

## Look at Amcal

**SIGMA** Healthcare is today showcasing its Amcal brand, which has more than 85 years of heritage and “leads the way by being a destination for expert advice and superior service”.

Pharmacists considering joining Amcal can find out more on **page four**.

## UK subscription model for drugs?

**TWO** new antimicrobial medications are close to becoming the first available under an “innovative subscription-style payment model,” which aims to incentivise research by testing new approaches to evaluating and paying for drugs.

The new drugs, cefiderocol and ceftazidime-avibactam, will only be used to treat patients with severe drug-resistant infections.

In 2020 only 41 new antimicrobials were being tested in clinical trials, with the new subscription payment model designed to boost R&D into drugs which can combat the growing threat of antimicrobial resistance.

The reimbursement model has moved forward after the UK's National Institute for Health and Care Excellence completed an evaluation estimating the new drugs' value to the UK's NHS.

# Ramsay receives takeover proposal

**THE** 60-strong Ramsay Pharmacy network may potentially change hands after parent company Ramsay Health Care received a conditional offer from a consortium of investors led by private equity group KKR.

The non-binding indicative bid at \$88 per share values the overall Ramsay group at more than \$20 billion, with the company's Board of Directors this morning confirming it had “determined it appropriate to provide the Consortium with due diligence on a non-exclusive basis to explore whether the Consortium can put forward a binding proposal that is in the best interests of Ramsay's shareholders”.

As well as its retail franchise pharmacy operation, Ramsay Australia is Australia's largest private hospital operator, with a portfolio of 72 private hospitals and

day surgery units.

A number of Ramsay's pharmacies are located within or around its hospital locations, although it also operates pharmacies in communities and shopping centres in Qld, Vic and NSW.

The business also has 34 acute hospitals and day procedure centres in the UK, along with about 350 specialist clinics and primary care units in five European nations.

The KKR proposal would be implemented through a scheme of arrangement, and is subject to

a range of conditions including completion of satisfactory due diligence, no disposal of any Ramsay subsidiaries or properties, final approval of the Consortium's investment committee, and approval by regulators such as the Foreign Investment Review Board.

It would also be subject to approval by a vote of Ramsay Health Care shareholders.

Ramsay noted that discussions with KKR are preliminary in nature, with no guarantee that any further proposal will be forthcoming.

## Boots wipe-out

**BRITISH** pharmacy chain Boots has announced it will withdraw sale of all plastic-based wet wipes, replacing them with plant-based biodegradable alternatives.

The company is one of the country's largest sellers of wet wipes, with more than 140 different lines stocked across the skincare, beauty, baby, tissue and health care categories.

Boots noted that about 11 billion wet wipes are sold in the UK each year, with evidence suggesting they are the cause of more than 90% of sewer blockages.

The company has pledged to clear its shelves of plastic-based wipes by the end of 2022.



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- THRUSH
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References: 1. Resolve Plus Product Information. Date of Most Recent Amendment 26 October 2018. 2. Van Cutsem JM, Thienpont D. Miconazole, a broad-spectrum antimycotic agent with antibacterial activity. Chemotherapy 1972;17:392-404.

**Resolve Plus**



## Today's issue of PD

**Pharmacy Daily** today features three pages of news, plus a full page from Amcal.



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## Let's 'ear it for pharmacist intervention

A PILOT ear health intervention project involving community pharmacists and GPs has been found to deliver better patient outcomes in rural areas, where ear disease continues to occur at alarmingly high rates.

Titled LISTEN UP (Locally Integrated Screening and Testing Ear aNd aUral Program), the scheme has been running in two rural Qld communities for six months, supporting community pharmacists in conducting ear examinations using video otoscopy and tympanometry for patients presenting with an ear complaint.

Dr Selina Taylor, Pharmacy Academic at the Centre for Rural & Remote Health at James Cook University, said community pharmacists follow the LISTEN UP protocol and make patient recommendations which could include no treatment, pharmacy-only products or referral to a GP via an embedded direct pathway.



"Many patients present in their community pharmacy with ear pain or a blocked ear...the pilot supports those patients to receive primary care in a timely manner which can reduce potential emergency department presentations or negative outcomes," Taylor said.

The pilot scheme involved GPs, pharmacists, specialist medical officers and others in rural

communities, with Taylor saying "health outcomes...continue to be improved through community pharmacists practising towards their full scope and primary health care professionals working together".

Taylor is pictured right with Pharmacist Glory-Anne Leauepe and Shana Valentine, Pharmacist Manager.

## FDA coeliac draft

THE US Food and Drug Administration has issued draft guidance on developing drugs or biologics to treat coeliac disease, as a complement to a gluten-free diet.

Coeliac disease, described as "an autoimmune condition in which dietary gluten triggers small bowel inflammation and villous atrophy, causing malabsorption and gastrointestinal symptoms," currently affects about 1% of the US population.

The only treatment is a strict, lifelong gluten-free diet, with the new guidance including details on eligibility criteria for new treatments along with trial design, considerations for efficacy and safety, and clinical outcome assessments.

