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Vic businesses need COVID clarity

CONCERNS are being raised over reports that business owners in Victoria are learning that their premises have been listed as COVID-19 exposure sites through the media, rather than from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

Pharmacy Guild of Australia Victorian Branch President, Anthony Tassone, told *Pharmacy Daily* that the DHHS needed to get on the front foot to contact businesses before they are listed, prior to informing media outlets, following the latest outbreak of the virus in the state.

"It is very concerning to hear reports of businesses that have been listed as exposure sites to COVID having either not heard from the Victorian DHHS or following a delay in being contacted regarding what the circumstances of being mentioned are," he said.

"Employers want to ensure the safety of their patrons and staff, and the Victorian DHHS must do whatever it can to have early and

close engagement with businesses so they're not hearing about it through the media and left confused without absolute clarity of what to do."

Tassone added that the Victorian Government's decision to close the state's border with NSW on New Year's Eve had come "as a shock to many... impacting many thousands of travellers scrambling to return home...including pharmacy staff and their families trying to enjoy a well-earned break after the overwhelming year that was 2020".

"The Guild has been assisting members with queries regarding staff entitlements during periods of needing to isolate, as well as helping navigate DHHS information on what the expectations are for returning travellers in terms of testing and isolation," he said.

"With the growing list of COVID exposure sites of businesses in Victoria – the Guild continues to encourage members to ensure their COVIDSafe plan is current and in



place for their pharmacy and team.

"Staff of pharmacies (as well as patients) along the Murray River border, particularly Echuca-Moama are experiencing lengthy delays at times commuting to and from work crossing the border re-introducing challenges from last year that is understandably frustrating for those impacted.

"The Guild is grateful for all of the frontline healthcare workers at the testing clinic sites and Victorian police on the border, many of whom have had to cut their own leave short, to cope with the sudden demands that the border closure announcement have created."

Today's issue of *PD*

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

MediSOL deal

NOVA Pharmaceuticals is offering discounts of up to 30% on orders of its hospital-grade MediSOL Disinfectant Spray 300g.

See **page three** for more.

PPE import rules

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has issued updated guidance for the importation of personal protective equipment (PPE).

The TGA noted that anyone importing medical devices must ensure the products are listed on the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods prior to importation.

Pharmacist charged over vax sabotage

US PHARMACIST, Steven Brandenburg, is facing charges of recklessly endangering safety, adulterating a prescription drug and criminal damage, after confessing to deliberately spoiling 570 doses of Moderna's COVID-19 vaccine.

Authorities have reported that the 46-year-old pharmacist had "formed this belief they [the vaccines] were unsafe", although they did not say why he believed

the vaccine was harmful.

They added that the pharmacist was a troubled man, noting a colleague reported that he had taken a gun to work twice.

Brandenburg told investigators that he knew "that people who received the vaccinations would think they had been vaccinated against the virus when in fact they were not", National Public Radio, reported (*PD* 04 Jan).

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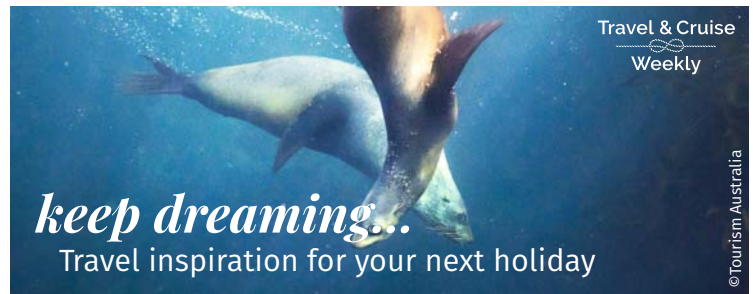
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Dispensary Corner

PHARMACISTS around the world are standing ready to help distribute the COVID-19 vaccine, but in Bulgaria they've come up with an alternative solution - hot dog trucks.

The eastern European nation received its first shipment of almost 10,000 doses of the Pfizer immunisation last weekend, and immediately activated an innovative plan involving the small goods delivery vehicles.

The Pfizer-BioNTech jab must be stored at temperatures of -70°C to remain effective, and can be kept at temperatures of 2° to 8° for up to five days.

Apparently hot dog trucks were deemed as ideal for the delivery, which saw police escorts lead the refrigerated vehicles to several locations.

The initiative prompted a predictable wave of online hilarity, including photos of frankfurts with the Pfizer logo posted on social media (**below**).

Health Minister, Kostadin Angelov, assured the country's citizenry that the hot dog trucks met all the requirements for the storage of the vaccine, describing the mockery as "inappropriate".

However he noted that future batches of the vaccine would be distributed via other methods.



RPMA eligibility review

PHARMACIES located in a Modified Monash Model category 3 to 7 location but do not meet eligibility requirements for the Rural Pharmacy Maintenance Allowance (RPMA) may still be able to access partial payments.

Under the revised scheme funding will be made available to pharmacies based on their location and script volume, with stores in the MMM 7 category who have a script volume of less than 21,893 a year will receive \$51,328 from 01 Jan until the end of the 2020/21 Financial Year.

However, a number of rural pharmacy owners have reported that their funding will be slashed to "zero" under the new model (**PD 04 Jan**).

The Pharmacy Programs Administrator (PPA) noted the MMM classifications were set using population data from the 2016 census and geographic information.

Under the program, pharmacy owners cannot apply to have their store's location reclassified.



Although pharmacies located in MMM category 3 to 7 locations who have seen their funding cut under the new program, can submit an exceptional circumstances request to the Federal Department of Health (DoH) for review.

"A case will be presented to the DoH who will approve or decline the applications," the PPA said.

"Approval could result in partial payments."

CLICK HERE for further details on the revised RPMA.

e-Cigarettes to require Rx from Oct

NICOTINE for use in electronic cigarettes will become a Prescription-Only product from 01 Oct, following a final scheduling decision announced by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) last month.

Under the new regulations pharmacists will be able to dispense a prescription for nicotine e-cigarettes with Special Access Scheme or Authorised Prescriber approval.

Pharmacists will be able to extemporaneously compound products provided they meet Pharmacy Board of Australia

requirements, while wholesalers will be able to apply for an import permit using either an import declaration or a self-assessed clearance declaration.

"This [decision] will provide an opportunity for consumers to receive appropriate advice from a doctor and their pharmacist on the use of, and risks associated with these products," the TGA said.

Nicotine replacement therapies that do not require a prescription will continue to be available from pharmacies and some retail outlets.

Guild Update

Expert speaker

INFECTIOUS Diseases Specialist and Clinical Professor, Katie Flanagan, will present a key session at the Tasmanian Pharmacy Conference, being held in Hobart 20-21 February 2021.

Professor Flanagan is a clinician scientist with more than 20 years' experience in clinical infectious diseases and has an international reputation in vaccine and pathogen immunology.

She has led numerous vaccine immunology trials throughout the world including trials of novel malaria and HIV vaccines in Africa, and trials of the immunological effects of commonly used vaccines in the young and elderly.

Professor Flanagan will examine the rapidly evolving COVID-19 vaccine development landscape - covering the immune response to SARS-CoV-2 and the vaccine approaches taken to develop a COVID-19 vaccine, including some of the more novel approaches.

She will describe the frontrunner constructs in pre-clinical and clinical trials and summarise the emerging results from phase I to III clinical trials.

To find out more about Professor Flanagan visit the Tasmanian Pharmacy Conference website [here](#).

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