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References: 1. Howell AB, et al. BMC Infect Dis. 2010;10:94. 2. Jepson RG, et al. Cochrane database of systematic reviews. 2012(10).

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Let super-sub play role

VICTORIAN politicians are being urged to let pharmacies “off the bench” to support efforts to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic as the State enters a seven-day lockdown.

Pharmacy Guild of Australia Victorian Branch President, Anthony Tassone, said community pharmacies would be an essential service that will remain open as the State battles with its latest COVID outbreak.

He urged the Victorian Government to let pharmacists play an active role in administering vaccines.

“It’s a travesty that community pharmacies stand ready on the sidelines watching the game unfold before them and have been held back from taking the field by the Victorian Government to help the team get the job done,” Tassone said.

“Over 800 community pharmacies [in Victoria] have been deemed ‘suitable’ by the Commonwealth Department of Health through the expression of interest process to participate in the Australian Government COVID-19 vaccination program.

“That’s over 800 COVID-19 vaccination clinics sitting idle none the wiser when they can help protect their patients and communities as we enter another seven-day lockdown.

“The time has well and truly come, we’re almost in overtime in the game, let the super-sub off the bench and onto the field – State and Territory Governments must activate pharmacies now for the COVID-19 vaccine program.”

The State-wide lockdown will come into force from midnight tonight.

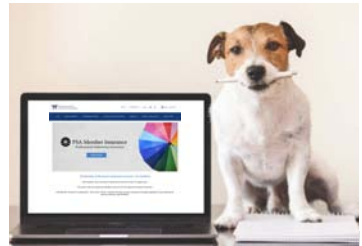
Ellura support

FLORDIS is today highlighting Ellura, its clinically researched cranberry product which helps reduce the occurrence of medically diagnosed cystitis. See the **cover page** for more.

Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features three pages of news, a **cover page** from **Flordis**, and full pages from:


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Guild awaits RAP endorsement

THE Pharmacy Guild of Australia is finalising its first national Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), with plans to launch it once it has been endorsed by Reconciliation Australia.

National President, Trent Twomey, said the RAP was being developed in consultation with stakeholders and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples.

“Reconciliation is all about action and our plan will detail the very real and positive actions our member pharmacies can take towards reconciliation,” he said.

“This is just one example of how reconciliation must work in a very real sense.”

Guild needs to make biosimilar push

PHARMACY leaders are being urged to “tread the halls” of Parliament House to educate politicians and bureaucrats about the benefits of biosimilars, former Commonwealth Department of Health Secretary, Jane Halton (pictured), believes.

The Generic and Biosimilar Medicines Association (GBMA) Independent Chair, told delegates at the Australian Pharmacy Professional Conference (APP) that she was “genuinely concerned and very worried” about the lack of understanding of biosimilar medications in the halls of power.

“It concerns me that people have become very inward focused,” Halton said.

“They’re very focused on just process and they’re not curious, and in the absence of curiosity the problem is your knowledge remains

very fixed, and you don’t see the challenge and opportunity.

“I don’t think there’s an easy fix for this... it does require a high level of engagement and advocacy on your behalf.

“The messages you want to share are not just about pharmacy specifically, they’re also about medicines, they’re about the opportunities that there are for Australia and Australian patients.”

Halton also expressed concerns over the public’s health literacy.

“One thing I worry about and we’re seeing at the moment is patients pick up on things in the media, and they worry,” she said.

“Your leadership does need to regularly tread the halls and go and sit in those conference rooms in the ‘serious building’ [Parliament House].

“We need to be out talking more



about what [biosimilars] are and why they’re important.

“Biosimilars are absolutely the coming thing, and we need to talk about this, and sadly not just to the public and your patients, but also to Government.”

Brunswick pharmacy added to watchlist

PATIENTS who visited Priceline Pharmacy Barkly Square, Brunswick, on 22 May, are being told to get tested for COVID-19 and wait until they have a negative result.

Victorian health officials added the pharmacy to the State’s watchlist yesterday, after it emerged that a person who tested positive for the virus visited the Barkly Square shopping centre on Sat between 1.15 and 2.30pm.

Barkly Square has been assessed as a Tier 2 location with



authorities noting the individual “walked around the centre and into some shops with limited purchases”.

