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APC plots prescribing standards

THE Australian Pharmacy Council (APC) is seeking interest from practising pharmacists to inform the development of new Accreditation Standards for pharmacist prescriber training programs.

The Pharmacy Board of Australia has requested APC to undertake a project to develop the new standards, as part of the organisation's role and purpose as the independent accreditation body for pharmacy education.

APC CEO Bronwyn Clark said "accreditation standards for pharmacist prescriber training programs will ensure that pharmacists who complete an accredited and approved education program are competent to prescribe".

The Council's Stakeholder Reference group will provide expert advice and commentary to inform the development of the standards.

"Our consultation processes are thorough and will provide multiple opportunities for people to contribute," Clark said.

"To ensure a wide breadth of knowledge and advice, we've invited key stakeholders across the pharmacy profession, other prescribing professionals, education providers, accreditation councils and consumer groups to nominate representatives," she added.

Expressions of Interest are now open from practising pharmacists who wish to join the pivotal project, with three positions on the Stakeholder Reference Group,



seeking professionals working across a variety of practice settings, geographical locations and representing a range of professional experience, Clark noted.

Development of accreditation standards will be informed by the NPS Prescribing Competencies Framework (2021) which describes the expectations for all health professional prescribers.

"The standards for training programs for pharmacists prescribers will ensure that pharmacists complete an accredited and approved education program and are competent to prescribe," according to the program's guidelines.

Associate Professor Sue Kirsas will oversee the work, with the stakeholder reference group being chaired by Professor Lisa Nissen.

A subject matter expert

pharmacist will also undertake a literature review, environmental scan and competency mapping of pharmacist prescribing internationally and in Australia.

Invitations will be issued to a variety of other stakeholders including representatives from the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia, the Pharmacy Guild, the Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia, the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, and Pharmaceutical Defence Limited.

First Nations consumer and patient representatives will also be invited to participate, along with an Australian state or territory Chief Pharmacist.

Applications to join the stakeholder reference group are open until 13 Jan, with submissions to be done via a form which is available by **CLICKING HERE**.

Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features three pages of news and a full page from **Wakey Wakey**.

FIP education kit

THE International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) has launched a new *FIP Education Transformation Toolkit*, as the latest move to support pharmacy professional organisations, universities and educators in advancing pharmaceutical education at all levels.

The toolkit brings together "numerous globally relevant resources" for each of the 18 actions which were recommended by FIP a year ago (*PD* 14 Dec 2021) to help the global profession meet the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

These actions include quality assurance of pharmacy education and training, as well as supporting the development of advanced specialist frameworks, and were developed after bringing together members across the six WHO regions to co-create roadmaps to support the advancement of education within the sector.

Other key measures include increasing academic capacity, supporting post-graduation training, creating awareness of opportunities that exist in academia for early career pharmacists and more.

FIP Education Chair, Professor Ralph Altieri, said "we have urged all stakeholders to take our recommended actions to advance pharmaceutical education...we are now providing them with added support to do so".

"This digital toolkit is a much-needed compendium of FIP education resources that will serve to help all educators and trainers to provide quality education," he said.

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UK pharmacists hit by shortages

DEMAND for amoxicillin and penicillin has soared in the UK, with some pharmacists reporting surging prices and difficulties in sourcing supplies.

The crisis is emerging from a jump in cases of scarlet fever and strep A among children, with concerned parents going to extreme measures to secure prescribed medications.

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Prison for fraud

A GERMAN pharmacist has been given a three-year prison term after being convicted of defrauding health insurers by lodging fake prescriptions for an extremely expensive psoriasis drug.

A trial in Augsburg heard that the 53-year-old woman had issued 39 prescriptions herself leading to reimbursements totalling more than €500,000, using blank forms from her husband, who is a dentist.

The fraud was eventually uncovered by the insurer when it noted that dentists normally don't prescribe medications to treat psoriasis.

The Nuremberg Public Prosecutors Office said the sentence was discounted due to an early confession during the investigation, with about half of the stolen funds having been repaid and the remainder to come from the sale of the woman's pharmacy.

Guild to continue push for \$19 co-pay

THE Pharmacy Guild of Australia will continue to advocate for greater cost-of-living pressure relief for patients by having the general co-payment reduced to \$19, according to Guild Executive Director, Suzanne Greenwood.

Writing in the Guild's regular *Forefront* update yesterday, Greenwood (pictured) highlighted the reduction of the general co-payment to \$30 from 01 Jan, which she said was strongly supported by community pharmacists.

"We are not done with that campaign yet...and again, it will be community pharmacists whose stories of patient care and their challenge in affording medicines that will sway the politicians and decision-makers," she said.

MEANWHILE Greenwood also reflected on 2022, noting significant hard work and progress for the profession over the last year, in the face of the huge impact that COVID-19 had on the community pharmacy sector.



"The way the sector has responded to COVID-19 and other challenges has also had a major effect on another big development during the year: the momentum towards pharmacists working to full scope of practice.

"Proving how innovative and adaptable the sector has shown itself to be - and the difference this makes to improving accessibility of care to patients - has underpinned the acceptance by many State and Territory jurisdictions to put in

place legislation to take steps to allow pharmacists to work to full scope of practice," Greenwood said.

She noted that full scope of practice means "pharmacists being able to provide the full range of services that they are skilled and trained to provide".

"We are not seeking to reinvent the wheel, rather to use the wheel effectively and to the full benefit of our patients and their carers."

