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Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today
features four pages of news.

Parkinson's CBD?

NEW research in an animal model highlighted by Bod Pharmaceuticals has shown a potential therapeutic effect for cannabidiol for treating symptoms and progression of Parkinson's disease - see the research article at mdpi.com.



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Hold off on third jabs: PPA

THE Pharmacy Programs Administrator (PPA) has advised pharmacies not to administer any third doses of COVID-19 vaccines, after an update from Health Minister Greg Hunt on Fri that severely immunocompromised Australians will be able to receive a supplementary immunisation.

"We've received advice from ATAGI, the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation, recommending that boosters, or third shots, be made available for the immunocompromised," the Minister said.

"And so we'll move to do that from Monday," Hunt added.

The cohort covered by the booster program is expected to number about 500,000 nationally.

The decision saw the PPA issue a notice confirming that "the National COVID Vaccine Taskforce is currently finalising arrangements for reimbursement of third doses to community pharmacies," while also noting that the number of presentations is likely to be low.

Further advice will be provided this week, with the PPA saying "it is therefore important that community pharmacies do not administer third doses at this



stage...the Pharmacy Programs Administrator will keep you up to date with any developments in this regard".

Hunt said further advice was expected from ATAGI before the end of the month, in relation to a possible general population stage of the booster program.

Chief Health Officer Paul Kelly said the ATAGI recommendation was that booster shots be an mRNA-based vaccine, i.e. either Pfizer or Moderna as a general principle.

The recommended interval for the third dose is two to six months after the second dose of the vaccine.

Australians who are mildly to moderately immunocompromised are not currently being recommended by ATAGI to have a third dose at this stage.

Guild, College "at odds" over tobacco?

THE Pharmacy Guild of Australia has restated its opposition to tobacco companies being involved in the training of pharmacists, after it emerged that the publication of an article by Australasian College of Pharmacy chief pharmacist Brett MacFarlane was "supported by an unrestricted educational grant from Philip Morris International".

The contentious publication, which was distributed via email

by the *Australian Journal of Pharmacy*, was highlighted today by pharmaceutical industry newsletter *BioPharmaDispatch*.

The article, titled "Changes to the prescribing and supply of Nicotine Vaping Products (NVPs) in Australia" was sent on 06 Oct.

BioPharmaDispatch noted that as well as making tobacco products, Philip Morris is one of the world's leading providers of nicotine e-cigarettes.

US pharmacist shot by brother

A MAN in the US state of Maryland has been arrested on suspicion of killing his pharmacist brother after confronting him about "the government poisoning people with COVID vaccines".

Court documents also allege he killed his sister-in-law and another woman during his anti-vaccination rampage.



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AbbVie under fire for Humira letters

PHARMACISTS have raised concerns about pro-forma letters from specialists prescribing adalimumab, which they say have been inappropriately provided by the drug's originator AbbVie instructing them to only dispense Humira, the branded version of the biological medication.

A report in *The Australian* on Sat cited several pharmacists confirming receipt of the "rubber stamp" letters which order dispensing of Humira rather than its cheaper, PBS-listed biosimilars.

The letter sent by some specialist rheumatologists, gastroenterologists and public hospital clinics, states "based on my clinical judgement and in consultation with my patient, I have prescribed Humira (adalimumab)".

"I have determined that brand substitution is not clinically appropriate for my patient, and they should be treated with the Humira brand of the medication.

"No other brand of adalimumab may be dispensed in place of



Humira," the pro forma letter states.

Pharmacists quoted in the article include Newcastle-based Fady Rahmy and Queensland pharmacist Adam Rodger, who criticised the letters as "forms and templates for people to act in the drug company's best interest".

"How can that be the doctor's exact professional opinion when it's been written by someone else?" Rodgers asked.

AbbVie confirmed it had supplied collateral to specialists to help

support their decision to request the branded medication, and said this was common practice.

"AbbVie supports the ability for doctors to determine, in consultation with patients, which brand of medicine is prescribed and subsequently dispensed and as part of our commitment to Quality Use of Medicines, we provide relevant information and resources to healthcare professionals to be used solely at their discretion," a company spokesperson said.

UK Calci-D downschedule

BRITAIN'S Medicines and Healthcare Products regulatory Agency (MHRA) has approved the sale of Calci-D 1000mg/1000IU tablets for sale without a prescription.

