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Stranded pharmacist flies in supplies

FLOOD-AFFECTED residents of an aged care facility in Western Sydney will not be forced to go without critical medications after a stranded pharmacist organised for supplies to be airlifted to them.

Blooms the Chemist Windsor pharmacist, Lizzy Gripper, who has been unable to get home across the Hawkesbury River as a result of the recent flooding, worked with community organisations to arrange for a helicopter to deliver supplies to the Ron Middleton Nursing Home in Richmond.

Gripper spent several hours yesterday morning packing the essential medicines for the mercy flight to the facility.

“If they had waited until flooding subsided, it would take at least a week until they would be able to drive, which would be too long for the patients to wait,” a spokesperson said.

“Up to 80 residents are dependent on this essential flight, including one gentlemen whose



Parkinson’s medication needs to be packed and shipped within one hour to maintain medication integrity.”

MEANWHILE, NSW Health has also deployed a specialist Medical Assistance Team to the North Richmond area to provide emergency care to patients who have been cut off from hospitals as a result of the flooding.

NSW Health Deputy Secretary, Deborah Willcox, said the team is expected to be deployed for a period of seven days.

“The critical care team will be based in North Richmond and will be able to help stabilise patients, while arrangements are made for them to be transferred to an emergency department as early as possible,” she said.

Today’s issue of *PD Pharmacy Daily* today features four pages of news.

New flu vax tech

AUSTRALIAN pharmacists will be administering cell-based influenza vaccines for the first time this season.

Seqirus’s Flucelvac Quad is the first flu vaccine in Australia to use an advanced mammalian cell-culture system, breaking from the hen’s eggs traditionally used to develop vaccines.

The cell-based Flucelvac has been used in overseas markets for a number of years.



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United approach to diabetes

PHARMACISTS, doctors and allied health professionals in Western Sydney are working together as the Health Living Toongabbie group to help combat type 2 diabetes in the area.

Led by Toongabbie Discount Drug Store owner, Monica Boules, the group aims to educate and empower patients to better manage their condition, through in-person and online events.

Since launching in 2019 the group has expanded to include more than 20 health experts.



PSA QLD celebrates six of the best

THE Pharmaceutical Society of Australia's Queensland Branch marked the significant contribution the profession has made to communities across the state at its Annual Therapeutic Update last weekend.

Naming White Retail Chief Operating Officer, Bridget Totterman, as the PSA Queensland Branch's 2021 Pharmacist of the Year, Branch President, Shane MacDonald, hailed the "outstanding contribution" the profession has made to the community across the state.

"These awards highlight the incredible talent that we have across the depth and breadth of the pharmacy profession in Queensland.

"The winners have truly embodied PSA's vision for the profession [outlined in the PSA's] *Pharmacists in 2023* and have all clearly demonstrated their contribution to the profession in Queensland," he said.



"Bridget has demonstrated leadership and drive for improvement in medicine safety and medicine management systems.

"Her role has fostered rapid translation and adoption of new protocols and digital initiatives across pharmacy and general practice, clearly demonstrated during the COVID pandemic."

Branch Committee Member, Hannah Knowles, was presented with the State's Early Career Pharmacist of the Year Award, with

Griffith University graduate, Joshua Clements, taking home the Graduate of the Year title.

Pharmaceutical Defence Limited Deputy Chair, Gilbert Yeates, was named as the Branch's 2021 Lifetime Achievement Award recipient.

MacDonald also conferred PainWISE Managing Director, Joyce McSwan, and James Cook University Professor of Pharmacy, Beverley Glass, PSA Fellows during the event.

Pictured, MacDonald presenting Totterman with the Bowl of Hygieia.



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Pharmacy group raises \$15k for RFS

REGIONAL brigades from the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) are set to share in \$15,000 raised through sales of the 2021 Capital Chemist Group's community calendar.

The group, which had a dozen pharmacies affected by last year's bushfires, presented the cheque to the RFS at Capital Chemist Batehaven Pharmacy in Batemans Bay earlier this week.

The funds will be used to support six of the RFS's smaller units at Belowra, Deua River, Malua Bay, Nerrigundah, Runnyford and Wallaroos, and have been earmarked to provide GPS communications equipment and repeaters to improve communications.

Additional funds have also been made available for the RFS branch at Tinpot, in the mountains west of Narooma.

The calendar, featured images of



the NSW South Coast and photos of the heroic Malua Bay Fire Brigade, captured by photographer, Josh Burkinshaw, and was available for a gold coin donation.

Pictured, Capital Chemist Batehaven Pharmacy Partner,

Andrew White, presenting the \$15,000 cheque to representatives from the local RFS branches, with Capital Chemist Group Business Manager, Andrew Topp, and Capital Chemist Community Program Manager, Melita Flynn.

Pharmacist opioid plea

NEW York-based pharmacy, Regal Remedies, has been shut down after owner, Michael Paulsen, pleaded guilty to illegally distributing oxycodone, healthcare fraud and paying kickbacks.

Paulsen admitted to charges that he dispensed "large quantities" of oxycodone to people without prescriptions or who had used fake scripts, raking in thousands of dollars.

He also allegedly billed Medicaid and Medicare for the illegally dispensed pills, and now faces up to 14 years behind bars, the *Staten Island Advance* reported.

