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Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features three pages of news plus a full page from TePe.

MedAdvisor + API

MEDADVISOR this morning announced a new five year agreement with Australian Pharmaceutical Industries, with the deal expected to add about 250 more Priceline pharmacies to the MedAdvisor network across the country.

From Sep MedAdvisor will roll out a Priceline-branded version of its mobile app, integrated with the Priceline Sister Club loyalty program.

The tech firm will receive a monthly recurring licence fee from each participating API pharmacy, with the contract expected to generate about \$2.5 million over five years, on top of transaction, messaging and health program fees.

Pharmacists critical for health: Hunt

PHARMACISTS have a vital role to play on the frontline of Australia's health system, Federal Health Minister, Greg Hunt, believes.

Speaking during the opening session of the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) Conference this morning, Hunt praised pharmacists for their work throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Hunt noted the importance of having the PSA as a signatory to the Seventh Community Pharmacy Agreement (7CPA) for the first time.

"To have you there as part of that CPA, and a \$18.3 billion agreement, with its focus on dispensing and quality use of medicines is a critical step forward," he said.

Looking to the future and the Government's focus on quality and safe use of medicines, the Minister highlighted the role pharmacists are set to play in the implementation of programs stemming from the Royal Commission into Aged Care.

"This is a \$17.7 billion program, [that] in particular through its focus on making sure that we have quality and safe use of medicines, and that there is not chemical restraint," he said.

"Obviously where appropriate medicines are appropriately prescribed and dispensed that's a different matter, but when these medicines have been used in the past simply as a means of effectively restraining somebody - that's not a quality use of medicine."

"You, going forward through the programs the Royal Commission has put in place, and with our strong clear support, will have a vital role in supporting and protecting older Australians."

MEANWHILE Minister Hunt confirmed the establishment of the National Medicines Policy Review Committee this morning.

The committee will be Chaired by Deputy Chief Medical Officer, Professor Michael Kidd AM, and include pharmacists, Professor



Lloyd Sansom AO, and Dr Sarah Dineen-Griffin.

The National Medicines Policy was first published in 2000 with a framework to promote timely access to medicines that Australians need at a cost the community can afford, ensuring quality use of medicines and maintaining a responsible and viable medicines industry.

The review process will include a public consultation, and is expected to take approximately six months.

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Guild to push for fairer COVAX pay

PHARMACISTS are being urged to embrace their role in the COVID-19 vaccination (COVAX) rollout to support the Pharmacy Guild of Australia in pushing for better remuneration.

Speaking during a webinar earlier this week, Guild National President, Trent Twomey, said that while fees for pharmacists administering two doses of the vaccine remain unchanged (\$42 for pharmacies in metropolitan areas, and \$48 for those zones classified as Modified Monash Model two or higher; GPs can earn close to \$75 for the same service), the organisation will continue to fight for more equitable pay (**PD** 01 Feb).

"It is not right that another professional does the same job and gets paid twice the amount we do," Twomey said.

"The Guild does subscribe to the notion that if you're doing the same job you deserve the same pay, and I promise you we are continuing to agitate for that in the background.



"What I need you to do is grasp this challenge with both hands.

"Run with it and prove to the Commonwealth that we are a reliable partner in vaccine preventable diseases, and they will have no choice but to acknowledge the value of our network and meet us with better remuneration."

Pharmacist-turned-politician and Federal Shadow Minister for Mental Health, Emma McBride,

has previously raised the disparity in remuneration between GPs and pharmacists, in the House of Representatives (**PD** 05 Feb).

McBride told the House that, "GPs are concerned around the level of remuneration, and intuitively, pharmacists are concerned as well, particularly given that they must adhere to the same criteria and as it stands currently, for less remuneration".

COVAX transfer gets green-light

APPROVED COVID-19 vaccination (COVAX) sites will be able to share excess stock to ensure doses get to where they are needed under a new measure approved by the Federal Government.

Pharmacy Guild of Australia National President, Trent Twomey, confirmed the Guild and medical bodies had successfully lobbied to secure Government backing for "horizontal stock transfer".

Twomey described the measure as "a commonsense initiative... it's going to be a lot easier turnaround time if I can just lend some to my mate down the road, or call some in."

COVAX providers will be required to record transfers on the COVID-19 Vaccine Administration System (CVAS) to allow batches to be tracked.



