

Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features three pages of news plus a full page from **Dispense Assist**.

Need a hand?

DISPENSE Assist is today showcasing its team of on-demand dispensers who can connect into any pharmacy's dispensary workstations securely to help manage surges in demand.

A range of packages are available offering rates as low as \$4.62 per hour, with the company promising to save as much as \$100,000 on a single employee.

See **page four** for details.

Elmiron advisory

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration has announced an additional warning about pigmentary maculopathy to the Product Information and Consumer Medicine Information for pentosan polysulfate sodium (Elmiron).

The medication is used to treat bladder pain syndrome (interstitial cystitis), with the update following reports in overseas medical literature of rare cases of changes in the retina of the eye associated with its use, particularly after long-term therapy.

There have been no adverse event reports in Australia.

College discontinues Philip Morris deal

THE Australasian College of Pharmacy (ACP) has confirmed the suspension of its arrangement with cigarette manufacturer Philip Morris (**PD** yesterday) to "allay any further concerns about its probity".

The issue was highlighted after the *Australian Journal of Pharmacy* distributed an educational article about the prescribing of Nicotine Vaping Products (NVPs) which noted the support of the global tobacco giant.

An update posted on the College website in response to the controversy said the publication of the article was "in line with our regular practice to help members and others in the pharmacy industry understand what a TGA-directed change means for community pharmacies," after vaping products became prescription-only from the start of this month.

"The article objectively and factually summarised the essential information for pharmacists about the NVP regulations," the College update insisted, but acknowledged that the brief reference to the support from Philip Morris had raised some concerns.

"It is common for large multinational companies to provide unconditional grants for academic activities that relate to their products and services.

"Such arrangements with objective third parties facilitate awareness of the products or services and their additional uses and implications beyond the company's promotional and compliance messaging," ACP said.



NEW

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For use when iron deficiency or iron deficiency anaemia has been diagnosed by your doctor and a therapeutic iron supplement is recommended. Always read the label. Follow the directions for use. If symptoms persist, worsen or change unexpectedly, talk to your health professional. *Vitamin C has been shown to enhance the absorption of iron when taken together.





"ACP viewed the offer of an unrestricted educational grant from Philip Morris as an opportunity to keep members informed about the changing regulatory frameworks for this preventative health approach, in the spirit of open conversations with pharmacists, doctors and suppliers about the products that doctors prescribe for pharmacists to dispense," the College added.

The funding was intended to help support a research dissemination project focusing on education about smoking cessation, "not individual products," ACP said.

The project would be "underpinned by a robust, non-biased, evidence-based academic process...ACP had carefully considered the offer to support NVP-related educational activities and ensured the grant would be entirely unconditional and in the interest of members needing to understand the changes".

The College noted that no logos or input from Philip Morris would be incorporated into any material, and the cigarette and vaping products maker could not promote its involvement with the project.

College CEO Dimitri Kopanakis said the article by ACP Chief Pharmacist Brett MacFarlane had been scheduled to be published close to when the changes became effective on 01 Oct.

"We can confirm that no financial transactions had occurred by that date, or at all," Kopanakis added.

The Australasian College of Pharmacy is listed as a subsidiary of the Queensland Branch of the Pharmacy Guild of Australia in a Guild organisational chart.

Yesterday a spokesperson from the Guild's National Office told **PD** the organisation had "restated it is opposed to any tobacco company being involved in the training of pharmacists".

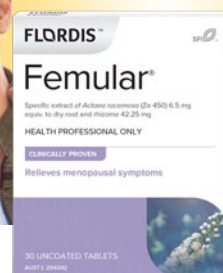
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SFI
HEALTH



Priceline class action lodged in court

LONG-RUNNING threats of imminent class action by several Priceline Pharmacy franchisees came to fruition yesterday, with parent company Australian Pharmaceutical Industries (API) confirming a case had been lodged in the Victorian Supreme Court (**PD** breaking news).

The company said it would “vigorously defend the action,” which was first flagged almost 18 months ago by Sydney law firm Levitt Robinson (**PD** 06 May 2020).

A website operated by Class PR, a public relations company owned by persons related to the senior partner of Levitt Robinson, has urged other Priceline franchisees to opt into the claim, which is for “restitutionary damages” in the case API has found to have been “unjustly enriched”.

Levitt Robinson says the action aims to “add value to the investment made by current franchisees,” claiming the current agreements contain provisions that may breach the current legislative



framework which governs pharmacies in various states.

