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Del Piano, et al. 2010, *Journal of Clinical Gastroenterology*, Vol. 44, S30-S34.; Reid, G, et al. 2003, 'Oral use of Lactobacillus rhamnosus GR-1 and L. fermentum RC-14 significantly alters vaginal flora', *FEMS Immunology & Medical Microbiology*, Vol. 35, No. 2, pp.131-134. Funded by Procter and Gamble, NSERC and Kidney Foundation of Canada; Diop, L, et al. 2008, 'Probiotic food supplement reduces stress-induced gastrointestinal symptoms in volunteers: a double-blind, placebo-controlled, randomized trial', *Nutrition Research*, Vol. 28, No. 1. Sponsored by Lallemand SAS.

Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features three pages of news, a front cover from **Ther-Biotic**, plus a full page from **TerryWhite Chemmart**.

Probiotic boost

FLORDIS is rolling out its new range of therapeutic probiotics, **Ther-Biotics**.

The fridge-free product line includes condition-specific probiotics designed to boost vaginal health, immunity and digestion, and stress and mood balance.

See **cover page** for more.

COVE study

RESEARCHERS are seeking volunteers to join the COVE study investigating severe emphysema.

CLICK HERE for more.

Pharmacy Award embarrassing: Sim

INCREASING wages rates under the Pharmacy Industry Award 2020 will make pharmacy a more attractive career option for talented students, Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) National President, Dr Fei Sim, believes.

Speaking at the PSA's annual conference in Sydney last week, Sim described the current rate as embarrassing.

"Remuneration has a direct tie to our workforce capacity issues," she said.

"They are intertwined. Imagine if you are a parent, [or] a very aspiring year 10, 11 or 12 [student] and you go to a career fair... the first thing they check is 'what's the take home wage for pharmacists?'"

"Are you going to aspire to be a pharmacist if you know the award rate is \$29.41 per hour?"

"I personally feel embarrassed to go out there and tell people that our award rate is \$29.41."

"In real life we do not pay pharmacists that amount anymore,

but what we're saying is the industry award rate definitely needs to be raised to match what we're paying people out there at the moment, but also further raising to recognise the skillset, [and] the competence of pharmacists."

Sim said that increasing pharmacist remuneration was high on the PSA's agenda, and has been an issue the organisation has raised in meetings with the Federal Department of Health and Aged Care, and relevant ministers.

"It's not going to happen overnight, but we are very, very committed to driving this agenda," she said.

"We are not an industrial body, so we are limited - in a way our hands are tied when it comes to what we can do with Fair Work."

"But what we are doing is we are using our advocacy efforts and channelling that through the stakeholders that we deal with to advocate for direct payments to pharmacists."



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PSA General Manager Policy and Engagement, Chris Campbell, said the organisation was seeking to secure "direct Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) payments for pharmacists for case conferencing" and "for administering medicines".

"[PSA is also] looking for a commitment in the future [Community] Pharmacy Agreements that remuneration for pharmacy services goes directly to the pharmacist who is giving those services," he said.

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Don't join VEEV vaping program: PSA

PHARMACISTS are being urged to snub Philip Morris International's (PMI's) controversial pharmacy program, with Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) National President, Dr Fei Sim, saying big tobacco has no place in healthcare.

The scheme, which is set to be rolled out by PharmaPrograms (PD 02 Aug), will provide payments to pharmacists to refer patients to get a prescription for nicotine vaping products, educating patients about vaping, and dispensing PMI's VEEV device.

"No healthcare professional should accept financial incentives or support from a tobacco company," Sim said.

"Big tobacco cannot, and should not, be trusted with the health of Australians.

"PMI's offer of financial kickbacks shows clear contempt for our profession and our dedication to the health and wellbeing of our communities.

"It's galling PMI are promoting these products while they remain unregulated and unregistered.

"No nicotine vapes are registered as medicines in Australia.

"Do not confuse a commercially

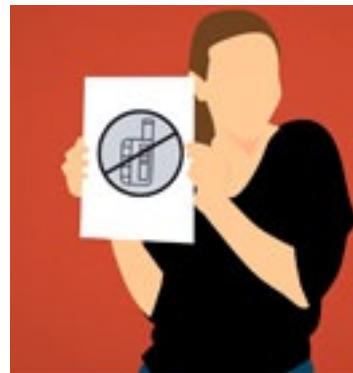
motivated decision from a large multi-national tobacco company as a decision of Australian pharmacists.

"[The] Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has provided clear advice to pharmacists and the health sector – nicotine vaping does not provide substantial benefits to patients as a smoking cessation tool, and nicotine vaping products are not a first-line option for smoking cessation."

Sim said pharmacists should use current practice guidelines to support patients to quit smoking, and called on any health organisations that have financial deals with big tobacco to terminate them immediately.

