

Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features two pages of news, plus a factsheet from **CHP Australia** and a full page from **Sigma Healthcare**.

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SIGMA Healthcare is inviting pharmacy owners to become part of its Amcal family. See **page four** for more.

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Pharmacy called in to rescue Sydney

COMMUNITY pharmacies in Sydney's COVID-19 hotspots are set to start vaccinating this month, but some pharmacists are concerned that restricting supplies to the AstraZeneca (AZ) shot could limit their capacity to immunise patients.

Speaking to *Pharmacy Daily* two Pharmacy Guild of Australia NSW Branch Committee members, Catherine Bronger, and Mario Barone, who operate stores in areas hit by the State's latest outbreak, welcomed the decision to activate pharmacies as vaccination sites, but expressed their frustration at the short lead-in time and that they will not receive stock of the Pfizer vaccine.

"Although it's good, it would've been nice to have more notice to prepare and now [we have to] prepare at the last minute in these conditions, it's challenging," Barone said.

"It's kind of like the boat's sinking and we [pharmacists] need to save it... we think it's great [to be vaccinating], but at the same time you need to prepare and get yourself ready.

"At the moment it's only AZ [that we'll be getting], because that's all we're approved for in NSW as

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pharmacists, which is ridiculous - I understand that Pfizer's restricted - but it doesn't make sense for us not to be doing Pfizer as well."

Barone noted challenges facing pharmacists in the latest outbreak zones include communicating messages about the vaccines to patients from diverse multicultural backgrounds, with English a second language for many.

"You're having to overcome massive vaccine hesitancy and then overcome AZ hesitancy on top of that vaccine hesitancy in a different language... it's going to be a challenge," he said.

"I think the doctors know that, and the doctors are trying their best to do this, but a lot of them in those areas have shut their doors to patients and they're going completely to telehealth."

Bronger, whose Wetherill Park pharmacy has had 10 positive cases come through the doors, said colleagues in the area believed they could have immunised a significant proportion of the local population had they been activated two months ago, as planned, rather than being asked to do so in the middle of a crisis, without access to the Pfizer vaccine.



"It's hard enough getting people to vaccinate, but then not having all the options available in a non-English-speaking area that's high-risk is nonsensical," she said.

"When you're trying to alleviate vaccine hesitancy, it's better to give them the one they know they want, but as a pharmacist to be vaccinating and to have one hand behind your back [not having access to the Pfizer vaccine] makes it even more challenging."

Both Bronger and Barone praised the efforts of pharmacy staff who have had to adjust to new workflows including restricting access to their stores for patients, in addition to new three-day COVID testing requirements for essential workers in the area.

See tomorrow's edition of *Pharmacy Daily* for more.

AdCheck insights

CONSUMER healthcare brands can discover how to ensure their advertising can manage their compliance obligations and liabilities with AdCheck.

The expert advertising advisory service helps advertisers to minimise their risk of breaching regulations and comply with confidence. See **page three** for more.

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*TWC Script Numbers Growth Jan - March 2021 vs pcp compared with total PBS subsidised prescriptions FY20 vs pcp

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Prescriber errors hitting pharmacists

COMMUNITY pharmacists appear to be bearing the punishment for the sins of others when it comes to breaches of Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) compliance, Pharmacy Guild of Australia Executive Director, Suzanne Greenwood, believes.

While backing the Commonwealth Department of Health's efforts to crack down on intentional PBS fraud, Greenwood expressed concerns that its recent compliance activity has "focused on unintentional administrative anomalies".

In a column in the Guild's *Forefront* newsletter, Greenwood said the Department's actions were "traumatic to the pharmacists and staff involved, and can affect patient care".

"This is compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic which has proved to be an enormous challenge for the entire health sector," she said.

But throughout the pandemic, community pharmacies have gone

to great lengths to stay open and support the primary healthcare of the Australian public.

"They have served – and continue to serve – the needs of their community as prescribers transitioned to telehealth arrangements and working remotely.

"So, when we combine changes within the PBS with the myriad external factors brought about by the pandemic, we see an often confusing and rapidly evolving situation for both prescribers and pharmacists which occasionally can result in unintended non-compliance.