The reclassification, made pursuant to a proposal from the product's sponsor Consilient Health Limited, makes the product a pharmacy (P) medicine, under conditions including that the product be available as a 28-tablet pack and with the indication that it is to be used to correct calcium and vitamin D deficiency in elderly patients with a one tablet daily dose.

Calci-D was first approved as a prescription-only medicine in the UK in 2015.

The down-scheduling makes it the first non-prescription medicine to contain 1000 IU of Vitamin D in the UK, with each chewable tablet containing 2500mg of calcium carbonate and 1000 IU of cholecalciferol (vitamin D3).

The MHRA said the daily dose of vitamin D contained in the tablets was "only marginally more" than similar products which are already available as pharmacy medicines.

"The availability Calci-D chewable tablets which contains a slightly higher dose of vitamin D is not considered to increase the risk of indirect danger," the regulator's evaluation concluded.

Starpharma's Viraleze set for Italy sales

ASX-LISTED Starpharma has announced a sales and distribution agreement for its Viraleze antiviral nasal spray with Admenta Italia Group.

The pact will see Viraleze become available to Italian consumers in the coming months via Admenta's LloydsFarmacia chain which comprises 260 pharmacies across the country.

Admenta is also the Italian

holding company of US-based McKesson Corporation.

Viraleze is currently registered in Europe and India and is also sold direct to consumers online in some other markets.

Starpharma was recently fined for allegedly promoting the use and supply of Viraleze in Australia without it being entered on the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods (PD 05 Jul).

EU e-trial rollout

THE European Medicines Agency has published a new "go-live planning document" detailing key milestones in the planned rollout of the Clinical Trial Information System (CTIS) scheduled for early next year.

CTIS will provide for online clinical trial safety reporting and monitoring, with EU member states able to access the information via an API.

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API ventures into the Google Cloud

AUSTRALIAN Pharmaceutical Industries (API) has announced a partnership with Google Cloud, as part of the acceleration of the company's digital transformation strategy.

The initiative promises to "leverage data and machine learning to deepen customer engagement," with API to use a host of Google solutions within its retail pharmacy business to build an end-to-end view of its customers ranging from e-commerce through to the web, mobile apps and API digital health services.

API Chief Transformation Officer, Dean Matthews, said "our customers are at the heart of our digital strategy".

"Priceline's Sister Club is Australia's fifth largest loyalty program with more than 7.34 million members across the country, and we see huge potential in leveraging the platform to curate even more relevant and personalised experiences for our discerning customer base, driven by their shopping preferences and purchase history," he said.

"Using Google's AI solutions will allow us to adapt to real-time customer behaviour and changes



in variables, like pricing and special offers," Matthews added.

"Understanding buyer behaviour and translating that into actionable insights is critical to our digital strategy, and Google has long been a pioneer in this space.

"Our vision is to build more value-based, long-term relationships with our customers, and with Google Cloud we have an innovation partner with a proven track record of success and expertise to drive more intelligent, data-driven experiences and build stronger brand loyalty," he said.

API earlier this year announced

a partnership with Roy Morgan to utilise its Helix Personas customer segmentation tool to facilitate a more personalised experience for Priceline customers (**PD** 17 Aug).

The new Google Cloud pact has seen the creation of a single 'Digital Customer Hub' which integrates API's existing loyalty, e-commerce and customer data platforms.

Google's Recommendations AI architecture will "deliver curated recommendations across company touchpoints," with the significant IT project overseen by Melbourne-based managed services provider Riley Solutions.

ACT pill testing pilot scheme

THE Pharmaceutical Society of Australia has welcomed a six-month trial of a fixed-site pill testing service by the ACT Government, with PSA ACT Branch President Renae Beardmore saying the move confirms the administration's commitment to harm minimisation.

The proposed service will provide analysis of the content of illicit drugs, warning users about unknown and potentially lethal contaminants.

"PSA considers pill testing and drug checking to be consistent with the principles of harm reduction and supports further trials to inform the role of pill testing and drug checking within Australia," the Society said.

"PSA believes that these trials should occur both at music festivals and also within or near other environments where illicit drug use occurs."

