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## Pharmacist shocked after head grab

**WESTERN** Sydney-based pharmacist, Veronica Nou, was stunned and appalled when a patient grabbed the back of her head while she was counselling another customer on Mon.

Operating in a disadvantaged area where a number of people in the community are “deep into conspiracy theories” about COVID-19, and a distrust of authority, Nou said the pharmacy team was focused on attempting to educate patients in a respectful manner, “if you push too hard they’ll dig their feet in”.

Nou told *Pharmacy Daily* that she had been talking to a new mother about her teething baby, when the man walked from his car, saw a sign noting that customers were being asked to wear a mask if they wanted to go into the store, or that

they could be served at the door if they were unwilling to, in line with COVID-safe requirements, when the incident occurred.

She said CCTV showed the man park his car across from the pharmacy, before walking towards the store, where there was a chalkboard advising customers of the requirement to wear a mask as a condition of entry, before he grabbed her head and walked into the stop without a mask.

“He was forceful enough to move my head,” she said.

“I don’t know if he had an issue with the sign or something else... [but] he’s not somebody with a history of mental health issues, but we’ve had issues with him before, he’s been aggressive in the past.”

After counselling the new mum, Nou said she went back into the



pharmacy where she confronted the man over his behaviour.

“He apologised - although I’m not sure if he was sincere - he tried to hug me to apologise,” she said.

Today’s issue of *PD*

*Pharmacy Daily* today has two pages of news, plus the January MIMS update.

## TGA extends Estradot SSSN

**THE** Therapeutic Goods Administration’s (TGA’s) Serious Shortage Substitutions Notice (SSSN) for Estradot 25 has been extended until 30 Jun, with the regulator issuing a separate notice until the same date for Estradot 75.

The TGA noted that SSSNs must be given effect under State and Territory law before pharmacists can supply the medicines according to the specified substitution.

**CLICK HERE** for more.

## Pharmacy mourns ‘giant’ of profession

**PHARMACY** leaders from across Australia and around the globe are paying tribute to former Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) National President, John Ware, who died on 27 Dec 2020.

Monash University Dean of the Faculty of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, Professor Arthur Christopoulos, noted Ware’s focus on giving back to the profession - highlighted by the \$1 million John and Nariel Ware Fellowship in Pharmacy Education and Leadership, launched in 2019.

“John was a giant in our field,” he said.

“John was the first to impress on me the importance of giving back to the profession through leveraging my research to advance practice in any way that I could.”

International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) CEO, Dr Catherine Duggan, described Ware, who served as FIP’s representative to the World Health Organization (WHO) Western Pacific Regional Office,

as, “a complete shining star in our profession”.

“John championed pharmacy across many shores and influenced so many of us in so many ways,” she said.

PSA Victorian Branch President, John Jackson, who presented Ware with the branch’s Lifetime Achievement Award last month, noted his “significant contribution to the profession” throughout his career.

“John has worked tirelessly and given much of his life to professional pharmacy both in Australia and internationally, and leaves a huge legacy to the profession,” Jackson said.

“He will be missed.”

Former Pharmacy Board of Australia Chair, Bill Kelly, described Ware as “an outstanding contributor to Australian pharmacy...a mentor and close friend”.

Responding to news of Ware’s passing, Pharmacy Guild of Australia Victorian Branch President, Anthony Tassone, said “the profession is all the better for his vast contributions”.

## US chains set for recruitment campaign

**US-BASED** pharmacy groups are set to rollback recent job cuts and embark on a pharmacist hiring frenzy to boost the number of trained immunisers available to administer COVID-19 vaccines, *The Wall Street Journal* reports.

The publication noted Walgreens Boots Alliance and CVS were offering signing bonuses to entice pharmacists, nurses, pharmacy technicians and retired health workers to join their teams, as rollout of the vaccines continues.

Walgreens’ Senior Vice

President Pharmacy and Healthcare, Rick Gates, said the group was confident its hiring efforts would be successful.

“There is a sense of pride in wanting to step up,” he said.

“We have people coming out of retirement saying, ‘I absolutely want to help.’”

However, one recently laid-off pharmacist told the *WSJ* that he was “not really interested in going back just to give shots”, noting he had felt pressured to focus on script volumes rather than patient care in recent years.

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## Dispensary Corner

**OFFICIALS** in Tanzania have decided to solve the COVID-19 pandemic problem with a unique local product, signalling plans to use local herbs for protection against the disease, rather than any of the rapidly expanding range of vaccines.

Gerald Chamii, a spokesman for the Tanzanian Ministry of Health told local newspaper the *EastAfrican* that "there are no plans in place yet for importing a vaccine for COVID-19".

"Our health experts and scientists are still researching and undergoing clinical trials for the local herbs," he added.

Official government figures continue to insist the country has minimal infection rates, with President John Pombe Magufuli previously declaring Tanzania as COVID-free.

No restrictions, border closures or other measures have been implemented to control the spread of the virus, despite other countries including the USA warning their citizens against travelling to the region.

Tanzania isn't the only country in Africa to go it alone when it comes to combating coronavirus, with authorities in Madagascar also believed to be persisting with trials of "Covid-Organics," a product based on artemisia annua (PD 23 Sep).

The push has seen the price of the plant more than double in some parts of the continent, where roadside vendors have been heavily promoting it to treat COVID-19 - apparently with little success if surging case numbers are any indication.

## COVAX can wait for TGA to do its job

**AUSTRALIA** does not need the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) to rush through its approval process for COVID-19 vaccines, the Advisory Committee for Vaccines Chair, Allen Cheng, believes.

