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Pharmacy 'the forgotten profession'

INCREASED remuneration and legislative reform is needed to support pharmacists to provide services to patients during the COVID-19 pandemic, a study reveals.

The paper published in *Research in Social and Administrative Pharmacy*, found that pharmacists have experienced increased demands and reduced resources during COVID-19, which was associated with burnout.

The authors from the Australian National University College of Health and Medicine, and the University of Sydney's School of Pharmacy, reported that many of the demands placed on pharmacists during the pandemic were the result of the accessible and trustworthy role they play in healthcare, which fuelled increased workloads.

"Pharmacists were relied upon to provide advice and support to communities as fear, uncertainty, and social isolation caused increased psychological distress and anxiety during the pandemic," they said.

"Taking on roles usually performed by others, particularly in-person consultations and [providing] public health information... due to their accessibility and expertise during pandemics and emergencies, all of which added to the expectations placed on them.

"Pharmacists reported feeling unappreciated, and undervalued, 'the forgotten profession' during COVID-19.

"The value of pharmacists needs to be reflected with adequate remuneration and legislative reform to support them to perform their important duties.

"For many pharmacists, the demands of taking on additional tasks that would usually be performed by others was extra work and 'never financially compensated for'.

"Providing pharmacists with an appropriate legal and financial framework to practise in extended scope roles such as emergency



preparedness and response, vaccination, specialist compounding, and even prescribing will ensure adequate training and governance to support a sustainable model of care and a valued workforce.

"This intervention will likely also reduce some demands such as managing medication supply, which was 'a major problem' and resulted in poor consumer behaviour, as pharmacists would have more autonomy and agency in making decisions around medications."

Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features three pages of news, plus full pages from:

- TerryWhite Chemmart
- Sigma Healthcare

Be like a winner

SIGMA Healthcare is encouraging pharmacy owners to follow the lead of its Amcal Life Clinic Donnybrook franchise in delivering health services.

The store claimed the 2022 Pharmacy Guild of Australia Pharmacy of the Year Excellence in Business Management Award, for leading the way in embracing innovative technology and providing its community with a "superior health service offering".

See **page five** for more information about the Amcal Life Clinic model.

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Publish NQPHN inquiry findings

FORMER North Queensland Primary Health Network (NQPHN) Board member, Dr Nicole Higgins, is calling on the Federal Health Department to publish the findings of its investigation into the organisation.

In a statement Higgins told *Australian Doctor* that the NQPHN, which has been at the heart of the proposed North Queensland Pharmacist Scope of Practice Pilot, had failed to support GPs.

"The PHN is viewed as a funnel for federal money into North Queensland," she said.

"I urge the federal government to make the review open and transparent to ensure that our communities can have faith that taxpayers money is being invested in their healthcare appropriately."

SHPA seeks CPA-style hospital deal

AUSTRALIA'S would-be Prime Ministers are being asked to commit to developing a five-year Pharmaceutical Reform Agreement with the Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) ahead of the Federal Election.

As part of its election priorities statement, the SHPA has called for the development of a deal between the Commonwealth, jurisdictional governments and the Society that will be "aligned to the next iteration of the National Health Reform Agreement for Public Hospitals" - which is due to commence on 01 Jul 2025.

The SHPA said the deal would be similar to the Community Pharmacy Agreement (CPA) and would help enhance support for timely, quality, equitable and safe patient access to Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) medicines in hospital settings".

The agreement would also "reduce long-standing PBS medicines access inequity for NSW

and ACT hospital patients, who are supplied [with] as little as three-days' worth of discharge medicine", by enabling hospital pharmacists to dispense a full PBS supply on discharge.

The SHPA has called on candidates support for reform of the Closing The Gap PBS Co-Payment Measure, to improve Indigenous patients' access to medicines under the program.

"Unlike community pharmacies, public hospital pharmacists are currently unable to supply PBS medicines to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients under the Closing The Gap PBS Co-Payment Measure, which hampers Australia's efforts to close the gap in healthcare outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples," the SHPA said.

"This results in inequitable, higher out-of-pocket costs and co-payments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients, or missing out on medicines altogether and

increasing their risk of readmission to hospital."

The SHPA has also said the commission of a 10-year national pharmacy workforce plan to support the sector, is a key priority.

