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Priority testing a must for pharmacy

NSW health authorities are being urged to provide priority access to COVID-19 testing for pharmacy staff working in areas where they are required to be tested every three days.

In a joint statement released by the Pharmacy Guild of Australia, the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) and union group, Professional Pharmacists Australia (PPA), backed the testing regime, but raised concerns that health workers have been forced to wait for several hours to be swabbed.

PSA National President, Associate Professor Chris Freeman, warned that without priority access to testing for pharmacists, community pharmacies may not be able to continue to serve patients.

"Our doors have stayed open, providing access to life-saving medicine and health care, and we are now playing a critical role in the vaccine rollout," he said.

"With pharmacists in hotspot

areas now administering a large amount of COVID-19 vaccines, it is crucial that they continue to remain open - and to do that, our pharmacists and pharmacy staff must be given the highest priority at testing facilities."

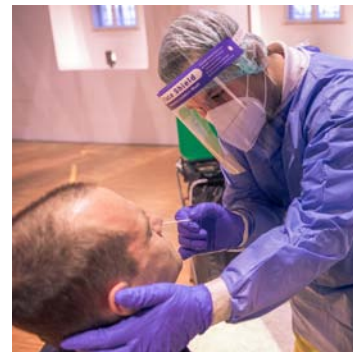
Guild National President, Trent Twomey, said delays in testing pharmacy workers could stall the vaccine rollout.

"It is a matter of common sense that these community pharmacists be given priority access to testing facilities so they can get back to helping protect their communities without delay," he said.

"I urge the NSW Government to act on this as a health priority."

PPA President, Dr Geoff March noted the testing requirements were effectively extending the working hours of pharmacy staff "without any kind of compensation or priority listing".

"Pharmacists are adding hours onto their already long days to wait



in extremely long testing lines," March said.

"This is a significant burden on Australia's already exhausted health workers."

The PPA also called on pharmacy owners to provide "paid worktime" for employees to get tested.

PSA NSW Branch President, Chelsea Felkai, previously raised the issue of priority access to testing for health workers suggesting "they should have their own lane" at test centres (*PD* 20 Jul).

TGA issues shortage notice

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has made a Serious Scarcity Substitution Instrument (SSSI) as a result of shortages of all strengths of Progynova (estradiol valerate) tablets.

Under the SSSI pharmacists will be permitted to dispense Estrofem estradiol or Zumenon estradiol (both as hemihydrate) tablets of 1mg or 2mg, in substitution for Progynova 1mg or 2mg tablets, where appropriate due to shortages.

The SSSI is expected to remain in place until 01 May 2022.

Tassie gets vaccinating despite limits

TASMANIAN pharmacies have commenced administering COVID-19 vaccines, with limits on the minimum age of patients who can be vaccinated in a pharmacy remaining 60 years.

TerryWhite Chemmart Sorell Owner, Madeleine Bowerman, was among the first community pharmacists in the State to administer a dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine yesterday.

Welcoming moves to approve pharmacies in the State to administer the vaccine, Pharmacy Guild of Australia Tasmanian Branch President, Helen O'Byrne, called on the Government to "rethink" its

decision to limit pharmacies to immunising patients aged 60 and older.

"It is unfortunate that the State Government has determined that at this time Tasmanian pharmacists will not be able to administer the vaccine to those under the age of 60, despite the Therapeutic Goods Administration advice and guidelines, as this would certainly help to lift vaccination rates across the State," she said.

"Pharmacies across all other Australian States and Territories are approved to administer AstraZeneca vaccines to those under 60 where appropriate."

Today's issue of *PD*
Pharmacy Daily today features two pages of news.

PSA Masterclass

SYDNEY-BASED cardiologist, Professor Peter MacDonald, will discuss heart failure at Mon night's Pharmaceutical Society of Australia Masterclass webinar.

[CLICK HERE](#) to register.

