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Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features four pages of news plus a full page from Good Price Pharmacy Warehouse.

Get ready for full scope future

QUEENSLAND University of Technology Head of School for Clinical Sciences, Professor Lisa Nissen, is set to discuss the fundamental principles of pharmacist prescribing at next month's Australian Pharmacy Professional Conference (APP) on the Gold Coast.

Nissen, who led the Queensland Pharmacists Immunisation Pilot, and her colleague Dr Lynda Cardiff, will look to "demystify what prescribing is within the community pharmacy setting".

CLICK HERE to see the full APP program and register.

Court orders API vote on takeover

AUSTRALIAN Pharmaceutical Industries (API) shareholders will vote to approve Wesfarmers' proposed acquisition of the pharmacy wholesaler on 17 Mar.

In a statement to the Australian Securities Exchange (ASX) the company announced that the Federal Court of Australia ordered it to convene and hold a meeting of shareholders to vote on a scheme of arrangement that would see the firm become a wholly owned subsidiary of Wesfarmers.

The Court has also issued directions for API to distribute a "scheme booklet" providing information about the takeover arrangements to shareholders.

API confirmed that the scheme booklet was registered with the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) yesterday, and it will be dispatched to shareholders alongside a notice of the meeting and a proxy form today.

In its ASX announcement, API said

that a copy of the Independent Expert's Report into the proposed deal, prepared by Grant Thornton Corporate Finance, has been included in the scheme booklet.

"The independent expert has concluded that the scheme is in the best interests of API shareholders in the absence of a superior proposal," API said.

"The independent expert's conclusion should be read in context with the full Independent Expert's Report and the scheme booklet.

"In the absence of a superior proposal and subject to the independent expert continuing to conclude that the scheme is in the best interests of API shareholders, each API Director recommends that API shareholders vote in favour of the scheme, and intends to vote in favour of the scheme in relation to the API share in which they have an interest."

Due to health risks arising from the COVID-19 pandemic the



shareholder meeting will be held virtually, at 2pm (AEDT) on 17 Mar.

To be eligible to participate in the meeting individuals will be required to be registered as API shareholders on the register at 7pm (AEDT) on 15 Mar, with the company noting that "share transfers registered after that time will be disregarded in determining entitlements to vote at the scheme meeting".

Shareholders unable to attend the virtual meeting can vote by submitting a validly completed proxy form to the Board by 2pm (AEDT) on 15 Mar.

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Rural health needs political focus

STOP-GAP measures and small-scale funding initiatives are failing to address the critical issues facing Australia's rural health system, the National Rural Health Alliance (NRHA) believes.

In the organisation's pre-Budget submission, NRHA CEO, Dr Gabrielle O'Kane, called on the Federal Government to deepen its policy focus on the area and implement a new National Rural Health Strategy, noting that there are not enough health services to support the seven million Australians living in regional, rural and remote locations.

The NRHA has called for wholesale changes to the funding structure for rural health with serious consideration to be given to block funding and the development of Rural Area Community Controlled Health Organisations.

"After years of well-intended, ad-hoc support, it is evident that a holistic and strategic approach is necessary to address the

fundamental systemic issues of workforce shortages, lack of access to services and the affordability of rural health care," she said.

"With half the number of health providers per capita in rural Australia compared to major cities, rural people cannot access the health care they need, which contributes to them becoming ill, hospitalised and dying prematurely at a much greater rate."

O'Kane added that the lack of access to health services has meant that rural Australians use Medicare and the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme at "a much lower rate" than patients from urban areas, which has resulted in a "spending shortfall of \$4 billion in rural health annually".

"The way health services operate in the city doesn't translate to the country; it's just incompatible, which leaves rural areas missing out on that \$4 billion in taxpayer health funding every year," she said.



"Our current fee-for-service Medicare rebate system rewards high volume patient throughput, which does not work for smaller rural GP practices.

"The situation is even worse for many private allied health services, as there are very few Medicare Benefits Schedule items that patients can claim, making those services unaffordable for many rural people."

Tocilizumab gets WHO backing

THE World Health Organization (WHO) has added tocilizumab in three different quantities to its list of prequalified treatments for COVID-19.

