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GPs slam WA vaccination expansion

THE Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) and the Australian Medical Association (AMA) have blasted yesterday's decision by the Western Australian Government to widen access to immunisations through community pharmacies (**PD** 21 Apr).

The changes will see the community pharmacy vaccination program substantially expanded, with subsidised flu vaccines for patients aged five and above, plus MMR jabs for those aged 20-plus.

Pharmacies will also be able to administer HPV and DpTA vaccines to patients 11 and above, with RACGP President Professor Karen Price warning the decision could have "unintended consequences".

"Patients are better off receiving their vaccines from their usual GP," she said, adding that the WA move "is not a sound decision [and] takes the state in the wrong direction when it comes to vaccinations".

"Pharmacists may claim that GPs require support as we manage patients who have delayed or avoided screenings and consultations during the pandemic; however this is not a valid reason to extend the community pharmacy vaccination program, as it leads to



fragmentation of care during this critical period as pandemic-life returns to normalcy," she insisted.

Price questioned whether the initiative had undergone any evidence-based modelling.

"Are we providing a solution to a problem that does not exist?"

"There is evidence of the benefits of embedding non-dispensing pharmacists within practices, and the RACGP is always keen to explore collaborative solutions; however these changes are not something we support."

AMA WA President Mark Duncan-Smith joined the chorus of opposition to the expanded pharmacy vax program, saying it had the "real potential to fragment patient care by doctors and result in worse outcomes for patients".

He cited a 2021 WA Government

report finding that 50% of flu vaccines were wasted by pharmacies between 2018 and 2020, or not registered with the National Immunisation Register.

However yesterday's announcement by WA Health Minister Amber-Jade Sanderson highlighted expectations of higher cases of influenza this year, with the state government hoping to minimise its impact on the population via the new program.

MEANWHILE the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia has welcomed the expansion of pharmacist vaccination in WA, with state PSA Branch President, Keegan Wong, saying "with the flu season now in full swing, we need to do everything we can to protect Australian children".

"It is critical that Governments continue to remove barriers to vaccination and align the funding and regulation of pharmacist-administered vaccinations with that of all other authorised immunisers," Wong said.

PSA said it would work with the incoming Federal Govt to seek a Medicare payment to pharmacists for administering National Immunisation Program vaccines.

Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features two pages of news.

The next issue of **PD** will be published on Tue 26 Apr due to the ANZAC Day public hol.

New NPS tool

NPS MedicineWise has released a new tool aiming to support a collaborative approach between accredited pharmacists and GPs when preparing a Home Medicines Review (HMR) or a Residential Medication Management Review (RMMR).

The new *Best practice recommendations* aims to help pharmacists apply a "person-centred approach to writing MMR reports," encouraging communication with the referring medical practitioner to provide a common understanding of the context & goals of the report.

The tool has been developed with feedback from the PSA, Pharmacy Guild, SHPA, Australian Association of Consultant Pharmacy & the ACSQHC - **CLICK HERE** to access.

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Dispensary Corner

THERE'S been another great scientific breakthrough in the USA, where mechanical engineers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology have conducted an experiment to find out exactly what happens when you pull an Oreo apart.

The popular chocolate biscuits have long prompted the age-old question of why the cream usually sticks to just one wafer when an Oreo separates.

Fortunately the MIT researchers were able to bring their considerable abilities to bear on the problem, which relates to the science of rheology, the study of how materials flow when stressed.

A detailed experiment - probably also involving lots of consumption of the sweet treats - found the manufacturing process was behind the fact that no matter the flavour or amount of the cream, it almost always stuck to one biscuit.

They also found that the Oreo cream's failure stress was double that of peanut butter, and about the same as cheese.

Accreditation tax comment "a shock"

THE leaders of a 1600-strong accredited pharmacists group have described as "shocking" recently reported comments by Pharmacy Guild of Australia President, Trent Twomey who said "accreditation is a tax on younger pharmacists".

Members of the Consultant Pharmacists Australia Group on Facebook include accredited pharmacists, those on the pathway to accreditation, students, academics and pharmacists looking for relevant clinical knowledge.

One of the group's administrators, Faith Yong, said while previously the online community had been about teaching and connecting, Twomey's comments had prompted a "responsibility to ensure the group's members also have a voice when issues arise that affect them".

"The main credentialing body for accredited pharmacists, Australian Association of Consultant Pharmacy (AACP) is jointly owned by the Guild and the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia," she noted.

"It has come as a shock, therefore, to hear that the Guild President believes accreditation is a 'tax on younger pharmacists'."

Yong said the group was aware that the costs of credentialing and remaining credentialed are high.

"However we also firmly believe that a credentialing body and its rigorous accreditation program are necessary for the value that medication reviews represent, and are required for the professional and clinical outputs obvious today."

She said that between the three women who run the Facebook group there was 35 years of combined accreditation.

"We, like many others, found the accreditation process demanding.

"It is often the first postgraduate professional course that many pharmacists are exposed to, which is an experience in itself.

"However ensuring the process requires active learning and perseverance attracts a particular type of pharmacist...these pharmacists are willing to push themselves to learn more than what our university education and workplaces teach us," she said.

Yong said medication review accreditation opens the pathway for consultant pharmacy to Australian community pharmacists.

"This is a largely achievable goal for pharmacists with experience and passion for generalist clinical medication work," she believes.

"Its flexibility provides an opportunity for pharmacists who

are not wanting or able to own a pharmacy to create a new career paradigm, whether working for themselves, part of a team in primary healthcare organisations, and/or as an extension of the community pharmacy.

"It is also an avenue that is perfect for those craving part-time/casual employment which bricks and mortar pharmacies may not be able to offer," Yong added.

She also noted the recent federal announcements for aged care funding indicate there will soon be more demand for accredited pharmacists.

"We call upon the Pharmacy Guild of Australia to recognise the significance of medication review accreditation, as they historically have done," she said.

"We also request further support from all pharmacist associations to structurally develop pharmacist specialisation, in order to serve our increasing ageing population health needs and to retain our already trained pharmacist workforce.

"Perhaps the AACP... an arguably important organisation in the current pharmacy landscape, could be utilised more effectively in future pharmacy advancement development," she concluded.

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