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Record start to flu vax season: Sigma

PHARMACIES across Australia are gearing up for a record-breaking influenza immunisation campaign, with wholesaler Sigma Healthcare, reporting that pre-orders are up 140% on the same time in 2020.

Sigma said it has seen its largest single week for flu vaccines ever, with its distribution centres shipping more than 150,000 doses to pharmacies across its Australia-wide network, including Amcal, Guardian and Discount Drug Stores franchisees.

The group's Chief Pharmacist, Brinley Hosking, said the surge in orders reflected a trend for vaccinations being administered earlier in the flu season.

"We're really pleased that our partners are receiving their full Mar pre-orders so quickly," she said.

"It's been an incredibly strong start to the season with pre-orders up 140% this month and total orders for the year up 60% so far.

"We are seeing a large shift

towards vaccinations moving earlier in the season, so we have also made sure that stock is available to fulfill Apr and May orders should those doses be required sooner.

"To further support our pharmacies for the busy flu season ahead, we are also ramping up a number of exclusive training sessions to enable more pharmacists to administer a variety of vaccines, including influenza and COVID-19 vaccines when available."

Sigma's announcement of the surge in flu vaccine orders comes after Pharmacy Guild of Australia Victorian Branch President, Anthony Tassone, urged pharmacists to ensure "as much of the population [as possible] is protected against the flu whilst they await eligibility and availability of the COVID-19 vaccination" (PD 17 Mar).

"With the nature of the phased rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine for priority patient groups –



the majority of the Australian population is not planned to receive the COVID-19 vaccine any time before Phase 2a/May 2021, so there is an opportunity for patients to get organised and get protected by receiving an annual influenza vaccination in the meantime," he said.

MEANWHILE, the Pharmacy Programs Administrator is due to respond to pharmacies that have applied to take part in the COVID-19 vaccination campaign later today.

Today's issue of *PD*

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

CD extended

EMERGENCY measures allowing pharmacists to supply Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme subsidised medications under Continued Dispensing (CD) without a prescription will remain until 31 Dec 2021.

The Federal Government announced the measure will remain in place "while COVID-19 continues to put pressure on our health resources".



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No reason to miss APP 2021

PHARMACISTS planning to attend this year's Australian Pharmacy Professional Conference (APP) in May can save \$120, with earlybird registration closing on Mon 29 Mar.

APP 2021 Chair, Kos Sclavos, said the event will provide education opportunities for pharmacists and pharmacy assistants to upskill and improve their businesses.

Organisers have also moved to give attendees certainty should COVID-19 restrictions prevent them from going to the Gold Coast, saying they will be able to livestream sessions or get a full refund.

APP 2021 is being run as a COVID Safe Event from 20 to 23 May.

CLICK HERE for more information about the APP program and to register.

Guild past presidents back Twomey

OUTGOING Pharmacy Guild of Australia National President, George Tambassis, and his predecessors, Kos Sclavos and John Bronger, have voiced their support for Queensland Branch President, Trent Twomey, to assume the position.

The trio of Guild leaders issued a joint statement this morning endorsing Twomey, ahead of his expected ratification as National President at a sitting of the organisation's National Council later today.

Bronger, who led the Guild from 1994 until 2005, said Twomey "will make an excellent National President of the Guild".

"Trent is an excellent manager and has great knowledge across the sector," he said.

"He's well balanced and also has a degree in economics which will no doubt help him as he manages the different businesses across the Guild.

"Trent understands community

pharmacy really well and I don't know anyone more qualified than he is to take on this important role."

Sclavos, the Guild's National President from 2005 to 2013, described Twomey as an ideal candidate to lead the organisation in the future.

"Challenging times present opportunities and to take advantage of that, you need leadership with vision and a desire to improve the health of Australians, Trent is uniquely suited to provide that leadership and he is the right person to lead the Guild as we work towards realising the full scope of practice," Sclavos said.

"No one can advocate for pharmacy better than a pharmacist, and we are lucky in Trent's case he has both the passion the skills and the enthusiasm for this role."