API issued a statement in response to the lodgement yesterday, saying that it “remains focused on supporting Priceline Pharmacy franchisees through these difficult COVID-19 times, so that they can fully play their role in the distribution of vital medicines and the COVID-19 vaccine and serve their communities during and beyond the pandemic”.

“Given the matters alleged by the plaintiffs are now before a Court, it would be inappropriate for API to comment further,” the firm said.

It’s understood there are currently more than 365 Priceline franchisees across the country.

It’s unclear how many are participating in the class action, with the lawyer leading the charge, Stewart Levitt, claiming earlier this year that at least 30 current and former franchisees would be involved (**PD** 16 Jul).

The lead plaintiff is Chris Lemon, who in Jul was reported in the *Australian Financial Review* as being pursued by API in a civil action over \$2.1 million owed following the sale of two Priceline Pharmacy stores in 2019.

API flags stronger 2020/21 result

AUSTRALIAN Pharmaceutical Industries (API) yesterday announced it expected to exceed the profit guidance it provided in Jul, with an earnings uplift coming despite the broadening of COVID-19 lockdown restrictions.

The company said its reported earnings before interest and tax would be about \$28 million for the full year ending 31 Aug 2021, underpinned by an underlying result of about \$70 million.

“API recorded a stronger trading performance through our suburban and regional Priceline Pharmacies, as well as online,” said CEO and MD Richard Vincent.

“We also experienced elevated volumes through our Pharmacy Distribution business that we were not anticipating,” he added.

API noted that the previously announced sale of its NZ-based manufacturing plant is now expected to occur in the first quarter of the 2022 financial year, and Vincent also revealed that it was moving the planned date of its FY21 full year results announcement to 28 Oct.

The company is currently at the centre of a three-way takeover battle, with both Sigma Pharmaceuticals and Wesfarmers throwing their hats in the ring - and Wesfarmers last week confirming a 19.3% API stake.

Blackmores launches new campaign

BLACKMORES has released its first overarching brand campaign since 2017, with the move said to “symbolise the transformation and new strategy of the company” under the leadership of CEO and MD Alastair Symington.

With the tag line “Good Health Changes Everything” the new positioning is based on the premise that good health unlocks our ability to experience the best

that life has to offer.

Blackmores Group Chief Marketing and Innovation Officer, Joanne Smith, said the campaign aimed to tap into research which found a strong desire from people to achieve a naturally healthy life and have greater control over their wellbeing.

The campaign includes a TV ad which first aired on Sun, and can be viewed online at pharmacydaily.com.au/videos.

Prescriber out

THE Oct 2021 edition of NPS MedicineWise’s *Australian Prescriber* has been released (**CLICK HERE**), with key topics covered including oral health in older people, hypertension in pregnancy and fluoroquinolone safety.

An NPS update today also highlighted GSK’s Xevudy (sovorimab), a monoclonal antibody provisionally approved for COVID-19 treatment.

DRAW THE LINE... when it comes to Cold and Flu relief



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www.apohealth.com.au



Dispensary Corner

AUSTRALIA is one of several countries which have ordered stocks of novel oral antiviral molnupiravir, which earlier this month was announced by Merck as having significantly reduced the risk of hospitalisation or death from COVID-19.

Great hopes are being placed in the investigational drug, which has not yet been approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration - not least because it has been named after the mythical hammer wielded by Norse god Thor.

Made famous by the Marvel comics and more recently its suite of movies, Thor is the God of Thunder, and a founding member of the Avengers.

The drug was named with the assistance of Kaleio Inc, a global branding consultancy, with a spokesperson confirming that "the primary creative direction was to construct a name that evoked the power of Thor's hammer - named Mjöllnir," because the inventors wanted "something that carried the idea of potency".

"A variety of names alluding to Mjöllnir were ultimately proposed for consideration as the official nonproprietary (generic) designation for MK-4482/EIDD-2801 and in the end molnupiravir was selected," the branding agency said.

Merck will shortly submit an application for Emergency Use Authorisation for molnupiravir with the US Food and Drug Administration, in the hope the medication will deal a lethal hammer-blow to COVID-19.

TGA probes ivermectin scripts

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has confirmed it is looking into a "very small number of concerns" relating to GPs providing prescriptions for non-evidence based COVID-19 treatments.

The *Herald Sun* highlighted the issue last week, noting that six "cease and desist" letters had been sent to Australian medical clinics which advertised ivermectin for the treatment of coronavirus infection.

