



'All hands on deck' for COVAX rollout

EFFORTS need to be made to ensure every qualified immuniser is available and authorised to administer COVID-19 vaccines (COVAX) ahead of the planned rollout, pharmacy leaders believe.

Pharmaceutical Society of Australia National President, Associate Professor Chris Freeman, told *Pharmacy Daily* that engaging pharmacist vaccinators would be crucial if Australia is to meet the Federal Government's target of administering 80,000 doses a week.

"Australia will need all hands on deck to ensure that there is wide and comprehensive uptake of the vaccine, particularly in rural and remote areas where there may be a limited number of other vaccinators," he said.

"PSA strongly believes that a large scale rollout of this vaccine in Australia can only be achieved by utilising pharmacist immunisers across the country in addition to other immunisers."

Freeman added that Federal, State and Territory governments "need to act now to ensure legislation is in place to support this vital rollout" campaign.

Pharmacy Guild of Australia Victorian Branch President, Anthony Tassone, welcome the Federal Government's announcement that community pharmacies were identified as administration sites for the vaccine under the Government's policy.

"With such a significant task ahead of us to immunise as many Australians [as possible], who want to receive the vaccine in 2021 – we literally need all immuniser 'hands on deck' to get the job done," he said.

With the Government repeatedly stating that the vaccines will be available free-of-charge to all Australians, Tassone said, "it is unclear how pharmacies delivering the vaccine would be remunerated as there is currently no mechanism



for pharmacies to bill Medicare for delivery of vaccinations unlike other health professionals".

"This needs to change for the benefit of patients who may choose to receive a vaccination from their local trusted and convenient pharmacy," he said.

Meanwhile, Freeman welcomed the Government's announcement that pharmacists and GPs will be among the first groups of Australians to receive COVAX, "enabling them to continue to deliver vital health services to the community."

Today's issue of *PD Pharmacy Daily* today has two pages of news.

API AGM online

DUE to COVID-19-related restrictions, pharmacy wholesaler, Australian Pharmaceutical Industries (API), has abandoned plans to host its annual general meeting in person as previously announced.

In a statement to the Australian Securities Exchange this morning, API said the meeting will be held "solely online", using technology to facilitate shareholder engagement and participation.

Investors are advised to log in to the Lumi AGM platform at least 15 minutes prior to the 2pm (AEDT) start time on 20 Jan.

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Dispensary Corner

AUTHORITIES in Kuwait have arrested a hospital pharmacist who was diverting medications to female drug addicts in return for "illicit relationships" the *Kuwait Times* reports.

The unnamed pharmacist was busted by police after an undercover informant agreed to meet the man at his apartment to exchange prescription drugs for sexual favours.

Following his arrest, the pharmacist told police that he had been operating the scheme for eight months, taking advantage of medical colleagues in the hospital he worked in to secure scripts for the medication he was illegally trading.



AN IRISH pharmacy has been dispensing a little extra over the festive season, as the Emerald Isle endured a COVID Christmas.

While it might not necessarily have been what the doctor ordered, patients collecting their scripts from the Crosshaven Pharmacy in Cork, were presented with some Cadbury's Roses with directions to "take one three times a day... with a cup of tea".

We guess Mary Poppins was right "a spoonful of sugar makes the medicine go down".

Meds shortages hit patients' pockets

SUPPLY shortages of generic brands of vital chronic medications are forcing pharmacists to "hunt and forage" for alternatives, while leaving patients out of pocket paying brand price premiums on originators.

Pharmacy Guild of Australia Victorian Branch President, Anthony Tassone, told *Pharmacy Daily* supply shortages have seen patients prescribed anti-hypertensive, candesartan, and anti-depressant, sertraline, hit with brand price premiums of \$13.35 and \$5.51 respectively.

"These are regular long term medications for chronic conditions that patients can't go without," he said.

"The Guild continues to be an active participant on a medication shortage working group hosted by the Therapeutic Goods Administration with other stakeholders to collaborate to best manage medicine supply challenges.

"Whilst there can be a number of issues that contribute to medication shortages – it has sadly long been a daily exercise for community pharmacists to 'hunt and forage' for stock on behalf of their patients that is in short supply.

"Nothing changes if nothing changes, and we must explore other ways to manage this potentially serious issue so that patients don't risk going without.

"This could include a supply guarantee on manufacturers to apply to all PBS listed medicines (not just originator and first generic brands), greater clarity on what constitutes a 'critical' shortage which places greater obligations on manufacturers to report a supply issue within certain time frames, wider scope of medication substitutions for pharmacists, and also ways that the brand price premiums can be waived for patients where there are wide spread generic shortages

at no cost to the community pharmacy.

Community pharmacies have done a brilliant job in helping manage medication shortages for their patients throughout the COVID pandemic, but the ongoing shortages go deeper than this pandemic event and pharmacists are consumed spending precious time managing stock issues that could be better spent with patients delivering care and advice."

Qld Pharmacies set for lockdown role

PHARMACIES across South East Queensland are set to play a critical role in supporting their communities during the region's three-day COVID-19 lockdown.

The new lockdown, which includes a stay at home order, will impact pharmacies in the Greater Brisbane area, including Brisbane City, Ipswich City, Logan City, Moreton Bay and Redland City councils, from 6pm this evening, until 6pm on Mon.

Pharmacies will remain open as a key access point for healthcare services and information, and will be required to operate in line with their COVIDsafe plan, restricting numbers in store to



one person per 4m².

Throughout the lockdown the Queensland Government is requiring people within the Greater Brisbane areas to wear face masks in public areas, including pharmacies and other retail settings and other workplaces.



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