Greenwood noted the success of the uncomplicated urinary tract infection pilot in Queensland which saw some 9,000 women access the service via community pharmacies, often because they could not get a GP appointment.

"The success, and the impact the service will potentially have on health budgets and in easing pressure on GPs, has seen it introduced permanently in Queensland, with other jurisdictions looking to follow...it's a win for the health system and, more importantly, for patients."

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Dispensary Corner

A PARTICULARLY spicy meal eaten by a woman in China recently had some quite serious health effects, with a resultant coughing fit leaving her with four broken ribs.

The incident was reported by the *South China Morning Post*, which described how the Shanghai-based woman heard a sharp cracking sound coming from her chest as she struggled for breath after getting a bit of chilli caught in her throat.

She was admitted to hospital for a CT scan which subsequently revealed the injury to her ribcage, with doctors ordering strapping and bed rest while the bones healed.

They said the underlying cause of the fractures was her unhealthily low body weight, with the 171cm-tall lady weighing just 57kg.

"COCAINE Bear" - no, it's not the nickname of a cuddly drug dealer, but rather the title of a new movie recounting the odd case of a bear high on cocaine.

The trailer for the film confirms it's based on a true story from 40 years ago when an 80kg black bear ingested a significant quantity of the drug, which it found in a forest in the US state of Georgia.

That's about as far as the link to reality goes, with artistic licence seeing the producers base the film on the supposed drug-induced "bloody spree" which ensued the drug binge.

The reality is more prosaic - wildlife officers found the bear's lifeless body in the woods after it died of an overdose.

Over 100 million under co-pay scripts

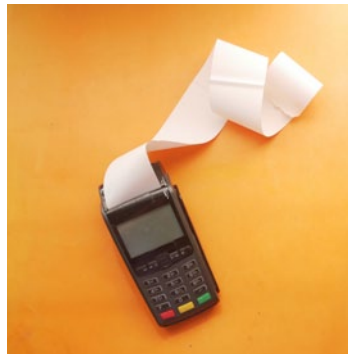
THERE were almost 101 million Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme prescriptions dispensed to patients at prices lower than the co-payment over the last 12 months, according to new data released by the Federal Department of Health.

Between 01 Jul 2021 and 30 Jun 2022 "approximately 100.8 million under co-payment prescriptions were supplied under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) and Repatriation Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (RPBS)," the Department noted in an update yesterday.

"The data continues to be successfully collected from both community pharmacies and public and private hospitals," the update noted, adding that the data is of a high quality and is now being made available on the Department's website, as well as in regular PBS publications and reports.

The figures for the last 12 months also confirmed that patient contributions amounted to just over \$1.5 billion in total, with the most commonly dispensed under co-payment medication being rosuvastatin tablet 10mg with 2,475,825 prescriptions.

Others in the top 10 last year included esomeprazol 20mg (2,075,098 scripts), pantoprazole tablet 40mg (1,963,236), cefalexin



500mg capsules (1,869,838), escitalopram 10mg (1,799,259), escitalopram 20mg (1,637,524), amoxicillin 500mg capsules (1,595,033), sertraline 50mg tablets (1,558,540), rosuvastatin 5mg tablets (1,504,835) and sertraline tablet 100mg (1,461,770).

This year's numbers continue an ongoing increase in the number of under co-payment prescriptions issued on the PBS/RPBS, with the figure for 2020/21 amounting to just under 94 million scripts and a total patient contribution of \$1.42 billion for the 12-month period.

In 2019/20 the number was slightly higher at 96.3 million and a \$1.47 billion patient contribution, while the pre-COVID year of 2018/19 saw 93.9 million under co-payment scripts dispensed with patients paying \$1.43 billion.

This year's top 10 under co-

payment prescriptions were largely unchanged from 2020/21, apart from paracetamol + codeine tablets which were in ninth position last year with 1.33 million scripts, but this year dropped back to 12th position with 1.29 million scripts.

The Health Department said the availability of the data is providing researchers with "enhanced coverage of medicines that are approved and dispensed under the PBS/RPBS".

"It is improving the accuracy of information available to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee and others to support evidence-based decision making and policy formulation," the Department added.

Over the period covered by the data the general co-payment was \$41.30 for 01 Jul-31 Dec 2021, rising to \$42.50 for 01 Jan-30 Jun 2022, while the 2021 concessional co-payment was \$6.60, increasing to \$6.80 last year.

The full list of under co-payment prescription data for past years is available online at pbs.gov.au.

The recent reduction in the general co-payment to \$30 (PD 27 Oct), which comes into effect from 01 Jan 2023, means next year's under co-payment prescription figures are expected to be markedly different.

Take home naloxone update from PPA

THE Pharmacy Programs Administrator has taken on board feedback from users and changed the Take Home Naloxone (THN) Individual Supply Claim Form to add a new option to the "Reason for Refill" field.

This information is supplied where patient consent to obtain and record the details has been

provided, with the additional option labelled as *My THN was given to someone else to keep*.

Pharmacists are asked to select this option if applicable, with the other choices being *My THN was used on me*, *My THN was used on someone else* and *My THN is lost, damaged or expired*.

Details at ppaonline.com.au.

GSK relocating

GSK PLC has announced the relocation of its global headquarters to a central London site called Earnshaw in 2024, from its current West London location in Brentford.

The new position is close to the UK capital's fast-growing Life Sciences Club and several GSK collaboration partners.

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