Pharmacy Daily
Mon 8th March 2021

Today's issue of *PD*

Pharmacy Daily today has three pages of news.

Research grants

PHARMACY researchers are being invited to submit applications for grants from the Pharmacy Research Trust of NSW.

The Trust said it has a $100,000 fund, and hopes to award "a maximum of two to three grants" for projects that will have "a direct and clear benefit to the health of the population, and a clear benefit to the practice of pharmacy and pharmacists in NSW".

The Trust reported a preference for research that can be completed within 12 months of funding approval, with an interim report provided at six months.

CLICK HERE for more details.

Hunt torpedoes private COVAX fee

SUGGESTIONS that health professionals could charge patients an additional fee to administer COVID-19 vaccines (COVAX) topping up Federal Government payments are being dismissed.

Speaking after being vaccinated yesterday, Commonwealth Health Minister, Greg Hunt, shot down calls from a Melbourne-based GP to be allowed to charge patients for administering the Government-funded vaccines.

"I did have one Toorak doctor who talked to me about how much they wanted to charge patients," he said.

"We said sorry – this is bulk billed.

"This is something that we have striven for, worked for as a society.

"This is free."

Under the arrangements announced by the Government last month, eligible pharmacists working in pharmacies that have been approved as COVAX sites, will receive up to $48 per patient for administering both doses of the vaccine, while GPs will receive up to $64.90 for each patient they fully immunise (***PD*** 01 Feb).

GPs will also be able to claim an additional $10 Practice Incentive Payment.

GPs are set to join the COVAX administration campaign from 22 Mar, with close to 300 practices due to receive 400 doses each per week from that date, while a further 1,000 GP clinics will join the vaccination rollout with 100 doses each a week.

A further 3,400 practices will join the campaign on a phased basis over the following four weeks, each receiving 50 doses a week, before an estimated 2,100 pharmacies and other GP clinics become part of the program from 07 Jun.

Pharmacies interested in taking part in the program were required to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) by 19 Feb, with the Department of Health expected to issue notification by 19 Mar.

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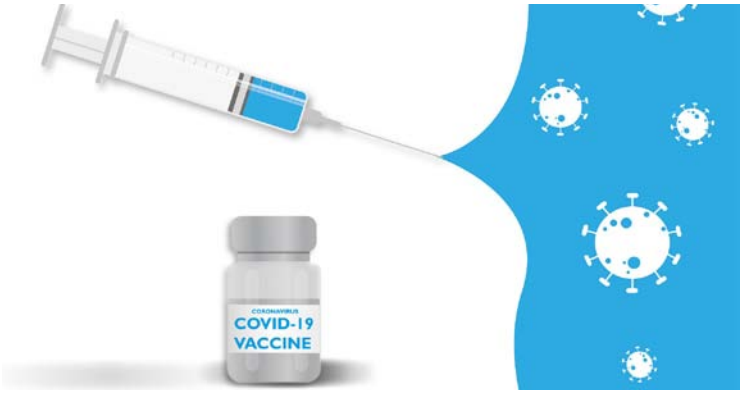
Vax harmonisation call welcomed

MOVES to harmonise State and Territory legislation and regulation to allow COVID-19 vaccinations to be administered in community pharmacies is being welcomed by the Pharmacy Guild of Australia.

Responding to the agreement by State and Territory governments to align legislation to enable pharmacists to participate in the COVID-19 vaccination program, announced after Fri's National Cabinet meeting, Guild National President, George Tambassis, said it would pave the way for a wider rollout of the vaccine campaign.

"With more than 5,900 community pharmacies spread out across Australia, there is broad accessibility for all residents to access vaccinations via this network," he said.

"Many of these pharmacies also are open extended hours and at weekends, making it even easier for communities to get their COVID-19 vaccination."



Tambassis said harmonisation of legislation and regulation also was an important step in the COVID-19 vaccination rollout.

"It is crucial that all States and Territories are on the same page in allowing the COVID-19 vaccination to be delivered in community pharmacies," he said.

"Having different laws covering different jurisdictions would only slow the rollout and potentially put Australians at risk."

In a statement issued after the National Cabinet meeting, Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, noted that the latest "efficacy data... strongly supports Australia's choice of both the rollout of the Pfizer and the AstraZeneca/Oxford vaccines".

The Prime Minister added that Commonwealth, State and Territory authorities will progressively scale up vaccination sites as increased supplies of vaccines become available.

Assistance Dogs Australia support

DISCOUNT Drug Stores is continuing its partnership with Assistance Dogs Australia, with the sponsorship of its 12th dog for the charity.

The group has raised more than $300,000 for the organisation which provides support for patients living with physical disabilities, autism spectrum disorders or post-traumatic stress, over the last 12 years.

Celebrating its ongoing support of Assistance Dogs Australia, Discount Drug Stores invited the community to name the new recruit, with Tango topping the list of more than 930 entries, as the most fitting moniker for the dog.

Discount Drug Stores Head, Partick Stoll, said the group "couldn't be happier to send Tango off on his journey to become fully trained".

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Dispensary Corner

FORGET the intrusion of a nasal swab for COVID-19 - a Dutch inventor is trialling a new "shouting booth" as an alternative way to quickly diagnose the infection.

The so-called scream test sees patients enter an airlocked cabin where they shout, scream or sing for a minute or two.

An industrial air purifier collects all of the emitted particles and then analyses them for COVID-19.

"If you have coronavirus and are infectious and yelling and screaming, you are spreading tens of thousands of particles which contain coronavirus," said the booth's creator, serial entrepreneur Peter Van Wees.

The COVID-19 scream test takes about three minutes, using a nanometre-scale device to conduct the screening.

Van Wees has partnered with a clinical trial company to collect evidence for the device's efficacy, with a prototype booth currently testing subjects adjacent to a COVID-19 testing centre in Amsterdam.

TGA fast-track COVAX

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has adopted Access Consortium guidance for fast-tracking authorisations of modified COVID-19 vaccines (COVAX) for variants.

The coalition of regulatory authorities from Australia, Canada, Singapore, Switzerland and the UK, set out information that medicines regulators would need to approve any modifications to authorise COVAX, should virus mutations make them less effective.

"According to the guidance, vaccine manufacturers would need to provide robust evidence that the modified vaccine produces an immune response, but time-consuming clinical studies that do not add to the regulatory understanding of a vaccine's safety, quality or efficacy are unlikely to be needed," the TGA said.

"This is because researchers are now better able to measure protection by looking at antibodies in the blood following vaccination, reducing the need to wait and see whether or not people in a trial become infected with the disease.

"This would significantly reduce the length of time taken for the modified vaccine to be ready for use.

"Alongside data on the immune response, the vaccine manufacturer would also be expected to provide evidence showing the modified vaccine is safe and is of the expected quality.

"In addition, data from the original robust clinical trials and the ongoing studies on real-world use in millions of people could be used to support any decision by the regulators.

"This approach is based on the tried and tested regulatory process used for seasonal flu vaccines, for which annual modifications are needed to match the strains circulating each year."

Win an Evolt 360 package

This week Pharmacy Daily & Evolt are giving away an Evolt 360 Body Composition package valued at $2500 - a high tech body composition platform that is proven to increase profitability, drive foot traffic, whilst engaging with the local community and establishing brand loyalty. To learn more click HERE. Click HERE to enter & to see last weeks winner.

How would you use the Evolt 360 scanner in store to increase sales?

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