

Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today has two pages of news, plus a full page from Sigma Connect.

Conferences off

THE COVID-19 pandemic, already the cause of the cancellation of this year's Australian Pharmacy Professional Conference and Exhibition, has led to more industry event casualties.

The Pharmaceutical Society of Australia's PSA20 annual conference, which had been scheduled to take place in Sydney from Fri 31 Jul-Sun 02 Aug, has been cancelled due to government gathering restrictions.

Also off is the Pharmacy Guild's Pharmacy Connect conference, previously set to take place at the Sydney Hilton in Sep this year.

The Pharmacy Assistant National Conference 2020, planned for Brisbane in Oct, will also now not go ahead.

The Guild said dates had already been set for Pharmacy Connect 2021, which will be held 12-14 Aug next year at the Sydney Hilton, while PA2021 is now scheduled for 22-23 Oct 2021 at the Sofitel Brisbane Hotel.

The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia recently solicited abstracts for its Medicines Management 2020 conference, set for 19-21 Nov in Adelaide.

Migraine medicines to S3

THE Health Department has confirmed the down-scheduling of sumatriptan and zolmitriptan to become pharmacist-only medicines, including the creation of Appendix H entries for both of the migraine drugs.

New entries in Schedule 3 provide for sumatriptan when in divided oral preparations containing 50mg or less per dosage unit, and when sold in a pack containing not more than two dosage units.

For zolmitriptan the entry is also for packs of two dosage units, in divided oral preparations containing 2.5mg or less per dose.

Both entries are indicated for the "acute relief of migraine in patients who have a stable, well-established pattern of symptoms".

The Pharmacy Guild of Australia welcomed the move, with National President, George Tambassis, saying it was a good outcome for patients.

"Patients don't know when a migraine is coming on and so have had to try to manage their medicines by having a prescription on hand in case they needed to fill it," Tambassis said.

"This very sensible decision... means that patients who have a stable, well-established pattern of symptoms, will be able to access sumatriptan and zolmitriptan for the acute relief of migraine when and where they need it.

"Importantly, being pharmacist-only medicines will ensure that patients receive the counselling and advice to ensure they are taking the medicine appropriately," he said.

The decisions are effective from 01 Feb 2021, with the Therapeutic Goods Administration noting that the access controls in place for S3 medicines were "appropriate and sufficient to mitigate the misuse of these medicines".

First e-script dispensed

AUSTRALIA'S first paperless electronic prescription in primary care was successfully prescribed and dispensed in Vic yesterday, with the breakthrough transaction occurring between Anglesea Medical and Anglesea Pharmacy.

The system uses the "token" model, where the doctor sends the e-script along with a code to the patient by SMS or email.

The patient then forwards or presents the code to their chosen pharmacy for dispensing.

Software involved in the first script included the Best Practice GP system, prescription gateway eRx Script Exchange, Fred NXT Dispense and MedView Flow.

Guardian knits

GUARDIAN Pharmacy has launched its 22nd annual "Knitting for Good" program.

Conducted in partnership with the St Vincent de Paul Society, the scheme encourages new and experienced knitters alike to join an online community and create garments for the homeless and other vulnerable community members.

A free Guardian Angel Knitting Book with patterns and more information can be found at guardianpharmacies.com.au.

Medicines supply key to response

THE inclusion of "stocks of healthcare consumables" as a key metric to ensure adequate health system capacity in dealing with COVID-19 has been welcomed by the Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia.

The Australian Health Protection Principal Committee has listed seven measures in relation to the ability to handle an increase in cases.

SHPA CEO, Kristin Michaels, said Australia's expanded ICU bed numbers would only be ready for use if key medicines to treat

patients with acute coronavirus symptoms were also available.

She said Australia had watched with concern as other nations such as Italy, Spain the UK and the US grappled with dangerous shortages of key items.

"What is now clear in the national conversation, as reiterated through SHPA's advocacy on behalf of members around the country, is that if COVID-19 cases surge, expanded ICU capacity can only be operationalised if the supply of essential medicines is secure".

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*Schrader et al. Human Psychopharmacology. 1998; 13:163-169. Woelk et al. BMJ. 2000; 321:536-539. Schrader et al. Int Clin Psychopharma. 2000; 15:61-68. Brattström et al. J Phymed. 2009; 16:277-283.

Dispensary Corner

COULD this be something we see in Australia in the coming weeks as COVID-19 restrictions are relaxed?

Tourist attractions in China's Hunan province are giving visitors hats with one metre-long pool noodles attached (pictured), as a way of encouraging social distancing.

The *South China Morning Post* has also posted a video of another option, where elaborate balloon hats are also being used to remind people to stay apart and flatten the curve - see pharmacydaily.com.au/videos.



CORONAVIRUS is slamming businesses right across the economy, but you would have thought contraceptives were pretty recession-proof.

Not so, apparently, with condom manufacturers reporting a worldwide droop in sales as people abstain from hook-ups during quarantine.

Laxman Narasimhan, CEO of Durex parent Reckitt Benckiser, said the shrinking profits could be attributed to stringent social distancing requirements "taking a toll on the number of intimate occasions" across the globe.

Wholesalers make history

PEAK wholesaler group the National Pharmaceutical Services Association (NPSA) says its members have distributed more than 70 million Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme medicines over the last two months - more than in any other time in Australian history.

Increased demand caused by the COVID-19 pandemic saw volumes up more than 70% in Mar, with NPSA Chairman, Mark Hooper, saying "we've seen extraordinary pressure across all segments of the supply chain."

"We appreciate the difficulties experienced by consumers as certain shortages continue, however the infrastructure and systems we have in place across the wholesaler network have withstood the test," Hooper said.

NPSA members include Sigma Healthcare, EBOS/Symbion, Australian Pharmaceutical Industries and National Pharmacies, with more than 3,000 people working to deliver the medicines.

"This behind the scenes workforce is made up of distribution centre workers, customer support teams, security officers, freight drivers, IT personnel, managers and support office staff," he added.



"These are everyday Australians who have gone above and beyond during a time of great need for our country, working long hours under significant pressure to ensure communities across the country can continue to access vital medicines in a timely manner."

"The CSO framework has played a key part in this and enabled us to respond constructively to the early volatile environment, preserving medicine availability and ensuring equity of access to medicines."

TGA warnings

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has issued safety updates about two products which Australians are believed to have purchased over the internet from abroad.

"Muses Coffee (Magic Thin)" sachets have been found to contain the undeclared substances sibutramine and phenolphthalein, while testing also found "Chinese Family in Hong Kong" tablets contain sildenafil.

The supply of both products in Australia is illegal, and they have not been assessed by the TGA for quality, safety or efficacy.

AHPRA offline


THE Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency has advised that its website will be unavailable between 9am and 1pm this Sun 10 May.

The Register of Practitioners will still be accessible, but no other online services including registration renewal, online graduate applications and financial transactions.

UK test kit alert

BRITAIN'S General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) has written to seven online pharmacies, requesting that they remove illegal COVID-19 home testing kits from sale.

Current Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Authority guidance notes it is illegal to sell home test kits in the UK without a formal European "CE" certification mark.




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