

Win some, lose some, RPMA changes

CHANGES to the Rural Pharmacy Maintenance Allowance (RPMA) are set to deliver increased funding for 960 rural and remote pharmacies, however, a number of stores are set to lose out under the new Modified Monash Model for rural classification.

Under the Seventh Community Pharmacy Agreement (7CPA) \$21 million a year is being made available through the RPMA, an increase of \$5 million on the 6CPA.

Federal Health Minister, Greg Hunt, announced the expansion of the program on 22 Dec 2020, saying more than 400 additional pharmacies will become eligible for funding under the new classification model.

"Eligible pharmacies will receive between \$3,000 to \$51,328 per year under this expansion, depending on their remoteness classification and Pharmaceutical Benefit Scheme prescription volumes," he said.

"The Government recognises the importance of maintaining



the pharmacy network to provide a steady and reliable supply of medicines and other pharmacy services, in particular to people outside in the regions."

While the scheme is set to provide increased payouts to some, a number of rural and remote pharmacists reported that they were set to be worse off.

Posting on the Rural Pharmacy Network Australia (RPNA) Facebook group, one pharmacist estimated

that up to 110 pharmacies were set to lose more than \$7,000 a year in funding.

Another owner described the updated RPMA as a "slap in the face", adding it "was a really great email to receive just before Christmas while our staff are slaving away to keep everyone on track over the festive period".

Further information on the RPMA is available through the Pharmacy Programs Administrator [HERE](#).

Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today has two pages of news, plus a full page from **Direct Chemist Outlet**.

Coastal role

DIRECT Chemist Outlet in Bega on the far south coast of NSW is seeking a full-time pharmacist, offering a "terrific business opportunity to the suitable candidate".

The role includes a generous salary, accommodation and relocation allowances, with more details on [page three](#).

Zostavax alert

HEALTH professionals have been reminded that Zostavax should not be used in people with compromised immune function, after a third fatality in a patient infected after receiving a Zostavax injection.

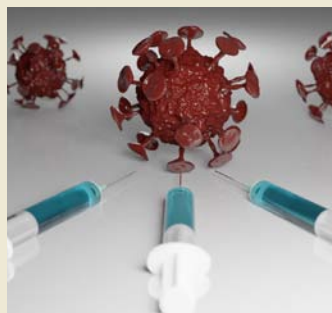
COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy growing

PUBLIC willingness to take a COVID-19 vaccine is in decline, a special Roy Morgan survey reveals, with 21% believing the threat posed by the virus was exaggerated.

Data recorded in Nov 2020, found the number of Australians willing to take a COVID-19 vaccine fell by 10% compared to Apr 2020, with 12% reporting they would refuse to take the jab (up 5%), while a further 11% said they were not sure whether they would get immunised against the pandemic virus.

The survey found Tasmania had the highest rate of vaccine acceptance (84%), followed by NSW (81%) and Victoria (79%), while Queenslanders were the most likely to say they would not take the vaccine (20%) followed by Western Australians (14%).

Significantly more men (83%) reported that they would be willing to be vaccinated than



women (72%) when a COVID vaccine becomes available.

However, male respondents were also marginally more likely to believe the threat posed by the virus had been exaggerated (25%), compared with 18% of women - a view shared by close to a third of respondents aged under 25 years.

The survey also found that Australians were largely supportive of international travel restrictions to limit the spread of COVID-19.

Pharmacist arrested over vax sabotage

A US pharmacist is facing allegations of deliberately spoiling hundreds of doses of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine.

The unnamed Milwaukee-based pharmacist has been arrested on suspicion of criminal damage and reckless endangerment, after removing 57 multi-dose vials of the vaccine from a refrigerator at Advocate Aurora Health Care's medical centre in Grafton Milwaukee on 24 and 25 Dec 2020, which were discovered by a pharmacy technician on 26 Dec.

Advocate Aurora Health Care Chief Medical Group Officer, Jeff Bahr, said the suspect had initially claimed to have removed the vaccines from the fridge to access other items and has accidentally failed to put them back, prior to admitting his actions on Wed.

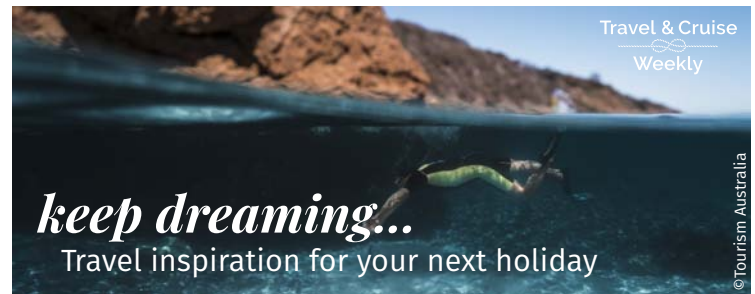
The *ABC* reported that the Moderna vaccine, can be stored at standard fridge temperatures



for 30 days, and remain viable for 12 hours outside of a refrigerator.

