

Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today has four pages of the latest news.

UK moves on pharmacy COVAX

PHARMACISTS in the UK could be authorised to administer an "unlicensed COVID-19 vaccination when one becomes available" under changes to the Human Medicine Regulations, *The Pharmaceutical Journal* reports.

The amendments will allow the UK's four countries to determine who can administer any COVID-19 vaccine.

The Department of Health and Social Care said no options were off the table when asked whether pharmacy technicians would be involved in a COVAX rollout.

The moves have been welcomed by the Association of Pharmacy Technicians UK.

API closing non-pharmacy Pricelines

AUSTRALIAN Pharmaceutical Industries (API) has announced the "rationalisation" of its Priceline company stores, with the move resulting in the overall network reducing by a total of 14 outlets.

The non-pharmacy stores are being shut down "after carefully considering the long-term impacts of COVID-19 on foot traffic in CBDs and shopping centres relative to ongoing rents," the company said in an Australian Securities Exchange update late on Fri afternoon.

"These stores do not benefit from the additional foot traffic that dispensaries provide to Priceline Pharmacies," API noted.

The closures, along with other restructuring costs and the impacts of COVID-19 will result in a \$9.4 million reduction in the company's net profit after tax.

Despite the closure of the non-pharmacy Pricelines, "the pipeline for new Priceline Pharmacies remains strong and relatively unimpacted by COVID-19," the

company added.

As well as the reduction in Pricelines, API has announced the outcome of a "detailed review of its balance sheet to determine the assets that are key to API in the post-pandemic world," resulting in the 100% write-off of the \$37.5 million carrying value of its Soul Pattinson Chemist brand.

Despite valuing the brand at nothing, API said it would continue to support the existing Soul Pattinson network of pharmacies.

The balance sheet review has also identified "specific inventory that would benefit from pricing support to accelerate clearance," which will see the company's profit further reduced by \$5.5 million.

CEO and MD Richard Vincent said despite the write-offs, "the underlying NPAT and our strong balance sheet show that we are successfully executing our strategic priorities to deliver sustained shareholder value".

He said the Victorian lockdown

currently meant 22 Priceline company-owned stores were temporarily closed, along with 14 of API's Clear Skincare clinics.

"Where we have re-opened Clear Skincare clinics after mandated shutdowns, pent-up demand has been significant, with comparative sales up 25% on pre-COVID-19 levels, followed by a sustained uplift," Vincent said.

"Priceline company stores and Priceline Pharmacies are also trading strongly compared to the same period last year in those States where COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted," he added, while Priceline's online sales had more than doubled this year.

The company will release its full year results later this week, with the overall underlying net profit after tax set to be "broadly in line with market expectations" of a \$30m to \$31m result.

Including the writedowns announced on Fri the statutory result is likely to be a loss of \$22m.

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AMA seeks COVID roadmap reroute

AUSTRALIA needs to adopt a new roadmap to recovery rather than relying on outdated assumptions made in the National Cabinet's COVID-19 Roadmap released in May, the Australian Medical Association (AMA) believes.

AMA National President, Dr Omar Khorshid, said the success of eliminating the virus from parts of the country, combined with international evidence that has shown COVID-19 can rapidly reemerge in places where there suppression strategies have used.

"We believe that a renewed roadmap is necessary to continue to support our health response, as well as guide a sustainable economic recovery," he said.

"We also know that even when countries have the virus well under control, it can quickly re-emerge when complacency takes hold and governments dismantle many of the restrictions on day-to-day life that had kept the virus at bay.



"The recent NSW experience shows just how hard it is to keep COVID-19 under control, with the State taking three months to contain its most recent outbreak, despite being caused by only a small number of infected people coming across the border from Victoria.

"While NSW has a highly organised and effective system of testing and contact tracing, it also relies heavily on a range of

restrictions and work-from-home directives.

"Had NSW moved to step three of the May Roadmap with minimal restrictions, it could have quickly found itself in the same position as Victoria."

Khorshid expressed concern over moves to drop restrictions in Western Australia, warning the State was now reliant on border controls and quarantine measures.

"This is a risky strategy," he said.

WHO busts COVID myths

WORLD Health Organization (WHO) Infectious Hazard Management Director, Dr Sylvie Briand, has taken to social media to bust myths about treating COVID-19.

Briand rejected claims aired on Facebook that COVID-19 was not a virus, but a bacterial infection, noting "the virus has been isolated by many laboratories...we even have the genetic sequence data of the virus".

She also dismissed theories that patients could sanitise or disinfect their insides by consuming alcoholic beverages.

"Maybe people are confused because they see that we use hydroalcoholic gel to wash our hands, but in reality the alcohol that is in the hydroalcoholic gel is much more concentrated," she said.

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VIC COVID cases

PHARMACISTS account for 2% of recorded COVID-19 cases among Victorian healthcare workers, data from the State's Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) reveals.

The latest figures from the DHHS, published last week, noted a total of 76 pharmacists have tested positive for the virus during the pandemic.

However, the DHHS data showed no new cases were recorded amongst pharmacists in the week ending 07 Oct.

Aged care and disability workers had the highest number of cases in total (1,618) followed by nurses (1,334), with medical practitioners recording the third highest number of cases (205).

When the latest figures were released, 3,548 Victorian health workers had recovered from the virus and 24 were classified as "active".

Profession overworked, overlooked

DESPITE standing on the frontline of the COVID-19 pandemic to support their communities, the contribution of pharmacists is often overlooked by politicians, the public and the media, researchers believe.