MedAdvisor's US expansion continues

AUSTRALIAN medtech firm, MedAdvisor, is continuing to grow in the US market, announcing the extension of a health program deal with a global pharmaceutical company for another three months.

In a statement to the Australian Securities Exchange (ASX) this morning the company said the new deal was worth US\$4.7 million on top of the previously announced five-month contract, which was valued at US\$3.4 million.

MedAdvisor CEO, Robert Read, said the company was pleased with the success of its US operations, with its state-side pipeline for 2021 tracking ahead



of last year.

"These health programs deliver tailored content specifically to the right patients based on advanced algorithms and are designed to ensure they are aware of the benefits of certain medications or vaccines," Read said.

"MedAdvisor continues to expand its global deal pipeline as it establishes scalable revenue streams both domestically and abroad."

Sanitiser warning

US-BASED online pharmacy, Valisure, is warning patients against using a list of 44 hand sanitisers, including Star Wars Mandalorian branded products, after discovering levels of carcinogen, benzene, in them.

The pharmacy has called on the US Food and Drug Administration to issue an immediate recall of the sanitisers to limit exposure to benzene.



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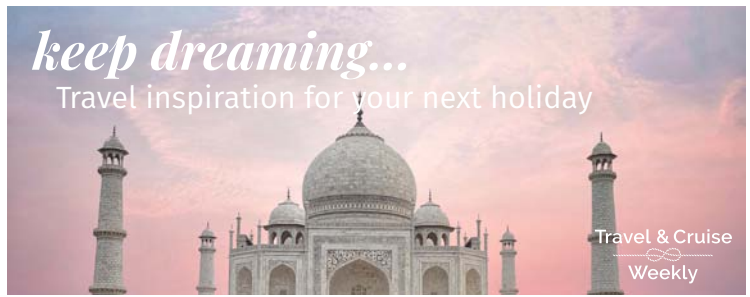


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Asthma Council backs COVAX

PATIENTS with asthma are being urged to have confidence in COVID-19 vaccines (COVAX), by the National Asthma Council Australia.

The Asthma Council has also updated the Australian Asthma Handbook with advice for patients and pharmacists about the COVAX rollout.

Asthma Council Guideline Committee Chair, Professor Nick Zwar, called on health professionals to reassure patients with asthma that their condition would not prevent them from having the vaccine or increase their risk of adverse reactions.

"We are encouraging Australians with asthma to get the COVID-19 vaccine from their GP as soon as it is available," he said.

The update also touches on the use of monoclonal antibody therapies for asthma which do not interfere with COVID-19 vaccines and reiterates that nebulisers should not be used to administer inhaled medicines, unless unavoidable.

ANZCA out of touch

CALLS for doctors not to prescribe medicinal cannabis products for patients living with chronic non-cancer pain, issued by the Faculty of Pain Medicine of the Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists (ANZCA) are "behind the times", an industry leader believes.

Responding to the ANZCA's statement saying there was a lack of evidence to endorse the use of medicinal cannabis, MedReleaf Australia Co-Founder, Nathan Davis, said an "unofficial observational study" had demonstrated the safety and efficacy of the products.

"Patients who have been and are suffering are heading in droves to the caring GPs and specialists (including pain specialists) across Australia, to access medical cannabis," Davis said.

"There have been over 100,000 approvals provided for scripts and the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has approved this medicine for over 200 medical conditions, with the majority prescribed for chronic pain, but also anxiety, insomnia and epilepsy.

"The fact that the TGA has provided pathways for any GP to

prescribe for all of these conditions is an indication of product safety and a clear understanding of the prevailing attitudes of patients.

"It will take many years to construct clinical trials for a plant medicine that contains over 100 cannabinoids, all that act on the existing endocannabinoid system that all of us have.

"Most people who suffer from or have loved ones suffering from pain would much prefer the use of a safe and effective product with minimal side effects, rather than an opioid, with all of the associated serious adverse effects, a drug class commonly prescribed first line by specialists for the management of chronic pain.

"Of course, opioids and a range of other modalities do have a place in therapy for chronic pain but to denigrate this new medicine and the common sense of patients who have experienced the benefits of this medicine in this way is unhelpful.

"The intent by the ANZCA is behind the times and somewhat out of touch."

CLICK HERE to read the ANZCA statement.



Dispensary Corner

DON'T believe everything you read about miracle cures for COVID-19, US pharmacist Suzy Cohen warns in her 'Ask the Pharmacist' column for *USA Today*.

Throughout the pandemic would-be "health experts" - not all named Donald Trump - have spread inaccurate information about products from hydroxychloroquine to elderberries.

"People are going to die because some health experts are irresponsible and have misinterpreted a scientific article from 19 years ago," she said.

"I'm not naming names, but these people are now posting very poor "advice" over the internet.

"Sadly, the misinformation is going as viral as the virus itself.

"You cannot and should not believe everything you read online, even if it's from a practitioner (even some famous ones) because not everyone has the gift of accurately interpreting medical data.

"That's actually very hard to do.

"Go onto the website *PubMed* and you'll see what I mean.

"Interpreting data requires a specific understanding of vitamins, enzymes, medications, genes, and metabolic pathways in your body."



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ODTP review

THE Department of Health has announced it will conduct a post-market review of medicine available under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) Opiate Dependence Treatment Program (ODTP), including consideration of patient access and affordability.

The review will be considered by the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee.