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## COVAX target needs 200k doses a day

**PHARMACISTS**, GPs and other immunisers will have to administer 200,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccines every day, if the Federal Government's target of vaccinating all adult Australians by Oct is to be met, experts believe.

A paper released by the University of NSW's Centre of Big Data Research in Health, outlined a number of scenarios, based on an assumed start date of 01 Mar, that could see the entire adult population vaccinated by 25 Oct and potentially earlier, if immunisers can administer 200,000 doses a day.

However, the expert's modelling suggested it could take significantly longer if the daily rate is lower, with models assuming 80,000 doses a day are administered forecasting it would take until Jun 2022 to complete phase 2b of the Government's rollout plan.

The paper's authors estimated that if half of Australia's 5,800

community pharmacies were "willing and able" to participate in the program, and administered 35 doses a day seven days a week, the network would be able to deliver more than 100,000 vaccines a day.

They added that the 1,000 GPs who have been recruited to rollout the vaccines would each be required to administer 100 doses a day to meet the 200,000 target.

"Taking into account the necessary screening and record-keeping involved in addition to their usual workload, this may be quite a stretch for all but the largest practices and pharmacies," the authors said in a separate article in *The Conversation*.

"It seems clear that to deliver at the scale needed to meet Government targets won't be possible through GPs and pharmacies alone.

"What's needed are mass vaccination sites... in a dedicated centre, trained nurses could vaccinate at a rate of between 80



to 100 people per hour.

"A similar approach in the UK has seen conference centres, sports stadia, churches and mosques all co-opted as mass vaccination hubs to great effect."

**MEANWHILE**, the Pharmacy Guild of Australia has welcomed the Therapeutic Goods Administration's decision to grant provisional approval for AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine (*PD* 16 Feb).

A Guild spokesperson described the move as "the next important step in the national rollout of the COVID-19 vaccination program".

Today's issue of *PD*

*Pharmacy Daily* today features three pages of news.

## Hunt to open APP

**FEDERAL** Health Minister, Greg Hunt, is set to address the opening plenary session of the Australian Pharmacy Professional Conference (APP) on Thu 20 May.

Confirming Hunt's attendance at APP, conference convenor, Kos Sclavos, said the announcement highlighted the significance of community pharmacy in the national health policy.

"Everyone knows that Minister Hunt is the busiest Minister in the Federal Cabinet at the moment, leading the Australian Government's COVID-19 vaccination rollout," he said.

Super early bird registration for APP closes on Mon 22 Feb.

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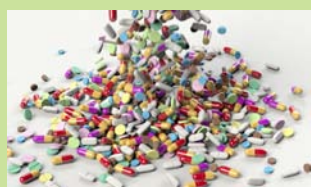


## Reviews need reconciliation

**CONDUCTING** medication reviews as standalone interventions do not significantly reduce hospital readmissions, research reveals.

However, a systematic review of the effect of different medication review interventions during hospital admission and transition of care on preventable hospital readmissions, found reviews conducted with medication reconciliation and patient education were associated with a significant reduction in all-cause hospitalisations.

The authors from Utrecht University said the finding, published in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*, showed it was important to combine medication reviews with co-interventions to deliver the best outcomes for patients.



## TWC network expansion fuels growth

**TERRYWHITE** Chemmart (TWC) is continuing its expansion, adding a record 22 new pharmacies to its network over the six months to 31 Dec 2020, parent company, EBOS announced today.

Reporting its half-year results to the Australia Securities Exchange (ASX), EBOS revealed a statutory net profit after tax of \$92.9 million, up 13.7% on the prior corresponding period, with the company's healthcare division, including pharmacy wholesaler, Symbion and retail pharmacy brands performing strongly.

The company's Australian healthcare business saw revenue rise by 5.5% to \$3.5 billion, with statutory earnings before interest and taxes climbing 10.7% to \$126.9 million.

"This growth is pleasing given that it cycles and further builds upon our record result achieved in the 2020 Financial Year, which was driven primarily by increased community pharmacy wholesale volumes," EBOS said.

"Community pharmacy revenue increased by \$121.9 million (up 4.8%) due to continued above market growth by major wholesale customers and further productivity



improvements across all sites, particularly from our Brisbane distribution facility.

"TWC welcomed 22 new pharmacies during the period, which is the largest six-month increase of network stores on record.

"This builds on store growth in previous periods and further strengthens TWC's position as Australia's largest health-advice oriented community pharmacy network.

"TWC network sales grew by 5.8% and on a like-for-like basis increased by 4.2%.

"This performance was driven by new store growth, continued increases in media spend (up 40%

in the first half) and improved promotional and category initiatives."

EBOS said that its employees had "shown extraordinary commitment in facing the many challenges throughout the COVID-19 situation".

"The Board wishes to convey their sincere thanks to everyone at EBOS for continuing to deliver to the communities we serve," the company said.

"We also commend all the pharmacists and healthcare professions that we serve, for the enormous amount of work they have done on the frontline during this pandemic."



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## Dispensary Corner

**A QUARTET** of thieves who targeted pharmacies in the US city of Atlanta, suffered a adverse reaction when they picked up the wrong medicine during a recent burglary.

The gang was busted by police after a spate of break-ins at pharmacies across the city, which prompted investigators to place a tracking device in a pill bottle.

The tracker led detectives to the home of one of the thieves, and the arrests of Deangelo Harris, Demetrius Height, Steven Finney and Antwone Owens.

Harris, Height and Finney were each charged with one count of obstruction, and released, while Owens was charged with one count of violating the Georgia Controlled Substances Act.



## Sertraline shortages to continue: TGA

**SHORTAGES** of multiple brands of sertraline 50mg and 100mg tablets are set to continue "until at least late Feb and potentially until Apr", the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) warns.

In a statement released yesterday, the TGA told pharmacists to "use your professional and clinical judgement to determine whether a patient is suitable for substitution under the Serious Shortage Substitution Notice (SSSN)".

For patients deemed suitable for and who consent to substitution, pharmacists have been told to, "counsel them thoroughly, including about how to cut unscored 100mg tablets for a 50mg

dose", "advise them to monitor for any side effects and to contact a doctor or pharmacist immediately if they have any concerns", and "recommend that they discuss alternative treatment options with their doctor where appropriate".

The TGA has issued Section 19A approvals for the importation and supply unregistered product - Sertraline 100mg tablets, USP (Cipla) and Sertraline 50mg tablets, USP (Cipla) to Medsurge Healthcare Pty Ltd - until 30 Jun to address the supply shortages.

However, the TGA may lapse the approval prior to that date if it becomes evident that normal supplies of registered sertraline



products become available to meet demand in Australia.

Pharmacists have also been reminded that the SSSN must be given effect under state or territory law before they are permitted to supply according to the specified substitution.

## UK pharmacy viability under question

**TEXAS-BASED** health business, McKesson Group, is in talks to sell its LloydsPharmacy chain in the UK, amid concerns over the future financial viability of community pharmacy.

Sky News reported McKesson has recruited Barclays to dispose of the pharmacy group, which comprises more than 1,400 stores, and the wholesaler, All

About Health.

Company accounts for the year to 31 Mar 2019 - the most recent available - noted LloydsPharmacy's profits had been hit by falling Government subsidies for medications, which it said had "impacted store profitability significantly" and had led to the closure of 60 pharmacies.

## Pharmacist's vax efforts praised

**BRITISH** Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, has hailed the efforts of pharmacist, Hardik Desai, who has organised volunteers to vaccinate 3,000 people against COVID-19 at Ticehurst village hall in Sussex, while keeping his pharmacy open.

Johnson described Desai's campaign as "astonishing".

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