

Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features two pages of news.

Champix pause

PFIZER has paused production of its smoking cessation medication, Champix (varenicline) after low levels of N-nitroso-varenicline were identified in Australian products - [CLICK HERE](#) for more.

We're coming to the Northern Territory

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DATE

Wednesday 18th August 2021

TIME

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PLACE

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OR CALL

Rachael Runner
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Booster boost likely

COMMUNITY pharmacists are likely to play a central role in the administration of COVID-19 vaccine (COVAX) booster shots should they be required, Federal Health Minister, Greg Hunt, says.

Addressing a Pharmacy Guild of Australia COVAX update webinar on Wed, Hunt said the Government was planning for the possible rollout of booster doses in 2022.

"There's not been a formal decision made [yet], but we've obviously acquired huge numbers of booster shots, and we've done it on the basis that the global evidence is indicating it's highly likely we'll [need to] have boosters," he said.

"And if we're not going to have mass vaccination clinics every year, we're going to have to use the primary network and that'll mean both GPs and pharmacies on an ongoing basis.

"That's an ongoing role [for pharmacy] that I expect will emerge from this."

Responding to questions posed by Guild National President, Trent Twomey, regarding which booster vaccines would be made available to pharmacies, Hunt said "there's

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been genuinely no decisions made on that".

"We have not made decisions on which vaccines [will be used for a booster campaign] let alone the distribution[of them]," he said.

"The decision on a booster [is] likely, but not made.

"Our intention is that pharmacies will be part of the ongoing program [should boosters be required]."

Twomey also raised questions about the potential for Community Service Obligation (CSO) wholesalers to play a part in supporting the distribution of COVAX doses to pharmacies.

"Clearly the preference of the sector is for the CSO to play a role [in distribution of the vaccines]," Twomey said.

However, the Minister said the current contracts had been made as part of a blind tender process, which he was not involved in.

"What I'll do is make the opportunity for you to feed in before we go to the next round," he said.

"I will not do a contract assessment and a tender process though myself, that is where we have an independent panel."

Indigenous health a priority

PHARMACISTS are being urged to play their part in Closing the Gap to improve the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Welcoming the Federal Government's \$1 billion implementation plan aimed at Closing the Gap, Pharmacy Guild of Australia National President, Trent Twomey, said the organisation was committed to developing and implementing policies and programs aimed at making medications more accessible and affordable for Indigenous Australians.


"Community pharmacies, as local leaders, can connect with their local Indigenous communities and build relationships which ensure equity of access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients to culturally safe primary healthcare services," he said.

Twomey added that the profession has a role to play in supporting Indigenous people to train as pharmacists.


ACP MDV video

PHARMACISTS participating in the rollout of COVID-19 vaccines can access a new video and print resource from the Australasian College of Pharmacy (ACP) providing step-by-step information on drawing up doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine from a multi-dose vial (MDV).

[CLICK HERE](#) to access the free resources.



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Govt needs to step up on substitution

RULES around therapeutic substitution are “overly prescriptive” and need to change to ensure pharmacists can support their patients, Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) National President, Associate Professor Chris Freeman believes.

Speaking at the PSA21 conference last week, Freeman said the Society had worked “side-by-side” with the Pharmacy Guild of Australia to allow pharmacists to deliver continuity of care by substituting medicines in the event of shortages, but was disappointed with the system approved by the Federal Government.

“Unfortunately, the way it was implemented was not what we had put forward,” he said.

“It is overly regulated and

prescriptive about pharmacists being able to substitute a medicine for an equivalent medicine in a class of therapy, or in a different therapeutic class.

“There’s no reason if a medicine - say sertraline 100mg, which we know has been in short supply, can’t be substituted for two 50mg tablets.

“My six-year-old can work that out.”

Freeman said if the Government wants to enable the profession to better support patients, “allowing pharmacists to do that without having to contact the doctors is what the Government can do”.

He added the COVID-19 pandemic had highlighted the importance of continuity of care being delivered through community pharmacy, with



continued dispensing measures.

“We fought very hard to ensure that we got Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) subsidy alongside that, because we don’t want to disadvantage patients from seeing their pharmacist,” he said.

“We will fight tooth and nail to make sure that continued dispensing continues outside of the COVID-19 pandemic.”



Dispensary Corner

IT MAY seem like unnecessary advice to have to give, but Irish teenagers are being urged to steer clear of beer before going for the COVID-19 vaccine.

The recommendation has been made after an increase in the number of teenage patients passing out after receiving their shot, as the Emerald Isle’s vaccination campaign gathers pace.

Pharmacist, Laura Dowling, told *RSVPlive* that “we are seeing a lot of fainters in this younger cohort of people coming in to get their vaccine”.

She noted that the high rates of fainting in the 16 to 18-year-old age group was mainly down to patients presenting with hangovers and not having eaten well beforehand.

However, Dowling added that a recent heatwave - with temperatures soaring as high as 27°C in recent weeks, may also have been a factor.

The pharmacist suggested that patients should abstain from alcohol the night before their vaccination appointment, eat a good breakfast and stay well-hydrated “especially in the extreme heat”.



TGA performance

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) is seeking stakeholder feedback about its performance over the last 12 months through an online survey.

All responses are confidential and will be de-identified to ensure anonymity of participants.

The survey is expected to take 10 to 15 minutes to complete.

CLICK HERE to take the survey.



American 'pie questions COVAX rollout

WITH Victoria now in its sixth COVID-19-induced lockdown, Collingwood Football Club’s US ruckman, Mason Cox, has asked why pharmacists haven’t been playing a greater role in Australia’s vaccination campaign.

“In the USA for months now - MONTHS - people can walk into a chemist and get a [COVID-19] vaccine,” he said in a tweet yesterday.

“No restrictions or questions asked.

“How is a first world country so far behind the rest of the world?”

“I see friends and family [in the US] back to normal and we haven’t budged in the last year.”

Responding to the tweet, Collingwood supporter and Pharmacy Guild of Australia Victorian Branch President, Anthony Tassone, said “you’re

right Mason, pharmacists should have been part of the COVID vaccine (COVAX) rollout much earlier”.

“FYI we do ask some questions just to make sure everything’s okay,” Tassone added.

Former Pharmaceutical Society of Australia CEO, Shane Jackson, also replied to Cox’s tweet, noting COVAX was “not the only thing pharmacists in other countries can do that we can’t do in Australia”, highlighting restrictions on the profession’s capacity to substitute medications during supply shortages.

“If I’ve a stock shortage of one strength of a medicine do you know I can’t give you the equivalent in another strength - apparently maths isn’t a pharmacist’s strong suit,” Jackson said.