

## Today's issue of PD

*Pharmacy Daily* today has three pages of news, plus a full page from **Nova Pharmaceuticals**.

## FIPWiSE push

**THE** International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) celebrated the first year of its FIPWiSE (Women in Science and Education) campaign last week.

FIPWiSE aims to champion and enable women in pharmaceutical sciences and pharmacy education to achieve their full potential, and to attract female students and young professionals to their fields.

**CLICK HERE** to learn more about FIPWiSE and watch the FIPWiSE Words video series.

## Grant funding available for APP2021

**FEDERAL** funding through the Business Events Grants program is still available through Austrade for exhibitors and delegates planning to attend this year's Australian Pharmacy Professional Conference (APP).

Through the program attendees and exhibitors who spend a minimum of \$20,000 will be eligible for rebates of up to 50%.

While the cut-off date for applications for grants is 30 Mar, APP Chair and former Pharmacy Guild of Australia



National President, Kos Sclavos, urged those looking to access the funding to "apply as soon as possible".

Sclavos added that 90% of the trade exhibition has sold out.



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## Lockdown sparks stockpiling fears

**VICTORIAN** community pharmacy workers are once again moving to reassure patients they do not need to stockpile medicines following Fri's announcement of a "circuit-breaker" lockdown.

Pharmacy Guild of Australia Victorian Branch President, Anthony Tassone, told *Pharmacy Daily*, there were reports from pharmacies across the State of patients seeking to boost their supplies of prescription and over-the-counter medicines, following Premier, Daniel Andrews' announcement of the return to Stage Four restrictions on Fri, as part of a five-day "circuit-breaker" lockdown.

"I witnessed and experienced this myself in my own pharmacy on Fri afternoon immediately after the announcement," he said.

"These were nowhere near the level we saw last year with the first wave of the pandemic in Mar 2020.



"However, it poses an ongoing challenge for community pharmacy staff in trying to reassure the public there is no need to stockpile medicines whilst they are dealing with many medicine shortages that are not necessarily related to the COVID pandemic."

Speaking this morning, Andrews

said he was "not in a position to be able to confirm" that restrictions would be eased as planned from 11:59pm on Wed.

Tassone said that if the lockdown continues beyond Wed, pharmacies would continue to be there for patients throughout "these challenging and uncertain times".

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## COVAX acceptance continues to rise

**AUSTRALIANS'** willingness to receive COVID-19 vaccines (COVAX) is on the rise, the latest Roy Morgan SMS survey into attitudes towards the pandemic virus reveals.

Vaccine acceptance rates saw 80% of respondents to the latest poll - taken over Fri and Sat - say they would be willing to be receive a COVID-19 vaccine, up 1% from the survey conducted two weeks earlier.

Roy Morgan found that vaccine acceptance was higher amongst older populations, with 88% of those age 65 years and older reporting they would be willing to receive the jabs, while those under 35 years reported the lowest rate of planned vaccine uptake, followed by 79% of those age between 35 and 49, and 80% of 50-64-year-olds.

The survey reported that Australians living in state capitals were more likely to be willing to be vaccinated (83%) compared with their regionally-based compatriots (75%).



NSW reported the highest rate of vaccine acceptance with 86% of respondents from the state positively disposed to be immunised, followed by 82% of Victorians, while Queenslanders were the most hesitant about the vaccines, with 29% saying they were not going to be vaccinated against the virus.

When it came to political preferences, Australian Greens voters expressed the highest rate of willingness to be vaccinated

(84%), followed by Coalition supporters (82%) and Australian Labor Party backers (78%), while 71% of respondents who said they voted for Independent candidates or other parties said they would be inoculated against COVID-19.

While vaccine acceptance has risen in recent weeks, support for compulsory wearing of face masks has fallen by 11% since the middle of Jan, to 61%, with Victorians the most supportive of mandating them (78%), the survey found.

## Zero tolerance

**PHARMACISTS** in Northern Ireland are calling for greater protection following reports that a patient assaulted a community pharmacy after they were asked to wear a face mask to comply with COVID-19 public health orders.

Pharmacists Defence Association Regional Officer, Una O'Farrell, reported that there has been a rise in violent and threatening behaviour towards pharmacists during the pandemic.

Calling on the Department of Health to support a campaign of "zero tolerance", O'Farrell said, "it really is time that we had support for all of us to be working safely and without that threat hanging over us".

"Regardless of circumstance I think violence or aggression is never an appropriate response in a healthcare setting," she said.

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## Dispensary Corner

**USUALLY** border authorities are alert to shipments of illicit drugs, so it was perhaps a bit of light relief when officers at the New Mexico, USA southern border intercepted about 100kg of counterfeit bologna.

The contraband was being carried in the boot of a Nissan SUV, with guards from US Customs and Border Protection finding "22 large, red packaged rolls in the trunk, and some 'hidden' in the drivers' luggage".

The suspect sausage (pictured) prompted a major alert, with the agency warning that "bologna is a prohibited product because it is made from pork and has the potential for introducing foreign animal diseases into the US pork industry".



## Pharmacists need substitution support

**PHARMACISTS** should be given greater authority and support to substitute medications by strength when products are in short supply, to avoid wasting GP resources, former Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) National President, Shane Jackson, believes.

In a post on Twitter, Jackson noted that pharmacists are often forced to go back to prescribers when a particular dosage is unavailable, rather than being able to provide sensible solutions.

"In the middle of a global pandemic you might think that pharmacists would be supported to help patients at the coalface," he said.

"No Sertraline 100? Unavailable... supply 50mg?"

"No go back to your doctor... you need a script to tell you to take to 50mg sertraline tablets."

Responding to the tweet, North Melbourne-based GP, Dr Paul Grinzi, described the current requirements as a "waste of GP consultation resource if it's to verify 2x50=100", suggestion a phone call to the GP could mitigate the need for a new prescription.

PSA Lifetime Achievement Award recipient, Debbie Rigby, called for "pragmatic thinking", noting

"pharmacists making this decision does not compromise medicines safety and avoids unnecessary GP visits".

While Pharmacy Guild of Australia Victorian Branch President, Anthony Tassone, said nothing would change without patients lobbying politicians to push for pharmacists to have greater autonomy around managing medicines shortages.

"Nothing changes, if nothing changes," he said.

"[We] need patients to contact their local MP as they're ultimately the loser.

"Pharmacists try their best to ensure continuity of care and



not inconvenience patients, but we can't pull rabbits out of hats forever."

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