The report confirmed there had been a fourfold increase in prescriptions for ivermectin during the pandemic, with GPs banned from off-label prescribing.

Last month (**PD** 13 Sep) the TGA ordered that the medication be only allowed to be prescribed by general practitioners for scabies and certain parasitic infections, while certain specialists including dermatologists, gastroenterologists, hepatologists and infectious disease physicians can prescribe it for other unapproved conditions if they believe it is appropriate for a



particular patient.

The newspaper also cited Australian Border Force figures indicating a surge in illegal importation of alleged COVID-19 remedies including ephedra, ivermectin and hydroxychloroquine.

The Australian Veterinary Association has cited strong concerns about people self-dosing ivermectin, particularly in preparations for large animals, while there have also been reports from pharmacists of patients presenting with scripts for the drug without disclosing what they are taking it for.



Guild Update

Joining the vaccination effort

OVER 3,600 community pharmacies have now joined Australia's COVID vaccination effort and the number continues to climb. Already total COVID vaccinations administered by pharmacists have passed one million.

Addressing a webinar hosted by the Pharmacy Guild, TGA head Adjunct Professor John Skerritt said the power of vaccinations shows in the sharp cut to deaths from COVID cases in 2021 to about one-sixth the rate in 2020.

He underlined the contribution by pharmacists to this sharp cut in the rate of fatalities.

Fully vaccinated Australians account for only one per cent of intensive care admissions.

Pharmacy Guild National President and webinar host, Trent Twomey, said the Guild's marketing campaign was delivering bookings and addressing vaccine hesitancy.

He said 45% of Australians using the findapharmacy.com.au website to start the booking process completed that process, a notably high "conversion" rate.

Win with Crampeze

Crampeze and Pharmacy Daily are this week giving away a \$50 woolworths gift card each day.

Crampeze is an effective multi-combination solution vs. magnesium alone for cramp relief. For chronic cramp sufferers, ideal for long term use.

Contains Viburnum Opulus (Cramp Bark), an antispasmodic traditionally used in western herbal medicine to help relieve muscle cramps, mild muscle spasms & twitches. To learn more, [CLICK HERE](#).



Name two symptoms of muscle cramps?

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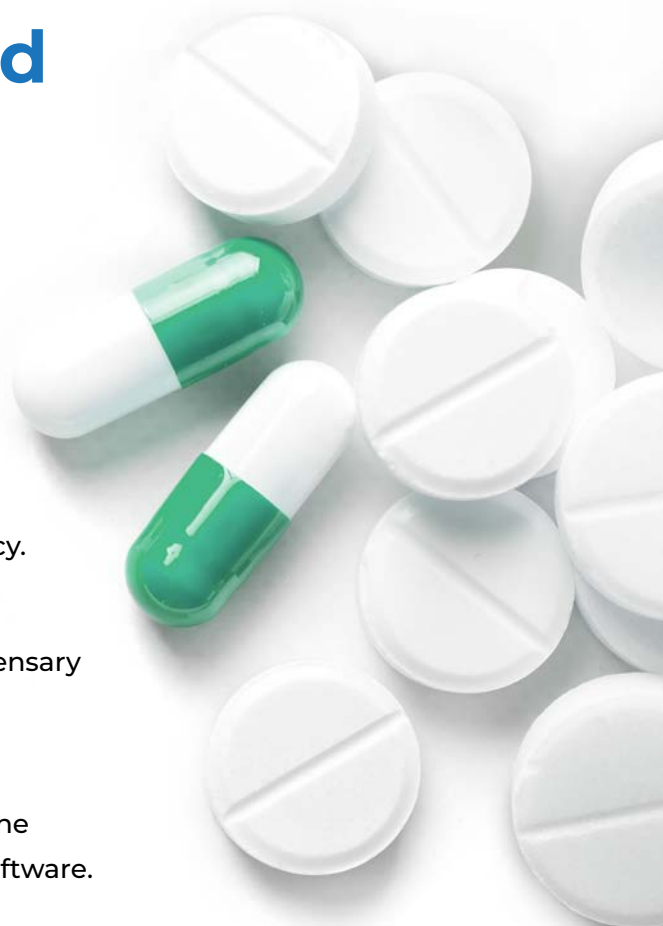
You book a session, selecting a pharmacist or dispensary technician, and an exclusive or shared session.



You log us into your dispense workstation during the session and we dispense through your dispense software.



You complete the dispensing process including taking the medicines off the shelf and labelling them.



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