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Dispensary Corner

MOTORCYCLE-RIDING

hospital pharmacist, Rajnikant Saxena, is facing a litany of charges after he lashed out at police for attempting to tow his illegally parked bike, *The Times of India* reports.

The 45-year-old was booked after he pulled his motorbike down from a towing crane, refused to pay a fine and attacked two police officers in Surat, 280km north of Mumbai.

The publication reported that Saxena had left his bike in a no-parking area and arrived back to it just as it was being removed by a tow-truck.

He then forcibly removed the bike from the crane before abusing police officers who issued him with a \$12 fine, which he refused to pay.

Saxena was charged in relation to numerous breaches of the Indian Penal Code including "voluntarily causing hurt to a public servant, assault or criminal force to deter a public servant from discharging his duty, obscene language", and "criminal intimidation".



Vic pharmacies get access to support

VICTORIAN pharmacies adversely impacted by COVID-19-induced lockdowns will be able to access funding through the State's Small Business Hardship Fund, while support has been lacking in other parts of the country.

Pharmacy Guild of Australia Victorian Branch President, Anthony Tassone, welcomed State Minister for Industry Support and Recovery, Martin Pakula's decision to open the \$180 million fund to community pharmacies.

"This funding couldn't come at a better time," Tassone said.

"Pharmacies in the [Melbourne] CBD, shopping centres and [the] airport have remained open throughout the lockdowns despite a significant drop in trade, and have been there for their patients and communities in very challenging circumstances.

"Previously pharmacies have not been eligible for any Victorian

Government business support payments, but this is greatly welcomed."

The fund will provide grants of \$10,000 to businesses that have experienced a reduction in revenue of at least 70% as a result of the restrictions.

MEANWHILE, Guild National President, Trent Twomey, warned that unconscionable behaviour by superannuation fund landlords was threatening the community pharmacy network.

Speaking during the Guild's latest COVID-19 update webinar on Wed, Twomey said the lack of access to supports such as JobKeeper and the rental moratoriums which were in place during the initial lockdown, was "crap".

"We've had several members call in tears," he said.

"I don't know why a big super fund expects you to be able to keep paying the rent when you simply are



not allowed to trade due to a public health directive.

"It's unconscionable [and] we will keep fighting it."

Twomey told pharmacy owners that the Guild was working with the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the Council of Small Business of Australia to lobby governments at Federal and State and Territory levels for rental relief.

"There are some pharmacies out there that just won't make it through if they don't get some form of support," he said.

CW raises \$850k for Gotcha4Life

IN-STORE and online fundraising efforts by Chemist Warehouse (CW) have raised \$850,000 for Gus Warland's foundation, Gotcha4Life.

The charity aims to raise awareness and funds to build mental fitness and support social connection.

Funds raised by the CW campaign are set to assist Gotcha4Life to deliver presentations, workshops and vital sustainable training programs that create meaningful mateship, build emotional muscle and strengthen connections to put an end to suicide.

APF breakthrough for compounding

THE Australian Pharmaceutical Formulary & Handbook (APF) has revised the expiry date of compounded capsules and powders to six months, in what the pharmacy compounding sector is hailing as a significant breakthrough.

In Jan this year the APF published revised standards where, in the absence of an APF formulary or stability study, compounding pharmacies were restricted to applying up to 28-day expiry dates on all compounded dosage forms.

The change "had the potential to drastically impact compounding pharmacy workflow efficiencies, cost to prepare medications, and

most importantly patient access to much-needed personalised medications," according to a statement from Medisca Australia, a key supplier to the industry.

Medisca GM for Australia and Emerging Markets, Andrew Harb, said upon hearing of the change for capsule dating "we quickly ramped up efforts alongside fellow industry leaders and compounding pharmacies to express our concerns to the APF".

Efforts involved presenting scientific rationale for longer expiry dates for compounded preparations.

The update expiry guidance came into effect from 10 Aug.