In a paper published this month in the *Wiley Public Health Emergency Collection*, pharmacists from around the globe have assessed the contribution the profession has made during the COVID crisis.

The authors noted that as the virus spread "the World Health Organization (WHO), the news media, and others recognised physicians and nurses for their heroic frontline efforts".

The paper highlighted the roles pharmacists in the US, UK, Australia, Canada, Qatar, South Africa, Lebanon and Nigeria have made in supporting patients in their countries.

"Pharmacists, however, were rarely mentioned," they said.

"Worldwide, pharmacists are



providing essential frontline care to COVID-19 patients in hospitals, clinics, community pharmacies, long-term care, nursing homes, physician offices, and national and public health.

"The complexity of diagnosing and treating COVID-19 patients in the hospital, post discharge or as an outpatient, requires a multidisciplinary team of experts which includes pharmacists.

"While patients and physicians

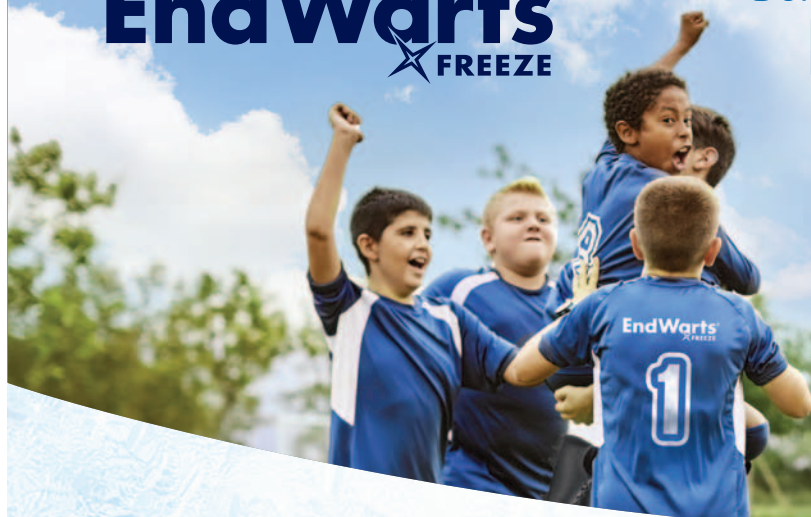
turn to telehealth virtual visits, pharmacies remain open and provide one-on-one access to the pharmacist, an essential frontline healthcare provider.

"The news media, the public, and politicians often overlooked pharmacists as essential frontline healthcare providers during the COVID-19 pandemic but the list of contributions by pharmacists from nine countries provided in this article can change this perspective."

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Dispensary Corner

CORONAVIRUS restrictions have prompted another innovation, this time in Poland where a fitness centre has rebranded itself as a place of worship to avoid closure.

A new wave of COVID-19 infections in the country prompted further lockdowns including an order that gymnasiums must shut down.

In response a Krakow sports club has declared itself both as a shop allowing clients to "test" fitness equipment for a fee, as well as creating an association for members called the Church of the Healthy Body.

The new guidelines allow places of worship to remain open, but with limited numbers.

Protestors have noted the inconsistency of the Polish regulations, where gyms must close while pubs are still allowed to continue operating.

MEANWHILE further crackdowns in other parts of Europe have seen a couple fined about \$500 for kissing in the streets of Milan.

The pair, who have reportedly been engaged for more than two years, found themselves surrounded by four policemen after they removed their masks and kissed in public while on the way to a restaurant.

After questioning them officers issued the penalty because the lovers could not show evidence that they were living at the same address.

Milan is in Italy's Lombardy region, currently seeing over 2,000 daily COVID-19 infections.

La Trobe trio honoured

THREE lecturers from La Trobe University's Department of Pharmacy and Biomedical Sciences have been recognised for their teaching talents by British not-for-profit organisation, Advance Education.

Jason Buccheri, Jennifer Selkirk-Bell and Terri Meehan-Andrews, have been awarded Advance Higher Education Fellowships for their work in training pharmacists, the *Bendigo Advertiser* reported.

Speaking to the publication, Buccheri said the COVID-19 pandemic had changed the way pharmacy is taught, with classes going online.

"I miss the corridor conversations and the chat before and after classes," he said.

"Students telling you where they are applying for a particular job and offering guidance is one of the most rewarding aspects of the role."

Buccheri added that the university's pharmacy program was delivering for the local community



with students from the course securing employment in the Victorian city.

"Hospital pharmacy intake is very competitive and our course is well presented in this year's intake," he said.

"Of the two available positions at Bendigo Hospital, both were filled by Bendigo students."



Weekly Comment

Welcome to Pharmacy Daily's weekly comment feature. This week's contributor is **Gerard Stevens**, Managing Director, Webstercare



The power of communication

Effective communication can mean life or death for pharmacies, or the difference between struggling and profitable businesses.

Offering information is the easy part. Being open to or listening for a response is just as important.

In a pharmacy, that might be whether the patient understood your instructions or discovering other obstacles to medication adherence. Everyone is an individual and we should aspire to complete the picture of each patient's specific health challenges.

A quick scan of the medication profile will trigger a range of questions and is a starting point in any professional conversation. Sophisticated analysis of pharmacy data is being increasingly adopted to learn more about risk profiles of patients, and numerous tools can prompt targeted engagement.

For instance, I love hearing when pharmacies effectively use Webstercare's PocketProfile™ medication list to engage customers and increase their use of medication management services.

Or discussing the Pil-Bob® with customers whose arthritic hands give them trouble opening medication blisters. People are grateful if you can support their independence.

So do a quick audit of your pharmacy's communication. Do you make effective use of the tools at your disposal?

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