To date five pharmacies have been listed as Tier 2 exposure sites.

PSA Refresher staying onshore in 2021

THE Pharmaceutical Society of Australia’s (PSA’s) annual Refresher Conference will break with tradition and remain onshore in 2021.

The event will take place in Darwin from 01 to 07 Sep, with former PSA National President, Warwick Plunkett, noting the Northern Territory capital came “closest to meeting our requirements for an interesting, different and exotic destination, albeit not quite ‘offshore’”.

Pre- and post-conference

tours will offer delegates the opportunity to experience the NT’s unique combination of tangible and spiritual elements, travelling to Kakadu, Katherine and Litchfield national parks, as well as the Red Centre.

The program’s educational sessions will provide therapeutic updates, and business insights from Queensland University of Technology Adjunct Professor of Pharmacy Management, Bruce Annabel.

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Goalposts keep moving on COVAX

PHARMACISTS are ready and waiting to join the COVID-19 vaccination (COVAX) campaign, but “the goalposts keep moving”, regional Victorian pharmacy owner, Taren Gill, told *ABC Victoria’s Conversation Hour*.

Gill noted community pharmacies had been advised that they would join the national immunisation efforts in May or Jun, adding “now we just don’t know”.

“My team of pharmacists here in Maryborough - and I know my colleagues around the State and country - have done our training and we’re still waiting for the green light,” she said.

“There is a ready workforce in pharmacy who are happy to help [with the vaccination effort].” Gill welcomed the Therapeutic

Goods Administration’s (TGA’s) decision to approve more flexible storage arrangements for the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine (**PD 24** May).

“The big gamechanger for a successful rollout is the fact that we can now have the vaccine - the Pfizer one - stored in the normal 2-8°C vaccine fridge that every pharmacy has, making it even easier [to store],” she said.

The Maryborough pharmacist added that she had seen “a lot of hesitancy” around the vaccine, but said the recent outbreak in Melbourne news that exposure sites have been identified in nearby Bendigo could encourage patients to get vaccinated.

“I think the message is clear from health professionals, and it’s a



single message that the best thing we can do is to get vaccinated and have that community immunity,” she said.

“It’s unfortunate that we have a cluster so close to home, but hopefully it does promote the idea that this is an important thing, and we may live regionally, but we’re not really too far away from the action.”



SNIFFER dogs could soon be out of work, with ferrets proving their noses are just as sensitive in picking up scents during a recent trial in the US.

Researchers from Colorado State University found domesticated male ferrets could identify the whiff of avian influenza from a quick sniff of duck poo.

In a paper published in *PLOS One*, the authors said the ferrets were 90% accurate at picking up the virus, even when they were given multiple samples of duck excrement infected with other viruses, delivering a near-instant response.

“You find out in one minute as opposed to getting a sample, sending it to a lab and then getting results a couple of days later,” they said.

While the authors were confident in ferrets’ abilities to identify other diseases, they warned that the mustelids were too distractible to become part of a GP’s diagnostic arsenal.



COVAX storage

THE Pharmacy Registration Board of WA has published a memorandum detailing requirements for pharmacy storage of COVID-19 vaccines.

Pharmacies approved to participate in the rollout must have a dedicated area where vaccines from multi-dose vials may be drawn up, and the vaccines may be stored outside the dispensary area, subject to certain conditions - see pharmacyboardwa.com.au.

GP costs block access to care: McBride

RISING out-of-pocket expenses are becoming a barrier for patients seeking access to primary care, Labor Shadow Assistant Minister for Mental Health, Emma McBride, warns.

The pharmacist-turned Federal MP, told the House of Representatives that the average out-of-pocket cost of visiting a GP has increased by close to 30% in the last eight years.

Highlighting the issue impacting her NSW Central

Coast constituency of Dobell, she quoted a letter published in the *Coast Community Chronicle* yesterday, in which a patient said her regular GP clinic forced her to have a telehealth appointment.

The woman was then charged a \$20 “gap” fee, and an additional \$50 charge, with no Medicare rebate, because she “hadn’t been into the actual centre for a year”.

The patient was then given a script for antibiotics, which the GP said “probably wouldn’t work”.

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