazes in Monbulla near the Victorian border.

Welcoming the order, Guild South Australian Branch President, Nick Panayiaris, said the authority to dispense full quantities should replace the three-day rule enshrined in the standard emergency dispensing protocols.

"This is a sensible measure during this very distressing time for patients impacted by the bushfire disaster on Kangaroo Island to help ensure they continue to have access to medicines; and recognises the expertise of pharmacists in determining where an emergency supply is appropriate," he said.

"This is a great step towards



permanently expanding and streamlining the capacity of pharmacists to assist patients with their prescription medicines during and after natural disasters."

Kangaroo Island-based pharmacist, Patrick Tiong, who assisted locals and tourists with their medication needs throughout the crisis, said the three-day dispensing rule had limited his ability to help patients.

"Last week when we supported people who had lost their homes, the evacuees as well as tourists and volunteers, the current regulations were far less flexible and it limited our ability to help those affected people," he said.

"I hope this change will help South Australians who need to continue taking their vital medicines when disaster strikes."

Pharmaceutical Society of Australia National President, Dr Chris Freeman, said there was a need for state and territory governments to review emergency provisions when the crisis subsides.

"We are keen to work collaboratively with all governments to permanently incorporate these more effective and affordable emergency supply provisions into our health system for future disasters," he said.

Today's issue of **PD**

Pharmacy Daily today has two pages of news.

GP vax failures

AN AUDIT of "at risk" general practice clinics conducted by NSW Health has identified 33 clinics in the state that have breached cold-chain storage requirements for vaccinations.

The audit was conducted last year after it emerged patients of two Sydney GPs had been administered expired and inappropriately stored doses of vaccinations (**PD** 21 Jun 2019), which the Royal Australian College of General Practice described as "regretful".

NSW Health audited 44 practices that lodged vaccine orders by fax rather than using the online system, *Australian Doctor* reported.

Of the 33 clinics that failed to comply with cold-chain requirements for vaccinations, eight have closed down, while a further five have stopped providing vaccination services, with the remaining 20 now meeting requirements.

Following the audit, NSW Health contacted 820 patients of a clinic which failed to appropriately store vaccines, to recommend that they be revaccinated.

However, NSW Health decided against contacting patients of the other clinics.

Amazon file pharmacy trademark

ONLINE retailer, Amazon, is seeking to trademark 'Amazon Pharmacy' in Australia.

The application filed with IP Australia on 09 Jan, seeks to cover a range of goods and services, including "pharmacy services... health care services, and preparation of prescriptions in pharmacies".

The filing also requests approval for the trademark to cover a "pharmacy packaging services that aligns, sorts and packages

a patient's medication by date and time into individual packets", which would facilitate a model in line with Amazon's US PillPack pharmacy business.

A Pharmacy Guild of Australia spokesperson suggested regulatory issues around ownership and medication pricing, combined with the convenience of accessing medicines immediately would limit Amazon's ability to compete with traditional pharmacies.

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Dispensary Corner

BRITISH pharmacist, Jasper Ojela, will spend up to 28 months behind bars after being caught diverting opiate painkillers, tranquilisers and medications intended for cancer patients to the black market.

The 56-year-old pharmacy owner's side hustle came undone when a pharmacy wholesaler reported that during an audit it had discovered the sale of medicines classified as 'controlled drugs' had not been recorded, prompting an investigation.

Inspectors from the UK's Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency noticed Ojela's pharmacy had purchased large quantities of diazepam, zolpidem and zopiclone from wholesalers.

During an interview with police, Ojela admitted that between Feb and Sep 2016 he illegally supplied more than 200,000 doses of the drugs to criminal associates while not holding licenses to supply the medicines in the first place.

With more than two years to contemplate his actions while serving out his sentence at Her Majesty's pleasure, Ojela is likely to need to prepare for a new career, as the General Pharmaceutical Council has indicated it will pursue disciplinary action against him.



Not too late to prepare for bushfires

PHARMACISTS operating in rural and regional parts of Australia are being urged to create and implement bushfire emergency plans, by Guild Insurance.

The Pharmacy Guild of Australia subsidiary has released advice for those impacted by the ongoing bushfire crisis, noting the claims were "being handled as quickly as possible", and warning of the need to remain vigilant with the fire season expected to last at least two more months.

"In the wake of the devastating bushfires spreading across the country, it's vital for rural and regional businesses to ensure they're properly prepared," Guild Insurance said in a message to pharmacy owners.

"If your business hasn't been affected, it's not too late to create and implement your bushfire emergency plan.

"All businesses need to be realistic about what can happen and be proactive in putting risk management strategies in place."

For businesses affected by the crisis that are seeking to claim against business interruption policies, the company said they should "gather information on income for the three weeks prior to loss, and provide confirmation of days/hours loss of trade and normal trading days/hours".

In the case of property damage, pharmacy owners have been advised to contact Guild Insurance as soon as possible, and to keep records of any emergency repair expenses incurred, take photos of the damage, prepare a detailed inventory of damaged losses including personal property and alert the insurer, their local council and workplace health and safety, to any concerns over potentially



hazardous substances such as asbestos, which may have been disturbed.

"Guild Insurance understands this is an extremely difficult time for you and we are committed to continue to provide you with exceptional customer service. Guild Insurance Claims are available 24 hours a day to be of assistance," the company said.

Pharmacy chains sue US doctors

US PHARMACY groups have lodged proceedings against doctors in two Ohio counties, Summit and Cuyahoga, claiming prescribers needed to be held to account for the nation's opioid crisis.

The move follows cases being taken by the counties against the pharmacy chains for dispensing the addictive painkillers, however neither Summit nor Cuyahoga targeted doctors in their case, *The Hill* reported.

Lawyers for the pharmacy groups including Walgreen, Rite Aid, CVS and Walmart, said the complaint lodged against them failed "to identify even one prescription that was



supposedly filled improperly by any pharmacist working for any of the Summit County pharmacy chains".

They added that the action was a "misguided hunt for deep pockets without regard to actual fault or legal liability".

Chemists' Own paracetamol

GENERIC Pharmacy Only and over-the-counter medicines brand, Chemists' Own has launched a new product, Paracetamol Pain Relief.



The product will be available in a screw-top bottle containing 100 tablets, with each tablet consisting of 500mg of paracetamol to provide temporary pain relief.

Visit www.chemistsown.com.au for stock enquiries, or contact Arrow Pharmaceuticals for more information.