Meanwhile, Quit Victoria Director, Dr Sarah White, told *BioPharma Dispatch* that it was "almost inconceivable that any Australian health organisation would be willing to help one of the world's largest tobacco companies get access to Australian pharmacists and - through paid incentives - to people visiting those pharmacists".

"Any pharmacist who has signed up for payments to secretly promote PMI e-cigarettes to their patients should be publicly named and



shamed," she said.

"This secretive, money-grubbing deal with big tobacco runs completely counter to what Australians expect of their community pharmacies and has the potential to ruin the trust between pharmacists and their patients."

PharmaPrograms has announced that it has postponed the launch of the VEEV Pharmacy Program "whilst a review of all components of the program are being completed".

"The intent of the proposed program was to support appropriate use for the approved patients, who have been prescribed nicotine vaping products by an authorised prescriber," a spokesperson said.

COVAX demand remains high

QUEENSLAND pharmacies are continuing to see "very high demand" for COVID-19 vaccines (COVAX), Pharmacy Guild of Australia Queensland Branch President, Chris Owen, reports.

Pharmacies across the State have administered more than 1.65 million doses of COVAX as part of the nation campaign since Jun last year.

"I'm hearing from community pharmacists across the state that demand for vaccinations is still very high," he said.

"The good news is that stock levels are level with demand, so it's pretty easy to get access to COVID-19 vaccines through community pharmacy.

"I would encourage anyone who hasn't had their third or fourth boosters to visit findapharmacy.com.au or come into their community pharmacy to get vaccinated."

Owen added that patients who have been prescribed COVID-19 antivirals should be advised to have someone else collect their medication.

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Time to fix rural health crisis: Tyrrell

EXPANDING rural pharmacists' scope of practice could be a solution to current GP shortages, Tasmanian Senator, Tammy Tyrrell, believes.

Addressing the Senate yesterday, Tyrrell said politicians of all stripes needed to address the GP crisis.

"We've got a well-intentioned policy to attract GPs to rural and regional areas, but it's obviously not working, because it doesn't push GPs to work in areas where they're needed the most, and the slack is falling on local councils to pick up," she said.

"Local councils are paying doctors to work in their area.

"They're paying to upgrade medical centres.

"They're offering free houses to GPs. They're paying for their

office equipment, their cars, their fuel and even their phone bills.

"Not every council can afford to do this, and if you can't afford to compete with the larger councils, if you can't afford to offer the same benefits to GPs, you just don't get a doctor.

"I want to start fixing it.

"I'm open to how we do it.

"Maybe we can offer full scholarships to young people in areas that need GPs the most, so long as they commit to returning home when they graduate with a medical degree.

"Maybe we can let pharmacists do more in high-need areas to take some of the burden off existing GPs.

"Maybe the way we classify the needs of communities has to change."



Dispensary Corner

IN AN ever changing world Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) Lifetime Achievement Award recipient, Terry White, reminded pharmacists that some things stay the same.

Accepting the honour at last week's PSA conference in Sydney, White noted that while there have been significant advancements in pharmacists' practice over the course of his career, the Australian Medical Association (AMA) has consistently sought to retain the *status quo*.

"At my stage of life I look back on those early days when I graduated... all those years," he said.

"While most of us who have been actively involved in the profession over the years feel a bit frustrated that things haven't moved as fast [as we'd have wanted].

"When I graduated, the AMA opposed our push to put the name of the medication on the label.

"And that moved on to pharmacist counselling patients, and again that was frowned upon by the AMA.

"So nothing's changed!"



Vincent steps down as API boss

WESFARMERS Health Managing Director, Emily Amos, has been named as the new CEO of pharmacy wholesaler, Australian Pharmaceutical Industries (API).

The move came after former API boss, Richard Vincent, stepped down from the role last week, four months after the completion of Wesfarmers' acquisition of the company in Mar (*PD* 31 Mar).

In a letter to API customers, Amos said that Vincent, who currently chairs the National Pharmaceutical Services Association (NPSA) had "decided that now is the right time to move into a business advisory role with API".

"I would like to take this opportunity to thank Richard for his enormous contribution to Soul Pattinson over the past 17 years, as well as the leadership he has



provided to the pharmacy industry across his entire career to date," Amos said.

"Richard has steered the business through a time of accelerated change in the pharmacy sector and most recently, the complex market conditions as we traversed the impact of COVID-19.

"His focus has always been centred

around the valued partnership that the Soul Pattinson team has with you, and this is a legacy that the leadership team will continue.

"On behalf of API and the Soul Pattinson network, please join us in thanking Richard for his immense contribution to the business and the exceptional legacy he has built for API's future.

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