Tambassis, who steps down after eight years in the role, thanked Twomey for his "support and wise counsel" during his term in office.



"We have worked together very closely on many issues facing the Guild and community pharmacy both in Australia and overseas," he said.

"No words could properly express the immense appreciation I have had working with Trent whilst always having our members and their patients as a priority.

"I have enjoyed every moment of working with Trent and his whole team even in the most difficult of situations."

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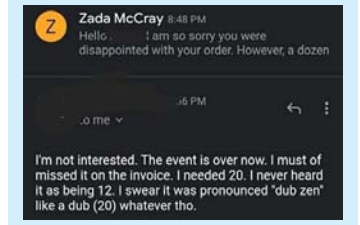
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Dispensary Corner

THERE'S clearly no such thing as bad publicity. An outraged bad review for a small US face mask supplier has led to business booming, after a complaint about an incorrect order went viral. Zada's Vault, an online shop that sells a range of products including customised face masks, received a complaint reading "wrong mask order" in which a customer wrote "Hello, I ordered a dozen custom masks from you, however you only sent me 12". "I really needed them all. I would like a refund please and I will no longer support your business. I try to support black owned businesses but you guys continue to rip people off". Zada McCray, the business owner, politely replied (pictured) noting that in fact a dozen means 12 and even offered a \$5 discount coupon for the misunderstanding. However the customer replied saying "I needed 20. I never hear of it being listed as 12. I swear it was pronounced 'dub zen' like a dub (20). Whatever tho". The crazy exchange was posted on Twitter and has been shared and commented on multiple times - leading to newfound fame and a boom in orders for the small supplier.



IR reforms likely to cause little impact

CHANGES to the *Fair Work Amendment (Supporting Australia's Jobs and Economic Recovery) Bill 2021* will have little impact on the operations of community pharmacies, a spokesperson for the Pharmacy Guild of Australia believes. The spokesperson told **Pharmacy Daily** that the elements of the Bill which passed through the Senate yesterday, with the support of One Nation Leader, Pauline Hanson, were "aligned with the recommendations made in the Guild's submission". However, the Guild noted that "the Bill is still a work in progress and has yet to be presented to the Lower House where further

amendments may be made". "The Guild will continue to advocate for measures which benefit community pharmacies and their ability to continue providing the best possible health services to their patients and communities," the spokesperson said. However, Shadow Industrial Relations (IR) Minister, Tony Burke, said the amendment deleted "every penalty for wage theft", in a tweet after Coalition Senators and Hanson voted in favour of the changes to the Bill. "They just let employers who deliberately underpay off the hook," he said. "Thanks to them there are no federal penalties for wage theft."



The passage of the legislation came after trade union group, Professional Pharmacists Australia, urged members to contact Hanson and other crossbench Senators to urge them to vote against the Government's amendments.

Regulators back AZ vax safety

EUROPEAN and British medicines regulators have reaffirmed the benefits of AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine far outweigh the risks, following reports linking it to a small number of thromboembolic events. The UK's Medicines Health Regulatory Authority said fewer than one in a million people vaccinated with the AZ shot had suffered blood clots, noting they can occur naturally. The European Medicines Agency's Pharmacovigilance Risk Assessment Committee also concluded that there was no increase in the overall risk of blood clots due to the vaccine, adding that there was no evidence of a problem relating to specific batches of the vaccine.

Pharmacies provide victim support

TASMANIAN pharmacies are joining the State Government's 'Safe from Violence' campaign, by highlighting resources for victims of family violence on repeat prescription folders. Pharmacy Guild of Australia Tasmanian Branch President, Helen O'Byrne, noted COVID-19-related restrictions had limited access to support for people who have been the victims of physical and non-physical domestic violence. "We hope that this resource can assist people to get help if they need it or provide information for friends," she said.

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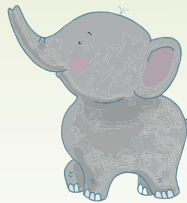


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