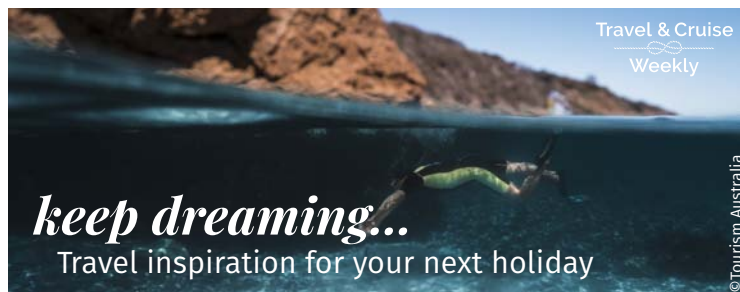
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The **Safe Vaccination Services in Community Pharmacy Program** will help frontline Pharmacy Assistants support Pharmacist Immunisers in delivering COVID-19 and other vaccines.



Rent relief for Victorian pharmacies

COMMUNITY pharmacies in Victoria that have been adversely impacted by COVID-19 may be able to access secure rent relief under a State Government program.

The Commercial Tenancy Relief Scheme launched by Victorian Minister for Small Business, Jaala Pulford, yesterday, will require landlords to provide proportional rent relief in line with a business's reduction in turnover.

To access the program, businesses must have an annual turnover of less than \$50 million and have experienced a 30% decline in turnover as a result of the pandemic.

"Victorian businesses have played a key role in the effort to keep us safe – making enormous sacrifices – and many of them are doing it really hard," Pulford said.

"As we emerge from lockdown, this is exactly the right time to

provide relief for those businesses that need extra assistance to get back on their feet.

"We're calling for good-faith negotiations between tenants and landlords, and the hardship fund will mean landlords who find reasonable common ground will be supported."

As part of the State Government's package, an \$80 million hardship fund will be established to support landlords who provide relief to eligible tenants.

Pulford also urged businesses and landlords to enter negotiations directly, with the Victorian Small Business Commission available to mediate in situations where the parties cannot reach a deal.

The scheme has come too late for one Melbourne CBD pharmacy owner, who was given two weeks' notice and evicted by her landlord in Oct 2020 (**PD** 26 Oct 2020).



However, a number of pharmacies could benefit from the scheme, with Pharmacy Guild of Australia Victorian Branch President, Anthony Tassone, telling **Pharmacy Daily** that despite being among the few businesses to be able to remain open throughout lockdowns, many pharmacies have been hit hard by the pandemic.



Dispensary Corner

WE'RE all well aware of the stimulatory impact that a morning cup of coffee can have, but it appears there's a lot more to caffeine than just that barista-induced rush.

A new study published in the *Current Biology* journal has found that caffeinated bees are much better at pollinating crops - and not just coffee trees.

Researchers at the University of Greenwich conducted several experiments which replicated previous results showing the stimulant boosted the insects' memories, meaning they remembered the location of flowers whose nectar had been doped with caffeine, and were thus better at foraging and pollinating.

However the team have now shown the impact works regardless of whether there is caffeine on or in the flowers themselves - the stimulated bees were simply better at their job overall.

A team of 86 "inexperienced bumblebees" were divided into three groups, with one exposed to a sugar solution, the second a solution also including strawberry essence, and the third with the addition of caffeine.

The results clearly indicated the impact of the stimulant, with the caffeinated creatures much more likely to seek out effective pollination targets, with faster "floral handling" and flower-visiting speeds, according to a *Guardian* report.

So clearly if you want your bees to be busier, boost their buzz with caffeine!

'We'll throw the book at them' - Hunt

FEDERAL Health Minister, Greg Hunt, is promising to take action if reports that a Sydney general practice has been charging up to \$250 for a COVID-19 vaccination are true.

A notice was posted outside the Blessed Health Care centre in Campsie in English and Chinese listing consultation fees for new Medicare or HICAPS patients.

The sign did note that "the COVID-19 vaccine medication itself is free".

The ABC reported that a GP from the clinic said it was charging a consultation fee as a private practice.

However, Minister Hunt said the Government had invested \$10 billion in the vaccine rollout

to ensure patients did not incur out-of-pocket expenses for the immunisation.

"If this story is accurate, we'll throw the book at them," he said.

"The reason why is very simple, the vaccine is free.

"The consultation for the vaccine is to be bulk billed."

Australian Associated Press reported people on temporary and bridging visas with no Medicare card had accessed doses of the Pfizer vaccine through the clinic.

MEANWHILE pharmacists have been advised that they can administer free doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine to patients who do not have a Medicare card (**PD** 29 Jul).

Know stroke risks

BLOOMS The Chemist is encouraging Australians to call into its pharmacies to have a free stroke risk assessment, as part of its National Stroke Week campaign (02 - 08 Aug).

With one stroke occurring every 19 minutes in Australia, the pharmacy network is urging patients to be cognisant of the warning signs.

Blooms Head of Pharmacy, Eric Chan, said the group is on a mission to raise awareness that strokes are largely preventable if people look after their health and check for risks.

Chan noted that "every single second counts during a stroke" highlighting the need to act fast.

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