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## No compelling staff to have COVAX

**PHARMACY** owners will not be able to compel employees to be vaccinated, but they should start discussions about having the COVID-19 vaccine with their teams, Pharmacy Guild of Australia National President, George Tambassis, says.

Speaking during a webinar hosted by the Guild on Wed night, Tambassis told proprietors it was unlikely public health orders would be made, which would allow them to require staff to be vaccinated against COVID-19.

“While the Government aims to have as many Australians as possible choose to be vaccinated, receiving the vaccination is voluntary - that’s the Government’s position,” he said.

“Much of the legal basis for workplace requirements would primarily come from the states and territories either through public health orders or work health and safety authorities.

“But also WorkSafe Australia [has] reported that given the limited information on transmissibility it did not believe the vast majority of workplaces would be expected to require



or need their workers to be vaccinated.

“Until the time that a public health order is released by the relevant authority it would be difficult for an employer to justify and lawfully direct that an employee is required to have a COVID-19 vaccination.”

Tambassis noted pharmacy staff will be eligible to receive COVID-19 vaccines from Phase 1b of the Federal Government’s rollout, which he said was imminent.

“The Guild recommends that you commence a consultation process with your staff [about the vaccination],” he said.

“Start talking to them about anticipating the voluntary vaccination program, to assist in protecting your community and

employees, especially where a pharmacy will be participating in this COVID-19 vaccination program.”

He added that with the rollout of Phase 1b set to begin on 22 Mar, the Federal Government had initially advised the Guild that pharmacy staff would receive the Pfizer-BioNTech jab, however that advice has since changed, and “pharmacists and pharmacy staff may receive the Pfizer vaccine or more likely the AstraZeneca vaccine as part of phase 1b”.

Today's issue of *PD*

*Pharmacy Daily* today features three pages of news.

### Virtual NMS

**NPS MedicineWise** will host its National Medicines Symposium (NMS) and 2021 Choosing Wisely Australia National Meeting in fully virtual formats this year, with registration opening this week for both events.

Researchers have until 22 Mar to submit abstracts.

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**References:** 1. Resolve Plus Product Information. Date of Most Recent Amendment 26 October 2018. 2. Van Cutsem JM, Thienpont D. Miconazole, a broad-spectrum antimycotic agent with antibacterial activity. *Chemotherapy* 1972;17:392-404.

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## Pharmacist's fraud gamble

TEXAN pharmacist, Mohamed Mokbel, and his accountant, Fathy Elsafty, are facing up to 10 years behind bars for their roles in a US\$134 million fraud scheme.

In a statement the US Attorney's Office, Southern District of Texas, alleged Mokbel's 4M Pharmaceuticals Inc, functioned as an outbound telemarketing call centre, with staff offering patients unnecessary treatments, and while many refused solicitations, the company billed the patients' insurers regardless.

The scheme which ran from Dec 2013 until Mar 2020, raked in more than US\$134 million, with prosecutors reporting that US\$15 million had been used to cover Mokbel's casino and gambling expenses.

## NPSA prepped for flu jab rollout

PHARMACY wholesalers are preparing to support pharmacies in meeting increased demand for influenza vaccines over the coming months.

The National Pharmaceutical Services Association (NPSA), which represents leading Community Service Obligation (CSO) wholesalers, Sigma Healthcare, Symbion, Australian Pharmaceutical Industries and National Pharmacies, said early consumer bookings and pharmacy orders were indicating a significant increase in demand for flu vaccines compared with 2020.

NPSA Chair, Richard Vincent, said the wholesalers were focused on supporting pharmacies and patients with reliable logistical support.

"Flu prevention remains a critical part of Australia's annual health program and we are pleased once again to provide first class service to pharmacy and the Australian public with reliable ordering, stocking and delivery to every



corner of the nation, backed by our experience in medicines handling and end-to-end logistics including cold chain," he said.

"We are meeting Australia's demand for early and ready access to flu shots, which will subsequently enable the pharmacy workforce to focus its capability on the COVID vaccination program.

"NPSA's long-term, sustained investment in health infrastructure and specialist teams means we

can provide the certainty needed to support Australia's 5,700 community pharmacies."

Vincent said that NPSA members had invested more than \$650 million in creating additional depth in their networks in the form of high-tech distribution centres, systems and experienced personnel, to support pharmacies.

He added that the wholesalers have assisted pharmacies throughout the COVID-19 crisis.

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## Dispensary Corner

**LOVERS** of Mexican food rejoice - you can now use your look to truly express your passion using a new burrito- and guacamole-inspired makeup range.

American cosmetic brand E.L.F. has confirmed a new collaboration with takeaway giant Chipotle Mexican Grill for the limited-edition collection.

Products include a special Chipotle Eyeshadow palette (pictured), which is complemented by Make It Hot lip gloss and an inspirational Extra Guac Face Sponge Set which - you guessed it - is in the shape of an avocado.

And you can keep all the gear in a new makeup bag which has been designed to look just like a pack of Chipotle tortilla chips.

"There is nothing tastier or prettier than the combination of burritos and makeup," according to E.L.F. Chief Marketing Officer, Kory Marchisotto.

Unfortunately Australian pharmacies wanting to ride the Mexican-themed makeup wave may be disappointed, with the products initially only launching in the USA via online stores operated by E.L.F. and Chipotle.

A previous collaboration between the brands 12 months ago sold out in four minutes.



## Extend telehealth: AMA

**CONCERNS** over potential outbreaks for new and more transmissible variants of COVID-19 are prompting calls from the Australian Medical Association (AMA) for telehealth provisions to be extended beyond 31 Mar.

AMA National President, Dr Omar Khorshid, said the organisation had written to Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, calling on the Federal Government to allow for telehealth consultations to be claimed under Medicare until the end of the year.

"The current uncertainty over the future of temporary COVID-19 Medicare telehealth items means that patients and practices can't plan consultations beyond the end of this month, even though we are still in the middle of the pandemic," he said.

"With the emergence of new and more transmissible COVID-19 variants, the community continues to live with the ever-present threat of tightened restrictions and lockdowns.

"For medical practices to be able to continue to deliver services to patients when these happen, telehealth remains an essential part of practice.

"While the level of community

transmission has been at or around zero for some months and the vaccine rollout has commenced, the pandemic is far from over and we cannot become complacent.

"We must continue to plan for the worst and ensure that continuity of care can be maintained for patients.

"Temporary Medicare telehealth items have supported the provision of care during these very difficult times and contributed to efforts to contain the spread of the virus.

"Telehealth has been embraced by doctors and the public alike.

"Telehealth remains fundamental to our national efforts to contain the spread of COVID-19 and ending the temporary arrangements in a couple of weeks would be premature.

"The telehealth arrangements also ensure that patients who are self-isolating can still access care.

"The AMA has been in discussions with the Department of Health about a long-term plan for telehealth, and we know that the Government is committed to making it a permanent feature of our health system.

"However, in the short-term, we need a telehealth framework that can operate in the context of a pandemic response."



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## AZ COVAX safe

**MEDICINES** regulators in the UK and European Union are backing the safety of the AstraZeneca/Oxford COVID-19 vaccine, after two patients died as a result of blood clots within two weeks of receiving the shot.

The European Medicines Agency and its UK counterpart have said there is no indication that the vaccine is linked to thromboembolic events.

## 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.

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