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Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features two pages of news.

API's Priceline set for store growth

AUSTRALIAN Pharmaceutical Industries (API) expects to open at least 20 new Priceline Pharmacy stores in the 2022 Financial Year, with the "pipeline of potential franchisees the strongest it has been for three years".

Reporting a 25% bump in the company's underlying net profit after tax for the 2021 Financial Year, CEO, Richard Vincent, reported that its Priceline and Clear Skincare Clinics had "bounced back strongly" after COVID-19 lockdowns.

Vincent noted that despite a 3.3% fall in Priceline Pharmacy's total network sales in the year to 31 Aug, gross profit was up 5.5% to \$216 million.

Booster remuneration 'short-sighted'

COMMUNITY pharmacies may well question their involvement in the rollout of COVID-19 vaccination booster shots, if the Federal Government fails to deliver "adequate remuneration" the Pharmacy Guild of Australia warns.

While welcoming the decision to including pharmacies in the booster campaign, Guild National President, Trent Twomey, hit out at the Government's \$16 per jab fee.

"We know that many patients will come to their community pharmacist as their trusted health professional with questions about the booster shot," Twomey said.

"Quite frankly, people already are confused and suffering information overload after endless messaging about the COVID-19 vaccine.

"They will turn to their community pharmacy for answers about the booster shot.

"Many patients will need to have the program explained in detail as the messaging to date has been confusing.

"They will need explanations on why the vaccine can be changed, the timelines between their second shot and their eligibility for the booster, and so on.

"All this takes a great deal of time and the failure by government to recognise this is short-sighted."

Twomey noted that the current fee had the potential to act as a disincentive to pharmacies that have played a key role in boosting vaccination rates.

"If providing booster shots ends up being uneconomical for pharmacies, some may well question their willingness to provide it," he said.

MEANWHILE, disillusioned by the level of remuneration, and the complexity of the rules, the owners of Harpers Pharmacy Earlwood, in Sydney's western suburbs, urged severely immunocompromised patients to consider going to their GP for a booster shot, in a Facebook post on 14 Oct.

"The Australian Government



is not reimbursing pharmacies an adequate amount to even cover our costs for providing this service so if you would rather get a booster dose of Pfizer at the doctor we would appreciate it," the owners said.

"If you can't get it done at the GP or if your doctor has recommended the Moderna vaccine then we will of course be happy to help."

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PharmX delivers for Corum Group

PHARMACY software provider, Corum Group Ltd, is reporting an 11% bump in total revenue for the Sep quarter compared with the same period last year.

In a statement to the Australian Securities Exchange, the company reported its health services business had generated \$3 million in the three months to 30 Sep, which was “primarily attributable to PharmX”.

Corum noted that it had “progressed discussions with more than 20 of the leading pharmacy retail banner groups” in the last quarter, securing agreements with Alive Pharmacy Group, Capital Chemist Group and Good Price Pharmacy Group, “to drive supplier and pharmacy engagement with the PharmX platform”.

The company also reported that during the Sep quarter, it had engaged TMT Partners as corporate advisors to “actively seek merger and acquisition opportunities”.

CSO offers COVAX boost

ENGAGING Community Service Obligation (CSO) wholesalers to distribute COVID-19 vaccines (COVAX) would offer the Federal Government a reliable and cost-effective model, National Pharmaceutical Services Association Chair, Richard Vincent, believes.

Speaking with *Pharmacy Daily*, Vincent said the pharmacy wholesalers have continued to offer their services to the Government’s COVID-19 Taskforce, to assist with the distribution of the vaccines.

“From my perspective it’s the most reliable, efficient and cost-effective model in the industry... and I’m sure all stakeholders would agree with that,” he said.

“I think there is some acknowledgement from Government that at a point in time it needs to move from the crisis mode that we’ve been in, in the early days of COVID to something more business as usual.

“And if we’re considering business as usual, then we would put forward the case that it should be done through the CSO wholesalers.”

In terms of delivering a more cost-effective distribution service, Vincent was “not just pointing to what they [the Government] would

be paying” to get the vaccines to pharmacies.

“I’m also talking to wastage in the system - you’ll have read numerous articles that talk about stock being in the wrong locations, turning up late, being damaged, going out of date or out of temperature control,” he said.

“If you revert to the normal processes that the CSO distributors have in place the majority of that would go away.

“So there’s not just the absolute cost of providing the service, but there’s all the side-effects that would be mitigated [by using CSO wholesalers].”

Vincent added that the announcement by Federal Health Minister, Greg Hunt, that community pharmacies will be able to access stock of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, alongside the AstraZeneca and Moderna shots, strengthened the case for CSO wholesalers’ involvement.

“I think it’s a tremendous move on his part, [and] logically now that all three [vaccines being used in the national COVAX program] will be available through community pharmacy they should also be available through the CSO system,” he said.



Dispensary Corner

WITH Halloween coming up this Sun, authorities in Ireland are warning parents that trick or treating kids could be exposed to lollies laced with illicit substances.

The advice comes after police on the west coast of Ireland recovered thousands of chocolate bars containing cannabis earlier this week.

Local police landed what has been described as “one of the most unusual drug seizures”, during a raid on a suspect’s home, where they had expected to find a firearm, but no gun was found, the *Irish Independent* reported.

The haul was the second confectionery-based cannabis bust in the country in just over a week, after two men were arrested in Dublin with a significant quantity of “cannabis jellies”.

Health authorities noted that six children under the age of 10 years have been hospitalised in Ireland after unwittingly eating cannabis-laced lollies.

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