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AUSTRALIAN OWNED

GPs push for antivirals in Doctor's Bag

CALLS for pharmacists to be authorised to initiate COVID-19 antiviral treatment for eligible patients are being rebuffed by the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP).

While the Pharmacy Guild of Australia and the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) have urged the Federal Government to follow pharmacist prescribing models being used in other countries, to ensure patients can start taking the medication as soon as possible, the RACGP has said there would be patient safety implications from such an approach.

RACGP Vice President, Dr Bruce Willett, told the organisation's *News GP* publication that "a more sensible approach would be to make these medications available as part of a Doctor's Bag, and to have GPs able to keep these medications on hand in the practice".

"That would solve the access issues and speed things up without compromising safety, unlike a

pharmacy-led model," he said.

However, Guild National President, Trent Twomey, noted that the current GP shortage has meant patient wait times were endangering those with COVID-19.

"This is backed by recently revealed Healthengine data," Twomey said.

"For example, in 2019 the average wait time in Victoria was 1.98 days and now it's 3.33 days.

"WA and NSW are the worst-performing states, where a patient has to wait an average of four and 4.17 days respectively to see a GP.

"These wait times are unacceptable.

"Given the treatment program of these life-saving anti-viral medicines needs to commence within five days of the initial onset of COVID-19 symptoms, it's vital that patients test early and often and receive treatment without long delays due to the lack of GP appointments.

"Community pharmacists in Australia have the skills, expertise



and knowledge to assist patients so there is no reason for delaying treatment to eligible patients.

"If Australia followed the New Zealand example, we could greatly reduce COVID-19 hospitalisations, increase the number of patients receiving treatment in a timely manner, increase productivity and save hundreds of millions of dollars in hospital expenditure by empowering community pharmacy."

Today's issue of *PD*

Pharmacy Daily today features three pages of news, plus a full page from TerryWhite Chemmart.

Get connected

PHARMACY owners looking to build a connection with their communities can gain support through the TerryWhite Chemmart network's dedicated omni channel marketing team. See **page four** for more.

Change at BKL

BLACKMORES (BKL) Group General Counsel, Helen Mediati, has been appointed as the supplement giant's new Company Secretary. Mediati assumes the position following the resignation of incumbent Secretary, William Hundy.

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Travel & Cruise Weekly

Stiff penalties for pharmacy attackers

CUSTOMERS who assault pharmacy workers in NSW could face seven years behind bars under new legislation before the State Parliament.

NSW Attorney General, Mark Speakman, introduced the *Crimes Legislation Amendment (Assaults on Frontline Emergency and Health Workers) Bill 2022*, in the Legislative Assembly yesterday, setting out stiffer sanctions against people who attack frontline workers, including all pharmacy staff.

"This Bill will ensure that people who assault frontline health workers, correctional and youth justice officers, and emergency services staff and volunteers will face tougher penalties under new offences," Speakman said.

"Every person should be able to feel free and safe in their workplace, including health and emergency services workers who perform an essential public

service for our community in difficult circumstances and often at personal risk.

"Acts of violence on emergency services workers and frontline workers in the course of their duties are unacceptable."

Pharmacy Guild of Australia NSW Branch President, David Heffernan, welcomed the proposed legislation, noting the organisation had been concerned that community pharmacy workers were not going to be protected by the Bill.

"They've incorporated all pharmacy staff into it, and it's a good decision," he said.

"They can't change the public's behaviour, but it's a good step forward to give comfort to pharmacists.

"We'd prefer that it didn't need to be there, but we all saw what happened in the panic of the pandemic.



"It's absolutely horrific to see footage of violence and your colleagues being assaulted - no one wants to see that, especially people who have been out there right through the pandemic putting themselves out in front in order to protect the public.

"But unfortunately these things do happen, but we now know that penalties will apply, which is a good thing."

Mask import fine

THE Federal Court of Australia has ordered Enviro Tech Holdings Pty Ltd to pay \$80,000 for the unlawful importation of surgical masks.

Two of the company's directors have been fined \$8,000 each for aiding, abetting, counselling or procuring contraventions of the *Therapeutic Goods Act 1989*.

The Court found Enviro Tech breached a condition of a special regulatory exemption in place during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic by importing surgical face masks that were not for supply to the National Medical Stockpile or included on the ARTG.

The case came after the business failed to pay a \$13,320 infringement notice issued by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) in Dec 2020.

RAT sponsor lands \$66k TGA fine

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has issued COVID-19 rapid antigen test sponsor, 2San Pty Ltd, with five infringement notices totalling \$66,600.

The company allegedly failed to provide information to the TGA to demonstrate the ongoing minimum level of sensitivity of two RAT products.

"2San Pty Ltd has been issued multiple infringement notices for serial non-compliance in not meeting deadlines for providing

information to the TGA," the TGA reported.

"Officers of the TGA contacted the company on several occasions over a two month period to remind them of their obligations.

"This compliance action serves as a reminder to companies to take their obligations seriously.

"Suppliers of products such as COVID-19 tests must meet their ongoing responsibilities with respect to post-market vigilance and monitoring."

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Dispensary Corner

USE of COVID-19 rapid antigen tests has given members of the public a taste of at-home testing, and it appears many enjoy the convenience. However, Irish pharmacist, Laura Dowling, is urging women to steer clear of menopause testing kits that have been gaining popularity with ladies of a certain age. The tests reportedly detect the presence of follicle stimulating hormones in women's urine, which they claim increases during menopause. "I wouldn't recommend those testing kits at all and I don't know of any pharmacy that would actually sell them," Dowling said. "Menopause is diagnosed on symptoms alone, even with the doctor you don't go in and get blood tests because by your very nature as a female your hormone levels are rising and falling all the time." The pharmacist stressed that women experiencing menopausal symptoms should visit their GP for a diagnosis.

NAPSA reps go to IPSF



RECENTLY appointed National Australian Pharmacy Students' Association (NAPSA) President, Flynn Swift, and Treasurer, Georgia Bridges, are representing the organisation's members at the 67th International Pharmaceutical Students Federation (IPSF) World Congress in Hurgada, Egypt. The meeting will be the first time in more than two years that pharmacy students from around the globe have been able to meet in person, after the COVID-19 pandemic forced the event online. The NAPSA delegation (**pictured**) will be able to contribute to

discussions that shape the IPSF's agenda. "It's an amazing opportunity for us as students to gain experience and connections from other pharmacy students around the world," Swift said. "Fostering our growing relationships and developing our knowledge within the IPSF is another major goal for the trip as we participate in a truly global event." The NAPSA delegation is being sponsored to attend the IPSF World Congress by Raven's Recruitment.

RLAP petition

A PETITION calling for the changes to the eligibility criteria for accessing the Rural Locum Assistance Program (RLAP) is gaining momentum. Launched by Western Australian pharmacist, Nathalka Sakalo, yesterday, the online petition has attracted close to 100 signatures, with a number of rural pharmacy owners signing it (**PD** 10 Aug). Sakalo started the petition in the wake of reports that a rural Tasmanian pharmacy had been forced to close its doors on a number of occasions since the store's owner, Mark Fletcher, died last year, with his widow unable to access RLAP because she is not a registered pharmacist. Sakalo said it was not the first time that rural communities have been left without access to pharmacy services due to the RLAP criteria. "There have been multiple instances in very remote and rural locations that a non-pharmacist has needed to apply to keep the pharmacy doors open," she said. **CLICK HERE** to access the petition.



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