

APC confirms dates for intern exam

PHARMACY interns will sit their written exam between 17 and 21 Oct, the same week the Pharmacy Board of Australia will conduct oral assessments, the Australian Pharmacy Council (APC) announced this week.

Announcing the new dates, APC CEO, Bronwyn Clark, said interns would be given the option of attending a test centre "as per usual" or sit the exam at home.

The move follows the cancellation of the Jun and Jul exam sessions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We truly felt for our candidates whose plans were suddenly disrupted and put on hold," she said.

"We appreciate everyone's patience whilst we have worked through our options and agreed on the best way forward.

"Our priority will always be you - our candidates and stakeholders.

"Your health and safety and that of our community will always come first."

Clark said candidates will be able to decide where they want to sit the exam when they register their application online at the APC website.



The APC also announced that the intern written exam has been shortened, from a three-hour time period to two hours, with candidates facing a total of 75 questions.

Registrations for the exam open on 25 Aug, and close on 07 Sep.

To be eligible to sit the exam, interns are required to be provisionally registered with the Pharmacy Board of Australia, or have been registered in the past, and have completed 40% of the required supervised practice hours, or have completed them by the exam date.

Test centres will be available

to candidates sitting the exam in Adelaide, Brisbane, Canberra, Darwin, Hobart, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney, while the APC may host exams in Townsville if numbers allow.

Acknowledging the disruption caused by the COVID crisis, Clark praised the efforts interns have gone to in supporting the profession and the community in recent months.

"I want to thank you for all the great work you are doing in your intern year and recognise it's been a really tough one for you," she said.

"We are hoping everything goes well for you."

Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features two pages of news, plus full pages from:

- API
- Sigma Healthcare

Safety advisory

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has issued a safety advisory for a product labelled AuLion Energy Candy.

The TGA revealed testing found the "candy" contained undeclared sildenafil.

Patients are being urged to stop taking the product and bring any remaining candies to a pharmacy for safe disposal.

TWC to rollout new 'BuyBetter' system

TERRYWHITE Chemmart (TWC) pharmacies will gain access to a new "intelligent ordering" software solution, 'BuyBetter'.

The platform has been piloted at 200 stores within the network since Apr 2019, and has delivered significant value, TWC CEO Duncan Phillips said.

"Our number one goal for any TWC is improving profitability under any type of condition," he said.

"We are facing a period of challenging customer sentiment for spending and it brings even more relevance to having quality systems in place to assist both with cost-reductions and freeing up more time to spend with customers.



"The program has contributed more than \$3.6 million in additional gross profit dollar improvements to our pharmacies currently using the program since the pilot began last year.

"And we know that with continued improvements and the further roll out, this number will only continue to grow."

RACGP names acting President

ROYAL Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) Rural leader, Associate Professor Ayman Shenouda, has been appointed as acting President following the death of Dr Harry Nespolon (PD 28 Jun).

Shenouda said that continuing Nespolon's legacy was his highest priority.

"I feel privileged to be in a position where I can continue on Harry's legacy," he said.

"I worked very closely [with] Harry throughout his tenure and will work hard every day to ensure that his objectives for improving general practice and supporting GPs are realised."

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Thai Rock pharmacists get all clear

PHARMACISTS from St Vincent's Private Hospital who dined at a restaurant linked to a known COVID-19 case have returned negative tests for the virus paving the way to return to work this weekend (**PD** 28 Jul).

In a statement issued this morning, HPS - the company which has been contracted to provide pharmacy services to the hospital - revealed all 18 pharmacy staff members who ate at the Thai Rock restaurant in Potts Point on Fri 17 Jul, have been cleared to return to work later this week.

"In accordance with a NSW Health directive these staff will continue to self isolate until Sat 01 Aug," HPS said.

"St Vincent's Private Hospital and the pharmacy have arrangements in place to continue pharmacy operations with patient and staff welfare the priority."

Sydney radio station, 2GB,



drive-time presenter, Jim Wilson, reported that he had been told the NSW Health isolation order affected "all but one of the hospital's pharmacy staff".

The Thai Rock restaurant in Potts Point is owned by the same people as the Thai Rock in Wetherill Park, which has been linked to 85 confirmed cases of COVID-19.

However, investigations by NSW Health have not identified links between the cases at the two

restaurants.

People who live in or have visited Potts Point in the last two weeks are being urged to monitor their symptoms and "immediately isolate and get tested if they appear", after a case was linked to The Apollo restaurant, which is also in the suburb.

NSW Health has issued warnings relating to cases at restaurants in Bankstown, Cabramatta, and Mount Pritchard.



Dispensary Corner

THE obesity crisis is impacting the famous canals of Venice, where gondoliers have imposed a new limit on the number of passengers they carry.

Initially thought to be a measure to assist with COVID-19 social distancing, the move which cuts the maximum capacity from six people to five, is actually because "over the last 10 years or so, tourists weigh more," according to the president of Venice's Gondola Association, Andrea Balbi.

"Rather than having them step on a scale before they get on, we are limiting the number."

The move has been backed by Raoul Roveratto, president of another group of gondoliers, who said that with some nationalities "it's like bombs loading on."

"When the boat is fully loaded the hull sinks and water enters."

"Going forward with over half a ton of meat on board is dangerous," Roveratto added.

AND while we're on the topic, an intriguing new study has found a close correlation between fat politicians and how corrupt they are in office.

Pavlo Plavatsky from the University of Montpellier in France used machine learning to estimate the weight of 299 cabinet ministers from the 15 post-Soviet republics, and then compared this with World Bank and Transparency International corruption indicators.

He found average body mass was a "convenient proxy variable" for political corruption.

NZ codeine rules

NEW Zealand's Medsafe has announced that all codeine and codeine-containing medications will become prescription-only from 05 Nov.

The move to reschedule the molecule brings NZ into line with Australian codeine scheduling.

AFT Pharmaceuticals Managing Director, Dr Hartley Atkinson, welcomed the move, noting patients may turn to its Maxigesic analgesic.

"In the 12 months after Australia rescheduled codeine containing medicines in 2018, sales of Maxigesic tablets increased by more than 50%," he said.

Pharmacy service key to adherence

POLICY-MAKERS should consider whether incentive mechanisms should be built into pharmacy remuneration systems to boost pharmacists' focus on services quality, researchers from the University of Sydney believe.

Data from a survey of 319 patients at eight pharmacies across Australia found evidence to suggest those who accessed medications from discounters were less likely to adhere to prescribed medicines than those who went to "service-focused" stores.

The study, published in *Patient Education and Counseling*, found perceived service quality impacted medication use, lead-



author, Dr Stephen Carter said.

Carter said that while patients who are non-adherent may seek out pharmacies where they are less likely to have "difficult conversations", consideration needed to be given to incentivising pharmacies to focus on service over price, "and ultimately patient care".

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