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Drug-induced deaths continue to rise

MORE than five Australians a day died as a result of misuse of drugs - including medications - in 2019, with opioids the most commonly identified substances in drug-related deaths (1,121), the latest National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC) report reveals.

Preliminary data estimated that there were 1,865 drug-related deaths in Australia in 2019 - excluding deaths caused by alcohol and tobacco - accounting for 7.4 deaths per 100,000 people, continuing an upward trajectory

since 2006, although it remains lower than the previous peak in 1999.

Researchers found a noticeable shift in the number of deaths involving heroin (474) than natural and semi-synthetic opioids such as morphine or oxycodone (460).

NDARC Drug Trends Program Lead, Dr Amy Peacock, noted that at least one psychosocial risk factor was present for approximately 24% of unintentional deaths and 62% of intentional deaths in 2019.

"The most frequent psychosocial



risk factor identified in coroner-certified drug-induced deaths was personal history of self-harm," she said.

"Other frequently identified psychosocial factors in 2019 were: disruption of family by separation and divorce, disappearance and death of a person in the primary support group, problems in [their] relationships with a spouse or partner, and problems related to other legal circumstances."

CLICK HERE to read the report in full.

Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features two pages of news, plus a full page from **Sigma Healthcare**.

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Dispensary Corner

WHILE pharmacists across Australia are waiting for the green light to join the COVID-19 vaccination rollout, Canadian pharmacists and sisters, Diane Harpell and Tiffany Savary, gave their mum and dad their first shot of the Pfizer BioNTech vaccine this week.

The family gathered at Harpell's pharmacy, The Medicine Shoppe, in Dartmouth, Halifax, for the special occasion as the siblings inoculated their parents, *CBC News* reported.

"I felt honoured to be able to give back to them," said Savary. "We wouldn't be here if my dad wasn't a pharmacist ... so it was kind of going full circle to be able to care for them after they've done everything for us."

Proud father, Arthur Hodder, said it was a momentous occasion to get the shot.

"To have both my daughters being part of the process, you can't get any better than that," he said.

"You know, it's almost like, okay, now we have the vaccine, let's go celebrate."

WHO's antibiotic fears

CONCERNS are being raised that none of the 43 antibiotics currently in clinical development "sufficiently address" drug resistance in the world's most dangerous bacteria.

Launching the World Health Organization's (WHO's) 2020 *Antibacterial agents in clinical and preclinical development* report, WHO Assistant Director General on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR), Dr Hanan Balkhy, said the world was still failing to develop new antibacterial treatments to combat drug resistance.

"The persistent failure to develop, manufacture and distribute effective new antibiotics is further fueling the impact of AMR and threatens our ability to successfully treat bacterial infections," Balkhy said.

The 2020 report revealed a near static pipeline with only a few antibiotics being approved by regulatory agencies in recent years.

"Most of the agents in development offer limited clinical benefit over existing treatments, with 82% of the recently approved antibiotics being derivatives of existing antibiotic classes with well-established drug-resistance," the WHO said.

"Therefore, rapid emergence of drug-resistance to these new



agents is expected."

The report said that only a fraction of the 43 antibiotics under development were likely to ever make it to market "due to the economic and inherent scientific challenges in the drug development process".

However, WHO Director of AMR Global Coordination, Haileyesus Getahun, noted that the COVID-19 crisis had deepened the global understanding of the health and economic implications of an uncontrolled pandemic.

"Opportunities emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic must be seized to bring to the forefront the needs for sustainable investment in research and development of new and effective antibiotics," he said.

One-to-one care

SIGMA Healthcare's award-winning Guardian Pharmacy brand aims to support pharmacy owners to put patients at the heart of its one-to-one care, focused on health without too many retail distractions.

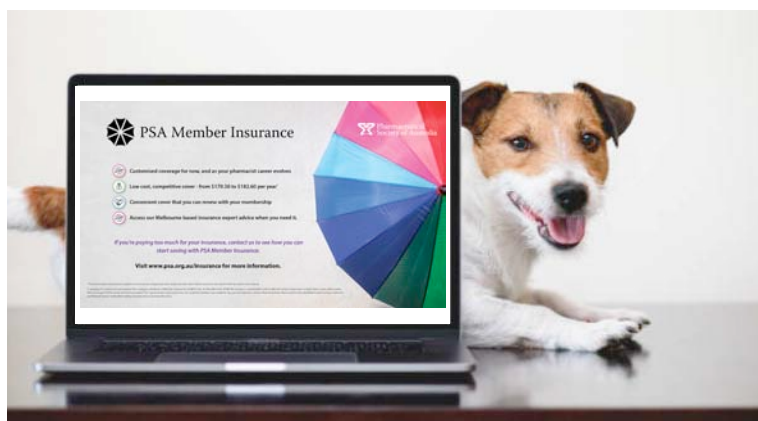
See **page three** to find out more.

CWH to roll out Fiji Kava range

AUSTRALIAN-FIJIAN medicinal kava company, Fiji Kava, has announced a new partnership with Chemist Warehouse (CWH) to distribute its range of complementary Noble Kava products.

Fiji Kava interim CEO, Nicholas Simms, said the deal was a milestone for the business, with 45% of Australians who buy vitamins, minerals and supplements, shopping at CWH.

"Securing ranging of Fiji Kava in CWH, the largest and most established pharmacy retailer in Australia, significantly expands our retail footprint in Australasia," he said.



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