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Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features three pages of news.

Good design win

WEBSTERCARE'S Websterpak 6 Dose (Parkinson's) has claimed the Good Design Award Gold Accolade in the Communication Design Packaging category.

Webstercare Managing Director, Gerard Stevens, said the company was proud to win the award for the medication system specifically designed to support patients with Parkinson's and their families with adherence.

The company worked with Parkinson's NSW to develop the special medicines folder specifically for Parkinson's medications, Stevens said.

The awards celebrate excellence in design.

Pharmacists more exposed than most

COVID-19 infection rates amongst Victorian pharmacists highlight the need for the implementation of paid pandemic leave, Professional Pharmacists Australia (PPA) President, Dr Geoff March, believes.

With the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) reporting that 65 pharmacists in the State had returned positive tests for the virus as of 08 Sep (**PD 10 Sep**), March said frontline workers were particularly at-risk, despite assertions from the Pharmacy Guild of Australia that hygiene requirements and the brevity of patient contact meant pharmacists face a lower level of infection risk than other retail workers (**PD 10 Jul**).

"The latest data from Victoria shows how vulnerable pharmacy employees are to contracting COVID-19 and demonstrates how important paid pandemic leave is in supporting workers who've been infected or are awaiting test results to stay at home," March said.

"Paid pandemic leave is a key weapon in our fight against COVID-19.

"Clearly frontline COVID workers like pharmacists should have access to paid pandemic leave as they are the ones toughing it out every day like nurses and doctors, often much more exposed than the rest of us."

Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) Victorian Branch President, John Jackson, also voiced support for the implementation of paid pandemic leave to support pharmacy workers with confirmed or suspected cases of the virus.

"Any arrangements that are put in place for paid pandemic leave for health professionals of course should include pharmacists," he said.

"[The] PSA always knew and has stated previously that frontline health professionals including pharmacists have been at significant risk of contracting COVID-19 and this has been borne out in the data in



Victoria.

"There's no doubt that pharmacists like other health professionals and groups have had issues in accessing personal protective equipment, and we commend the work that is being done to look at system improvements in protecting healthcare professionals."

The Australian Council of Trade Unions and the Business Council of Australia have issued a joint statement calling on the Federal Government to introduce a paid pandemic leave scheme.

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Rent relief needs long-term solution

ACTION needs to be taken on a national level to address the commercial rent imbalance between landlords and tenants, Pharmacy Guild of Australia Western Australia Branch Director, Matthew Tweedie, believes.

While welcoming the Western Australian Government's decision to extend the emergency period under the *Commercial Tenancies (COVID-19 Response) Act 2020* until at least 28 Mar 2021, Tweedie said long-term reform was essential to support small and medium-sized business owners.

Tweedie reported that 70% of pharmacies in WA have reported a decline in turnover of 20% or more in recent months, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, however, few have qualified for JobKeeper payments, and have been unable to access support through the *Commercial Tenancies (COVID-19 Response) Act 2020*.

He added that many community pharmacy owners who have

accessed government support, have reported that landlords are acting outside the requirement to act reasonably and in good faith, often engaging in difficult, protracted and delayed negotiations.

"It has become clear during this COVID period that legislation is required in order for tenants to receive the financial assistance they need to remain viable and survive into next year", he said.

"The imbalance between landlord and tenant has required the National Cabinet to develop a Code of Conduct and two dedicated pieces of quickly drafted Western Australian legislation highlights the challenge.

"As a result, very few community pharmacies have been able to access their entitlements, but rather are caught between an offer of 'take it or leave it' from landlords and the alternative, which is an expensive and time-consuming determination service."

The legislation includes a



moratorium on evictions, freezes rent increases and a code of conduct for small business commercial lease rent relief negotiations.

WA Small Business Minister, Paul Papalia, said the extension of the *Commercial Tenancies (COVID-19 Response) Act 2020* would "assist these tenants to negotiate further rent relief with their landlords to provide breathing space as the WA economy continues to rebound."

Digital evolution

TERRYWHITE Chemmart (TWC) is plotting continued growth with "big digital investments" to support network partners, CEO, Duncan Phillips, revealed at a virtual update event yesterday.

Outlining the group's "roadmap to success" Phillips noted the rollout of a revamped e-commerce platform with a localised focus to support fast 'click and deliver' or 'click and collect' services.

"Our brand is evolving with big digital investments to support our network partners," he said.

"We are experiencing extremely strong network growth [with 24 new stores so far this year] and increasing our investment in marketing, which will also benefit our supplier partners."

Phillips also announced TWC will host its Network Partners Conference online in 2021.

RACGP president backs collaboration

INCOMING Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) President, Dr Karen Price, has voiced support for greater collaboration between pharmacists and GPs.

Responding to a message of congratulations from the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia National President, Dr Chris Freeman, Price said "working together for the

good of Australian patients has always been a focus of the ethical collaboration between good Australian GPs and good pharmacists".

"Using best evidence of best practice as our guide, [I] look forward to productive innovation," she said.

Price will assume the presidency on 30 Nov, and has pledged to "hit the ground running"



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Dispensary Corner

A BRITISH takeaway outlet appears determined to kill its customers with cardiovascular disease, after launching a gigantic burger challenge involving the consumption of the equivalent of 56 normal-sized meals.

The stunt is the brainchild of Kyle Barlow from Madihah's Takeaway in Workington, Cumbria (pictured) who said the massive meal is free for anyone who can finish it in an hour.

However that seems unlikely, with the burger comprising 12kg of beef, along with 20 slices of bacon and 1kg of cheese.

"We have been putting the odd challenge on here and there, but this time I wanted to do something that was unbeatable," he said.

"The beef alone is nearly 30,000 calories...I'm quite certain there isn't another takeaway in the country putting on something like this".



CSO ready for COVID vax distribution

PHARMACEUTICAL wholesalers stand ready to play a key role in the distribution of COVID-19 vaccines when they become available, Sigma Healthcare CEO, Mark Hooper, says.

Announcing like-for-like revenue growth of 9.5% across the group's pharmacy brands and reported earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortization of \$25.2 million, for the first half of its 2021 financial year (up slightly on the prior corresponding period), Hooper said the signing of the Seventh Community Pharmacy Agreement (7CPA) and the Community Service Obligation (CSO) were critical to the pharmaceutical wholesale sector.

"The new agreements provide increased stability and funding for our pharmacy customers and improved funding and recognition of the role CSO wholesalers play in supporting timely and equitable access to medicines across the country," he said.

"The critical role of CSO wholesalers, together with community pharmacy, has never been more clearly demonstrated than through the support provided to Australian patients during bushfires and COVID-19.

"This network now stands ready to be part of the solution for the distribution and administration of COVID-19 vaccines when they

become available."

Hooper also noted that the business had reduced its reliance on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) to "around 50% of sales, which we expect to reduce further".

He added that Sigma's pharmacy business had been hit by reduced merchandise and marketing income due to lower promotional activity during the COVID-19 restrictions, and the increased provision for "doubtful debts" stemming from the uncertainty of the current economic environment, however, this has been offset by underlying growth in other areas of the business and cost reduction efforts.

Guild elections

CANDIDATES who have been nominated to run for election to their Pharmacy Guild of Australia Branch Committee have until 5pm AEST today to withdraw from the race, or submit a short personal statement to the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC).

Voting by postal ballot will open on Wed 07 Oct and close at 5pm AEDT on Wed 04 Nov, should it be required.

A full list of candidates is expected to be issued by the AEC within the next week.

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