Responding to calls for emergency approvals of COVID vaccines (COVAX), Cheng, who is also Australasian Society for Infectious Diseases President, said Australia was in a "different position" to other countries where vaccines have been granted emergency use authorisations or temporary approvals.

As part of a thread published on Twitter yesterday, Cheng stressed the need for the TGA to ensure that COVAX are "effective, safe and made to a high quality".

"Most vaccines are given to millions of people who are otherwise well to prevent disease - this is very different to treatments that are given to people who are unwell," he said.

"We want to know that there is a correct amount of vaccine in each dose.

"We want to know they are free from contamination...that there are no differences between different batches or those made in different factories.

"We need to know the shelf-life under different conditions... whether they can be used safely in pregnant or breastfeeding women.

"Whether they can be given with other vaccines such as the flu vaccine.

"For COVID vaccines, we have published papers that report that the vaccines appear to be effective and generally safe.

"Many people think that published papers are the gold standard in evidence, but they just scrape the surface of what we want to know.

"Ultimately, the question is whether the benefit of using the vaccine outweighs the known risks



and the uncertainties.

"Countries where there are hundreds or thousands of deaths each day are clearly willing to tolerate some uncertainty to prevent this, and this is appropriate.

"But we're in a different position in Australia - even with the current situation in NSW and Victoria, we can afford to wait for the TGA to do its job and make sure we're getting a safe, effective and quality vaccine."

### Wizard Pharmacy Christmas magic

**WIZARD** Pharmacy has delivered a bit of Christmas magic to the Starlight Children's Foundation, raising \$50,000 for the charity through its Starlight Giving Tree campaign.

The funds raised by the Western Australian group will give 500 children access to Perth Children's Hospital's Starlight Express Room during their time at the hospital, connect another 130 teens to the organisation's online peer support network, Livewire, and grant at least two Starlight wishes.

While some heroes wear capes, others work in pharmacy.

**Pictured**, Wizard Pharmacy

Marketing Manager Gavin Feilding and Wizard Pharmacy Chief Executive Officer Lyndon Dyson with two Captain Starlights at the Starlight Express Room at the Perth Children's Hospital.

### Wales backs pharmacy COVAX

**PHARMACIES** in Wales are set to receive a £12.5 administration fee for every COVID-19 vaccine (COVAX) provided under the regional Government's Primary Care COVID-19 Immunisation Service.

Community Pharmacy Wales Director of Contract Services, Judy Thomas, said the move was a positive step.

"We believe community pharmacists will become involved in significant numbers to play our full part in meeting the major public health challenge of 2021," she said.

## New Products

- **Caplacizumab (Cabliivi)** is a humanised bivalent nanobody that consists of two identical humanised building blocks (PMP12A2hum1), genetically linked by a three-alanine linker, targeting the A1-domain of von Willebrand Factor and inhibiting the interaction between von Willebrand Factor and platelets. It prevents the ultralarge von Willebrand Factor-mediated platelet adhesion, and also affects the disposition of von Willebrand Factor, leading to transient reductions of total von Willebrand Factor antigen levels and to concomitant reduction of factor VIII:C levels during treatment. Cabliivi is indicated for the treatment of adults experiencing an episode of acquired thrombotic thrombocytopenic purpura, in conjunction with plasma exchange and immunosuppression. Cabliivi powder for injection contains caplacizumab 10 mg and is available in a pack size of 1 or 7 vials with prefilled syringe(s) containing water for injection as solvent.
- **Melatonin (Slenyto)** is a naturally occurring hormone produced by the pineal gland and is structurally related to serotonin. Melatonin is associated with the control of circadian rhythms and entrainment to the light-dark cycle. It is also associated with a hypnotic effect and increased propensity for sleep. The activity of melatonin at the MT1 and MT2 receptors is believed to contribute to its sleep-promoting properties via their distinct actions on the circadian clock. The MT1 receptors are thought to inhibit neuronal firing, while the MT2 receptors have been implicated in the phase-shifting response. Slenyto is indicated for the treatment of insomnia in children and adolescents aged 2-18 with Autism Spectrum Disorder and/or Smith-Magenis syndrome, where sleep hygiene measures have been insufficient. Slenyto tablets contain melatonin 1 mg (available in packs of 60) or 5 mg (available in packs of 30).

## New Indications

- **Dapagliflozin (propanediol monohydrate) (Forxiga)** is now indicated in adults for the treatment of symptomatic heart failure with reduced ejection fraction, as an adjunct to standard of care therapy.
- **Ustekinumab (Stelara)** is now indicated for the treatment of moderate to severe plaque psoriasis in children and adolescents aged 6 years and older who are inadequately controlled by, or are intolerant to, other systemic therapies or phototherapies.

## New Contraindications

- **Cefotaxime sodium (DBL Cefotaxime Sodium for Injection)** is now contraindicated with pregnancy and during lactation.
- **Citalopram HBr (Cipramil)** should not be used in combination with monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs), including selegiline in daily doses exceeding 10 mg/day.
- **Metoclopramide HCl/paracetamol (Anagrain)** is now contraindicated in children under 18 years of age.
- **Vincristine sulfate (DBL Vincristine Sulfate Injection)** is now contraindicated with intrathecal administration.
- **Zoledronic acid (DBL Zoledronic Acid)** is now contraindicated in patients with severe renal impairment (CrCl  $\leq$  30 mL/min).

*This list is a summary of only some of the changes that have occurred over the last month.  
Before prescribing, always refer to the full product information.*