Comments on the draft are currently being sought with a deadline of 14 Jun - more details at [fda.gov](https://www.fda.gov).

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## Dispensary Corner

**IN A** case of the cure perhaps being almost as bad as the ailment, researchers in the USA have found that rotten egg gas may help protect brain cells against Alzheimer's disease.

Reported earlier this year in the *Proceedings of the National Academies of Science*, the study conducted at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine firmly linked "ageing, neurodegeneration and cell signalling using hydrogen sulfide (H<sub>2</sub>S) and other gaseous molecules within the cell".

Researchers studied mice which were genetically engineered to mimic human Alzheimer's disease, and treated them with a rotten egg gas-carrying compound called NaGYY developed at the UK's University of Exeter, which slowly released the hydrogen sulfide molecules while travelling through the body.

Behavioural tests showed using the H<sub>2</sub>S led to improvements of up to 50% in cognitive and motor function compared to rodents that did not receive the NaGYY injections, with treated mice better able to remember the location of exits from a maze.

While there's no suggestion that rotten egg gas should be administered to humans with Alzheimer's, the findings could potentially lead to the development of new therapies based on the use of hydrogen sulfide which is said to modify a common enzyme called glycogen synthase β - see [hopkinsmedicine.org](https://hopkinsmedicine.org).

## Ivermectin studies slammed

**A NEW** analysis of research testing anti-parasitic ivermectin for the treatment of COVID-19 has found "serious errors or signs of potential fraud" in more than a third of major trials.

The *British Medical Journal* has published a paper from researchers at Duke University in the USA looking at the unethical studies, concluding that the flaws in the research mean we still do not know if the drug is safe or effective.

Ivermectin is used to treat a range of parasitic diseases, and was tested as a possible treatment and prevention option for COVID-19 based on in vitro activity against SARS-CoV-2.

Initial randomised trials and systematic reviews suggested large benefits such as reduced hospital admissions and improved survival rates.

"It turns out that many of the results were - literally - too good to be true," the authors wrote.

They cited a prominent meta-analysis suggesting a large survival benefit which was later retracted because of the inclusion of studies with a high risk of bias or



potential medical fraud, along with recent ethics scandals casting a shadow over ivermectin research, including an experimental study in Mexico City giving almost 200,000 ivermectin-based medical kits to residents with COVID-19 which was later retracted because it was conducted "without proper consent".

The authors concluded that the pressure to act quickly during a global health emergency can lead scientists to unfortunately take shortcuts, urging the scientific community to "abandon research exceptionalism" in such situations.

## WPC seeks pharmacist vax opinions

**THE** World Pharmacy Council has launched an international survey of pharmacists, seeking to evaluate their attitudes, experiences and support requirements in relation to the provision of vaccination services.

Part of a collaborative project with Pfizer, responses from the initiative will be used to "help inform the future direction of vaccination services in the pharmacy sector".

Participants can request a summary of the overall results,

with the online survey taking about 15 minutes to complete.

Questions include the types of vaccines administered, training undertaken, the frequency of jabs and how the immunisations are funded.

Pharmacists are also asked about perceived barriers to vaccination and whether vaccination training for pharmacists should be standardised internationally.

The survey can be completed online by [CLICKING HERE](#).

## Pfizer makes \$100m app bid

**AN AUSTRALIAN** Securities Exchange-listed health technology company is set to be taken over by Pfizer, in a \$100 million deal which also includes ongoing R&D into COVID-19 products.

ResApp Health Limited specialises in the development of smartphone applications for the diagnosis and management of respiratory disease, incorporating machine learning to process captured sound and diagnose and measure the severity of conditions without the need for additional hardware or accessories.

Current TGA-approved products include ResAppDx, an acute respiratory disease diagnostic test for use in telehealth and primary care settings, and SleepCheck, a smartphone application which allows consumers to self-assess their risk of sleep apnoea.

Pfizer Australia Holdings Pty Ltd is proposing to acquire 100% of the shares in ResApp Health by way of a scheme of arrangement, paying 11.5c per share which is a 39.7% premium to the three month volume weighted average price as at 08 Apr.

The deal is expected to be finalised in late Jun.

In addition an R&D Licence agreement has been entered into, seeing Pfizer and ResApp collaborate for up to 12 months with a total \$3 million up-front licence fee and up to \$1 million in milestone payments based on clinical trial recruitment.



# Join a customer focused healthcare brand

Amcal is one of Australia's most trusted and recognisable national pharmacy brands. With more than 85 years of heritage, Amcal leads the way by being a destination for expert advice and superior service.

01

**As an Amcal Pharmacist, you will form part of a large national network of like-minded healthcare professionals committed to driving improved health outcomes for their community.**

02

**You will gain access to a growing range of health services re-defining pharmacy care. Making health advice and support available, affordable and accessible.**

03

**Be provided with turn-key business solutions including a complete omni-channel retail offer to meet today's consumer expectations.**

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