In an effort to avoid wasting the doses, a number of staff members were vaccinated, with the remaining vials being discarded.

However, as the vaccines may have been left outside the fridge, it is believed the effort not to waste all the vials may have been useless.



Dispensary Corner

POSING for a photo at a party may seem harmless enough in ordinary times, but in the COVID-19 era happy snaps taken at a New Year's Eve party at Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago have cost a US pharmacist his job.

Instagram posts featuring failed US Congressional candidate, George Santos, and his pharmacist fiancée alongside Trump allies drew criticism after being published in *The New York Times*.

The photos showed guests ignoring COVID-19 restrictions, however the would-be politician hit out at the publication in a tweet on Sat night, claiming it had exposed his family to "danger" and led to his fiancée losing his job, *The Daily Mail* reported.

"My fiancée and I had to leave our home this evening with our four dogs thanks to @nytimes publishing of my Instagram showing me attending the Mar-a-Lago New Year's Eve party," Santos said.

"My fiancée - a pharmacist - who worked 12 hour seven days shifts for nine months was fired.

"The violence against us is real."

Santos did not elaborate on what danger prompted him to leave his home in the wake of the republication of the photos from his Instagram account.

However, while the would-be Congressman has learned a valuable lesson from the incident, and made his Instagram account "private", we have yet to discover whether he is now social distancing.

NAPSA wants student COVAX role

VICTORIA, South Australia and the Northern Territory are being urged to amend legislation to enable trained pharmacy students and interns to administer vaccines to support the rollout of any COVID-19 vaccines (COVAX).

In an open letter to the Governments to the three regions, National Australian Pharmacy Students' Association (NAPSA) President, Ethan Kreutzer, said students could bolster the immunisation workforce.

Kreutzer noted provisionally registered pharmacists in the ACT, NSW, Queensland, Tasmania and Western Australia, are authorised to administer vaccines with supervision, having completed the required training.

"In Queensland, under the Queensland Pharmacist Vaccination Standard, the ability to administer vaccines also extends to pharmacy students with supervision," he said.

"We see this as a model to pursue, not only in your respective jurisdictions, but also around the

rest of the nation, utilising a ready-made workforce to achieve optimal public health outcomes.

"We call on the other states and territory to also allow pharmacy students to administer immunisations."

Kreutzer noted that pharmacy students in the US have been involved in the preparation and administration of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine.

"They have demonstrated their immense value in providing easy access to a much-needed immunisation," he said.

With the necessary legislative reforms, Kreutzer said pharmacy students and interns could play a crucial role in supporting the 2021 flu-vax campaign.

"We call upon your governments to make these changes to the approval requirements in your respective states and territory, allowing both pharmacy students and provisionally registered pharmacists to immunise under supervision," he said.



"The Australian Pharmacy Council has updated its Standards for the Accreditation of Programs to support Pharmacist Administration of Vaccines, to ensure that pharmacy students are eligible to take part in a training program for vaccinations.

"The foundations are in place already... we just need your help in making it a reality.

"Having a larger immunisation workforce will only ever be a positive."

NSW COVID cases hit pharmacies

NSW Health has urged patients who visited five pharmacies across Sydney and Katoomba to get tested and isolate until they receive a negative result, following reported COVID-19 cases.

People who visited Priceline Pharmacy Liverpool on 23 Dec 2020, Priceline Pharmacy Bankstown, Priceline Pharmacy Casula and Priceline Pharmacy Rhodes on 24 Dec 2020, were asked to get tested immediately and self-isolate until they received a negative result.

NSW Health reported that anyone who attended the Greenwell and Thomas Pharmacy, Katoomba, on 26 and/or 27 Dec 2020 has been deemed to be a casual contact and must get tested and self-isolate until they receive a negative COVID result.

Patients have been advised to continue to monitor for symptoms and get tested again if required.

Details regarding the latest COVID-19 locations across the state are available [HERE](#).

TGA Infants' Friend recall

BATCHES of grandfathered colic treatment, Infants' Friend, are being recalled due to the presence of chloroform as an inactive ingredient.

The recall was announced after a Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) investigation concluded the safety of the oral liquid medication was "not acceptable".

The product is labelled for use in infants from birth to one year of age.

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