"Pharmacy workforce shortages exist in all settings and have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and particularly in hospital pharmacy where specialised skillsets are required to deliver complex and acute patient care for critically unwell Australians," the SHPA said.

"Hospital pharmacy workforce shortages are felt the most in rural and regional Australia.

"To meet the immediate and future healthcare needs of the Australian community, leadership and strategic planning is required from governments to ensure Australia has a sustainable pharmacy workforce to achieve the aims of the National Medicines Policy and support the safe and timely supply of PBS medicines."

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Special Easter issue

Dispensary Corner

PERTH-BASED OnlyFans star, Lucy Banks, is using her platform to raise awareness of an unusual health risk facing people with food allergies.

The adult content creator who is allergic to peanuts revealed she suffered a reaction after having sex with a partner, who was not wearing a condom.

"He had eaten peanuts earlier that day, and it transferred to me through his semen," Banks said.

"I didn't realise at the time that this was possible, but now I want to warn others with serious allergies about this phenomenon.

"I went to the chemist to get antihistamine immediately.

The lady working there asked all the usual questions, like 'What is it for? Where is your allergic reaction?'

"It was so awkward!

"I ended up whispering the entire story to her and she burst out laughing, which made me burst out laughing too.

"She called over a few colleagues and tried to ask for their opinions and help, but she couldn't stop laughing.

"I mean, what do you do? You just have to laugh at the situation.

"It's not every day someone waddles into your chemist and has an allergic reaction to semen."

While Banks recovered from the incident, she has warned others to take precautions to ensure their partners have not eaten anything that could trigger a sexually-transmitted food allergic reaction.

No teen COVAX booster

PHARMACISTS will not be administering COVID-19 vaccine (COVAX) booster shots to adolescents in the coming weeks, with the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) recommending against rolling out top-up shots for 12 to 15-year-olds.

The advice came after the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) granted provisional approval for Pfizer's Comirnaty vaccine to be used as a booster for adolescents (**PD 11 Apr**).

"ATAGI has reviewed evidence on the benefits and risks of a booster dose of Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine in adolescents in Australia aged 12-15 years," ATAGI said.

"Current data suggests that COVID-related serious illness is very rare in adolescents aged 12-15, particularly after completion of a primary series of COVID-19 vaccination.



"At this time, ATAGI does not recommend that adolescents aged 12-15 years need to receive a booster dose of Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine and will continue to review international evidence on efficacy of a booster in this age group.

"ATAGI will continue to review and consider new evidence on the benefits and risks of any additional doses in 12-15 year olds, including for those with underlying medical conditions."

CVS to remove COVAX access barriers

US PHARMACY chain, CVS, has agreed to "eliminate barriers preventing people with certain disabilities" from accessing information about COVID-19 vaccines (COVAX) and booking appointments online.

Under the deal with the US Justice Department, the group will improve its booking portal to allow patients who use screen reader software or who have trouble using a mouse to arrange appointments.

"Now more than ever, we must ensure web accessibility for people with disabilities seeking access to critical needs and services," said Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke of the

Justice Department's Civil Rights Division.

"We are working aggressively to identify and remove barriers that prevent people with disabilities from privately and independently securing potentially life-saving COVID-19 vaccines.

"We will continue to work towards the *Americans Disabilities Act's* promise of equal access during the ongoing global pandemic."

CVS will be required to regularly test the pages of its website that include vaccine scheduling and quickly fix any problems that keep people with disabilities from being able to use these pages.

Guild Update

Pandemic planning

THE Senate Select Committee on COVID-19 has recommended the Australian Government establish an Australian Centre for Disease Control to improve Australia's pandemic preparedness, operational response capacity, and communication across all levels of government.

The committee also recommended the Government urgently review its pandemic planning to deliver immediate improvements including:

- a pandemic workforce strategy focused on support and protection for health, aged care and other essential frontline staff
- an agreement with the States and Territories on the responsibilities of different levels of government
- agreement on national principles for quarantine
- a plan for managing future international border closures
- a plan for timely repatriation of Australians overseas
- evaluate the effectiveness of plans for working with and responding appropriately to the needs of vulnerable people during a pandemic and implement updated plans accordingly, including for older Australians, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, people living with disability and children
- principles for addressing related health impacts

The full report can be accessed [here](#).

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