Beardmore noted that pill testing had already been trialled in Canberra at the 2018 and 2019 Groovin' the Moo festivals, where patrons were able to dispose of dangerous drugs in amnesty bins.

"As medicine safety experts, pharmacists can have a key role in this intervention.

"Law enforcement by itself does not stop people from dying, and in some cases can exacerbate outcomes from drug consumption - but pill testing, as a supplementary strategy, can.

"PSA looks forward to providing support to ACT Health in rolling out this initiative," Ms Beardmore said.

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Tocilizumab alert

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration, in collaboration with Roche Products Pty Limited, has advised wholesalers to constrain supply of subcutaneous tocilizumab to "usual purchasing history," in light of extremely limited stock due to a significant increase in global demand arising from its use in treating critically ill COVID-19 patients.

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Dispensary Corner

CONCERNS about climate change have led the US city of Phoenix, Arizona to appoint a new Chief Heat Officer, in the hope of saving lives and improving health despite the warming nearby desert.

David Hondula, an environmental scientist from Arizona State University, will work full-time to coordinate heat reduction strategies as director of the first US publicly-funded office of heat response and mitigation.

Proposed changes to make the city cooler include the installation of shade structures, tree planting and even adding lighter-coloured surfaces to streets and rooftops.

In 2020 excessively warm weather killed 191 people in Phoenix, with local mayor Kate Gallego saying "heat is an issue we have to get right".

AND while we're on the subject of big environmental changes, researchers believe the earth is actually becoming dimmer.

Scientists from the Big Bear Solar Observatory have been taking measurements every night for the last 20 years, and say the results indicate declining cloud cover means our world has been dimming at a noticeable pace.

They measure the so-called "earthshine" on the moon, with the biggest decrease in clouds over the coasts of North and South America, where sea surface temperatures have been rising due to a condition called the Pacific Decadal Oscillation.

SHPA: agents of change

PHARMACISTS and pharmacy technicians can be "powerful agents of change," according to the Society of Hospital Pharmacists (SHPA), which has showcased key characteristics of the profession in the latest issue of its *Pharmacy GRIT* journal.

SHPA CEO Kristin Michaels said pharmacists typically have a "patient and forensic mind," making them uniquely capable of delving into the intricacies of complex systems to find a better way forward.

"Long accustomed to delivering in busy and cost-constrained environments, hospital pharmacists and their peers are conditioned to navigating complex processes, protocols and hierarchies to achieve what they need for the people in their care," she said.

"In the latest issue of *Pharmacy GRIT* we celebrate members of the profession as progressive scrutineers, paradoxically finding the divine in the detail."

Issue highlights include SHPA members collaborating with a US-based "improvement science advisor" to articulate how pharmacists are suited to driving change, not just in medicines management but across the entire health care sector.

Members of SHPA's Cardiology Leadership Committee also appear in the publication, in a feature on parents tackling leadership of pharmacy disciplines while juggling home life in the virtual space.

An article on the possibilities and limits of standardisation canvasses the issue with contributions from pharmacists across the country, while "The Overdose Detective" showcases pharmacists' skills as problem solvers through a suspected polypharmacy case.

"SHPA is proud to showcase our members' expertise and provide open access to *Pharmacy GRIT* for healthcare professionals nationwide," Michaels said - to read the issue **CLICK HERE**.



Weekly Comment

Welcome to *Pharmacy Daily's* weekly comment feature. This week's contributor is **Amit Saha, MPS group technical manager, LaCorium Health**.



Science of hair loss

IT IS a known fact that 40% of men will have noticeable hair loss by age 35. This number reaches 65% by 60 years of age. Women are also deeply impacted by such processes: 50 - 75% suffer noticeable hair loss by age 65.

Hair goes through a natural cycle, transitioning between growing, dying and falling out and growing again. This cycle repeats itself over the years but when suffering from hair loss, the dying and falling out phase becomes longer and transitioning back to the growing phase becomes more difficult.

The root cause of this issue is the fact that hair follicle stem cells (called ORSc) located in the bulge along the hair, are less productive, affecting their ability to support hair follicle growth.

But there is hope in combating hair loss. Vitamins and minerals are important for normal cell growth. There are also hair stimulants such as caffeine that can contribute towards stimulating hair growth.

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