

### Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today has two pages of news.

### BHV backs diets

**PATIENTS** are being urged to speak to pharmacists and other health professionals before starting to take dietary supplements, as part of a campaign by Better Health Victoria (BHV).

Promoting the campaign, the Therapeutic Goods Administration tweeted "Vitamins and supplements are no substitute for a healthy diet".

However, Better Health Victoria noted supplements can play an important role for people with specific needs.

[CLICK HERE](#) for more.

## Emergency measures need reform

**PHARMACISTS** need greater freedom to initiate treatment in emergency scenarios, a pharmacist who works in the aged care sector believes.

Having spent a number of days with more than 50 residents and evacuees from other homes at the IRT aged care facility in Moruya, NSW, as bushfires threatened the region, pharmacist, Jo McMahon, told *Pharmacy Daily* that there was a need for embedded pharmacists to be allowed to provide certain medications.

McMahon said the town's pharmacies were forced to close when the electricity went down, resulting in limited access to medicines and medical support as the fires approached.

However, she was able to get medication for some residents from the local hospital.

"After this experience I think pharmacists should be able to initiate some medications in a situation like that," she said.

"Things like Ventolin, because people couldn't breathe properly, and were coughing and wheezing.

"If I'd been out in the community in a pharmacy I could have, over-the-counter, provided that to someone, but as an embedded pharmacist with residents that I knew, I had their medication charts and I had their diagnosis, I didn't actually have the ability to give them chloramphenicol eye drops or Ventolin."

With road closures preventing several staff members from accessing the town, McMahon volunteered to assist with the care of the facility's 30 residents, with patient numbers swelling as 20 residents from IRT's home in



Dalmeny temporarily moved to Moruya, due to the fire threat.

At the peak of the emergency, McMahon said residents were forced out of their rooms for up to two days and two nights, sleeping in chairs and unable to go outside.

With hazardous air quality lingering for days after the fire threat receded, McMahon said there was a need to ensure facilities have stocks of nicotine replacement products to support smokers in the event of future crises.

### Kiwi pharmacists told to ditch fax

**NEW** Zealand-based pharmacies are being told by the Ministry of Health (MOH) to get rid of their fax machine by the end of the year.

The edict comes with Kiwi pharmacists notably loathsome to give up the outdated technology, but the Pharmacy Guild of New Zealand is now forcing them to secure a digital alternative by the end of 2020.

The MOH says the change is needed as fax machines are becoming increasingly



incompatible with modern technology.

The suggestion was initially made in Jul.

The British health sector has almost finished phasing their faxes out, having begun last Jan (*PD* 12 Dec 2018).

### Self-prescribing dentist lands ban

**A DENTIST** who prescribed himself Schedule 8 and Schedule 4 drugs has had his license cancelled for five years.

The dentist was found guilty of improper or unethical conduct, in attempting to fill prescriptions for himself, primarily in the unmarried name of his wife, as well as making a false declaration in 2016 that they had complied with their suspension.

He had been taking his spouse's prescription painkillers, and after developing a tolerance



to codeine, began taking other forms of opioids.

The practitioner was in and out of hospital on multiple occasions, and had received treatment in relation to his addiction.

He has since left the profession with stated desire to not return, but despite relinquishing his own license, has still been suspended.



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## Dispensary Corner

**BRITISH** broadcaster, Sam Delaney, is drawing the ire of pharmacists after deriding the profession on morning TV last week.

The former host of RT (Russia Today) satirical show, *Sam Delaney's News Thing*, hit out at the UK's National Health Service (NHS) campaign to encourage patients to visit their pharmacists to seek advice for minor ailments in an effort to ease pressure on GPs.

Hitting out at the NHS's efforts Delaney suggested it was inappropriate for pharmacists to initiate discussions with patients about health issues such as weight management.

"The Government is suggesting that chemists should be able to intervene and say, 'you're too fat, you're overweight', I'm all for doctors pointing this out, if they think it's going to be a medical issue, because it's behind closed doors, but a chemist is a very public place," he said.

"You could be in Boots, it could be very crowded in there and suddenly you're being called fat by a chemist who I think society generally, rightly or wrongly, don't have much respect for anyway, because we think they're pretend doctors a lot of the time," he said.

Taking to Twitter a number of pharmacists have hit out at the misrepresentation of the profession and journalists' ignorance of the "expertise and value" pharmacists provide.

## Court backs pharmacist

**GERMAN** pharmacists have been given the green light to decline to dispense emergency contraception to patients based on their religious beliefs, following a court ruling last week.

The decision stems from a case taken by the Berlin Chamber of Pharmacists against a now retired pharmacy owner who never stocked or sold the morning after pill, due to his deeply held beliefs, *Pharmacy Business* reported.

Faith-based legal advocacy group ADF International supported the pharmacist and welcomed the ruling, noting it was the first time a German court had addressed the matter.

ADF International legal counsel, Felix Bollmann, said the decision was "a clear statement that the pharmacist had the right to act in life with his conscience and did not neglect his professional duty in doing so".

"Nobody should be forced to choose between their conscience and their profession," Bollmann said.



"The conscience rights of pharmacists are often, and sometimes deliberately, ill-defined in national law.

"The right to freedom of conscience must include the right to act accordingly."

Bollmann noted that across Europe legislation clearly protected medical staff from taking part in procedures they objected to on conscientious grounds, however pharmacists could find themselves in "a legal grey area" when it came to the protection of their conscience rights.

## British pharmacies on the brink: EY

**BRITISH** pharmacies are facing "notable" financial fragility, a report from consultancy firm, EY, reveals.

Commissioned by the General Pharmaceutical Council, the report indicated that 17 of the 33 pharmacies reviewed faced a deficit, which EY attributed to a "challenging environment", stemming from changes to available funding and reductions in drug reimbursements.

"The sector is demonstrating a notable fragility, with 52% of organisations in deficit across our

sample," the report said, with single independent pharmacies listed as "geographically isolated" more likely to face financial hardship.

All three online pharmacies reviewed also faced debts.

Australian pharmacies have been facing similar challenges, with Pharmacy Guild of Australia Vice President Trent Twomey telling the Pharmacy Connect Conference in Sydney in Sep close to one-in-five Aussie pharmacies weren't turning a profit (*PD* 09 Sep 2019).

## Asthma spike warning

**PHARMACISTS** are being urged to brace for a spike in asthma flare-ups ahead of the new school years, with hazardous air quality adding to traditional factors that trigger symptoms of the condition.

National Asthma Council CEO, Siobhan Brophy, called on pharmacists to help children with asthma prepare for going back to school next month.

"Pharmacists can help get children asthma-ready for school by asking parents about their child's asthma control experience during poor air quality days and whether their child has an up to date asthma plan and puffer," she said.

"This year's added factors of smoke and hazardous air quality from fires, coupled with high emotions such as stress and anxiety, are likely to trigger asthma symptoms."

Brophy said pharmacists had a key role in supporting parents and children with asthma, and encouraged them to discuss asthma management with patients when they present in store for any reason.

She added that pharmacists could assess whether patients have the appropriate inhaler technique, and that they use their preventer medications as recommended.

Pharmacists can refer patients wanting more information to the Asthma Council's Sensitive Choice program's factsheets on back to school and other issues.