"It is also notable that while the Government's Provider Compliance Strategy has provider education and support as the foundation, the focus for PBS compliance appears to only target pharmacies.

"It is the pharmacists who are being penalised for administrative errors that were often due to prescribers unfamiliar with their PBS obligations.



"In many cases, the issue may be minor but the potential impact on the patient can be huge."

Greenwood called on the Department to "prioritise an education and awareness campaign" for providers, noting "prescribers must understand PBS requirements to ensure that prescriptions are properly written at the outset".

She also said a review and update of PBS Online alerts was needed, with pharmacists noting it was easy to overlook a warning, whereas claim rejections prompt urgent attention by dispensary staff.



Dispensary Corner

AUTHORITIES in France look to have cracked the problem of vaccine hesitancy, simply by telling the country's citizens that they will need a COVID-19 immunisation to go to a bar.

More than one million people made bookings for inoculations on Mon this week, after President Emmanuel Macron said that from next month anyone who wants to visit bars, cafes or even shopping centres must show a "health pass" certifying that they have been vaccinated or had a recent negative COVID-19 test.

Currently only about 37% of the French population is vaccinated, with the new policy aiming to help the nation deal with the new Delta variant of COVID-19 while maintaining some normality.

IN ONE of those "only in America" stories, South Carolina authorities have confirmed a suspicious package that shut a bridge was an "abandoned liposuction machine".

Police in Charleston responded to an emergency call after someone found a metal box next to one of the supporting pillars of the Ravenel Bridge in Mount Pleasant, one of the state's busiest thoroughfares.

Officers said the caller sent a photo of the box with green and red buttons and a fan - at which point a supervisor shut the bridge and called the bomb squad.

The bridge reopened about three hours later, with officials confirming the item was in fact a liposuction machine.

Pharmacy drives evolving COVAX plan

MOVES to extend Australia's COVID-19 vaccination (COVAX) campaign to community pharmacies is being welcomed by the Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA).

SHPA CEO, Kristen Michaels, noted that hospital pharmacists and technicians have been integral to the success of state-run clinics.

"Hospital pharmacists continue to lead the set-up and operation of these mass vaccination hubs while not only acting as stewards for Australia's multiple vaccine candidates, but in many cases also

taking charge of preparing and administering vaccines, to make sure vaccination demand is met," she said.

"SHPA applauds community pharmacy's increasing involvement in supporting the rollout across rural and remote areas, with 65 community pharmacies now offering the AstraZeneca vaccine in Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory, and a further 135 community pharmacies set to join the effort across NSW, Victorian and South Australian regions from Mon."

COVAX clarity

THE Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) is calling on State and Federal Governments to clarify eligibility criteria for the COVID-19 vaccine (COVAX).

RACGP President, Dr Karen Price said it was time for consistent messaging from governments across the country.

She said patients were suffering an "information overload" with eligibility criteria changing on a daily basis in different jurisdictions.

Advertising Therapeutic Goods? What you need to know

one year on from TGA mandatory pre-approvals

Since 1 July 2020, advertisers have had to manage their compliance obligations and liabilities without the compliance safety net of TGA mandatory pre-approvals.

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AdCheck – an expert advertising advisory service – was established to help responsible advertisers minimise their risk in this new compliance environment, and has helped over 100 businesses comply with confidence.

Insights from the AdCheck Experts

1. The TGA has taken strong action against advertising breaches, issuing over \$1,026,500 in fines in the last 12 months.
2. Ensuring advertising is consistent with public health campaigns and advice has never been more important or more scrutinised.
3. With consumer expectations that businesses behave socially responsibly at an all-time high, noncompliance risks not only heavy fines but also brand and reputational damage.
4. Most common compliance issues:
 - a. Missing or incorrect presentation of mandatory statements
 - b. Misleading presentation of claims or benefits
 - c. Restricted representations.
5. An estimated 8 out of 10 ads submitted to AdCheck were assessed to require some form of compliance amendment.
6. Navigating TGAC compliance for digital & social media ads is particularly dynamic and complex. Given the practical limitations of some platforms, advertisers investing in this area should reassess their compliance capabilities and liabilities.



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