



Regional pharmacy education critical

PHARMACY owners in Far North Queensland are showing their support for the expansion of James Cook University's (JCU's) pharmacy program to its Cairns and Mackay campuses, by funding an advertising campaign for the course.

Alive Pharmacy Warehouse, Calanna Whole Health Pharmacy, LifeLife Pharmacy and Wholelife Pharmacy and Healthfoods, have put their hands in their pockets to promote the course, which will see the university offer 40 places for pharmacy students in Cairns, and 13 in Mackay in addition to the 52 pharmacy spots at JCU's Townsville campus for the 2021 academic year.

Pharmacy Guild of Australia Queensland Branch President and Alive Pharmacy Warehouse proprietor, Trent Twomey, welcomed the decision to offer pharmacy training across multiple regional locations.

"We were already seeing an increase in demand for pharmacists and pharmacist assistants ahead of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic," he said.



"Throughout the response to COVID-19, community pharmacies have again demonstrated their importance in the provision of frontline primary healthcare services.

"This will only continue as the COVID-19 vaccines are rolled out, and likewise, we expect opportunities and jobs within community pharmacies to only increase going forward.

"Community pharmacists are one of the most trusted primary

healthcare professions and consumers are already regularly visiting their local pharmacy 18 times a year on average two to three.

"With 97% of consumers living within 2.5km of their local community pharmacy, and 65% in regional areas, the ability for students to study pharmacy in regional areas is critical."

Pictured, JCU Bachelor of Pharmacy Graduate, Mickaela Todd, who completed the course in 2017.

Today's issue of PD

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

COVAX concerns

PUBLIC health experts are raising concerns that COVID-19 vaccines (COVAX) are not being barcoded to support traceability.

Global Vaccine Alliance CEO, Seth Berkly, described the planned COVAX rollout as "the largest in history" and it was vital that each dose could be tracked to ensure patient safety.

"We need to be able to trace every vaccine dose - from shipping to delivery and finally administration - using technologies such as 2D DataMatrix barcodes, and we need better adoption of common standards across to optimize cost and product visibility," he said.

FIP joins calls to safeguard healthcare

THE International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) is urging legislators and members of the public around the globe to take steps to safeguard underfunded COVID-19-affected health systems.

FIP President, Dominique Jordan, called on members of the public to "get vaccinated" and to follow government advice around

social distancing, hand hygiene, and wearing face masks.

He added that politicians need to "better invest in healthcare, healthcare educations and careers and pandemic preparedness".

Jordan made his plea in a video released by the World Health Professions Alliance, alongside leaders of other international health organisations.

Pharmacist bailed on meth charges

A PHARMACIST whose fingerprints were found on a funnel discovered by Northern Irish police during a raid on a methamphetamine factory last May has been granted bail.

Police told a special sitting of Belfast Magistrate's Court, that Peter Ozvolda, a 34-year-old Slovakian, had been arrested on Fri in relation to other matters,

after which officers discovered he was "a wanted person".

The court heard that Ozvolda had told police he was a pharmacist when he was not interviewed, but said he was not involved in making illicit drugs.

District Judge, Mark Hamill, released Ozvolda on bail of £400 and a £400 cash surety, and order him to be fitted with a tag.

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Dispensary Corner

AUSTRALIANS frustrated by seeming inconsistencies in COVID-19 restrictions can take solace in the antics in some overseas jurisdictions which prove that things locally aren't that bad after all.

Lawmakers in Missouri in the USA have been forced to shut down their seat of Government due to a COVID-19 outbreak - despite just last week voting down a measure which would have required the use of masks and social distancing.

A joint statement by the state's leadership cites a "rising number of cases" in the Missouri House of Representatives, and said authorities hope to reopen the building in a week's time.

AND in China there was a flurry of concern over the weekend when COVID-19 was detected in several samples of ice cream.

Frozen confectionery lovers across the globe were gripped with fear, but authorities in Tianjin have downplayed fears that icy treats across the globe may be impacted.

Initial epidemiological investigations looked into the source of the raw materials, including whey powder from Ukraine and New Zealand milk, but concluded the coronavirus contamination is most likely due to contact with an infected worker at the factory.

All of the 1,662 staff at the facility have undertaken PCR tests and been placed into isolation, while extensive tracing of the impacted batches has also been undertaken.

Independent CAM training needed

HIGH-QUALITY evidence-based information resources and independent training programs are needed to boost pharmacists' acceptance of an ethical framework for the sale of complementary medicines (CAM) in pharmacy, research reveals.

The authors from the University of Queensland and Griffith University found the use of an ethical framework could address an important gap in providing specific professional guidance to pharmacies when selling CAM.

The paper, published in *BMC Medical Ethics*, noted that "conflicts arise for pharmacists between respecting the autonomy of consumers who choose to use CAM and professional responsibilities regarding evidence-based practice and supporting positive health outcomes".

"This conflict is exacerbated by the competitive retail environment of community pharmacy," they said.

As part of the study, the authors, conducted a number of focus groups and individual interviews with 17 pharmacists from across Australia, to discuss the acceptability and feasibility of an ethics framework for selling CAM, which they had developed.

The authors noted issues relating to access to unbiased information, a perceived lack of education and financial disincentives to being more proactive in the provision of advice needed to be addressed, to boost acceptance of the framework.

"Several participants indicated the need for better access to and confidence with evidence-based information resources on CAM," they said.

"The provision of guidance on the availability, strengths and limitations of key evidence-based information resources available to community pharmacists could aid pharmacists unfamiliar with these resources.

"A second and related activity



is the availability of high-quality training for pharmacists and pharmacy support staff.

"There is a lot of sponsor-provided training opportunities in community pharmacy for both pharmacists and pharmacy support staff.

"Participants in this study identified the need for independent evidence-based learning opportunities in complementary medicines for both pharmacists and pharmacy support staff."

Pharmacy fraudster gets 18 years

PHARMACY owner, Wade Ashley Walters, is set to spend the next 18 years in a US prison for his part in a US\$510 million fraud.

Walters admitted his role in the conspiracy to defraud Tricare - a health insurer covering members of the US military, veterans and their respective family members - by paying kickbacks to prescribers for the prescribing and referring of fraudulent scripts for not medically necessary compounded medications that were dispensed by his pharmacies.

US Department of Justice

Criminal Justice Division Acting Assistant Attorney General, David Burns told the sentencing hearing last week that Walters had "wasted hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars and deprived individuals needed medical care".

Walters apologised for his actions telling the hearing that he hadn't realised what he was getting into until it was too late.

"By then the stakes were too high," he said.

"I thought I should get out of it...I regret that I didn't see that right away.

"I'm tired. I'm ready to move on and serve my time."

COVAX safety

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) is working with the European Medicines Agency to assess reports of about 30 deaths in more than 40,000 elderly patients who received the Pfizer BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine in Norway, to determine if specific warnings about risks of vaccination in the very frail elderly or terminally ill should be potentially included in the product information.

The TGA stressed it would only approve vaccines once they had demonstrated their safety and efficacy in clinical trials.

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