In a statement released late last week, the WHO said that while the prequalified products are manufactured by originator company, Roche, the listing "should pave the way from more companies to come forward to seek WHO prequalification... creating competition leading to potentially lower prices".

A Series Scarcity Substitution Instrument (SSSI) is currently in place for tocilizumab in Australia, with the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) reporting shortages are likely to remain an issue in Australia until late Apr.

MIMS ads PI, CMI for oral COVID drugs

FULL Product Information (PI) and Consumer Medicines Information (CMI) for Pfizer's Paxlovid (nirmatrelvir and ritonavir) and MSD's Lagevrio (molnupiravir) oral COVID-19 treatments can now be accessed via MIMS Online, the eMIMS Cloud and the mims.com.au website.

The two medications received provisional approval from the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) for the



treatment of COVID-19 in adults at increased risk of hospitalisation last month (*PD* 20 Jan).

The drugs will be included and searchable in MIMS from 01 Mar.

Morrison, Albanese laud Guild's Beahan

FORMER Pharmacy Guild of Australia National Director of Government Relations, Michael Beahan, has been remembered by Labor leader, Anthony Albanese, as "a ten-pound Pom who turned out to be a true bargain for Australia".

Paying tribute to the former Senate President, who passed away last month (*PD* 03 Feb), Albanese hailed Beahan's commitment to the pharmacy profession and the community.



Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, also lauded Beahan's contribution to Australian society through his time in the Senate.

Start the new year looking for new opportunities in **Community Pharmacy**

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The Pharmacy
Guild of Australia



RACGP issues NT COVAX warning

URGENT action is needed to boost COVID-19 vaccination rates in the Northern Territory, to prevent the jurisdiction's health system from being overwhelmed the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) warns.

The RACGP has backed the Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory's (AMSANT) concerns about the outbreak – as well as its call to urgently improve vaccination coverage, including boosters, and ensure COVID-19 positive people have a safe place to isolate.

The NT also has the highest hospitalisation rate in Australia, with hospitalisations now higher than the peak the Doherty Institute said it could safely cope with, the RACGP said in a statement today.

TTA moves to support biologics use

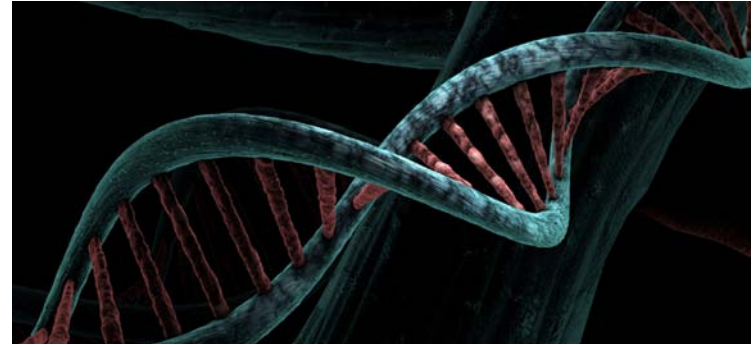
PHARMACISTS working with biologics and other specialised medicines can now access a range of evidence-based resources from the Targeted Therapies Alliance (TTA).

The resources include the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia's (PSA's) counselling checklist, and the Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia's (SHPA's) Biologic DMARD (disease modifying antirheumatic drug) quick reference guide.

NPS MedicineWise CEO, Katherine Burchfield, welcomed the new resources designed to help pharmacists to keep up to date with the latest evidence on use of biologic treatments.

"Pharmacists play an important role in the management of inflammatory arthritis, inflammatory bowel disease and plaque psoriasis," she said.

"As key members of the Targeted Therapies Alliance, the PSA and SHPA have developed valuable new resources to support pharmacists in



their role."

PSA National President, Associate Professor Chris Freeman said the TTA resources are important for pharmacists to keep up-to-date in this rapidly changing area of practice.

"Online learning modules across the three conditions and a practice audit tool on optimising the use of methotrexate and bDMARDs in rheumatoid arthritis are CPD accredited and are relevant for pharmacists working

in both hospital and community pharmacy," he said.

SHPA President Peter Fowler added that the resources were developed in close collaboration with specialist pharmacists as well as rheumatologists, gastroenterologists and dermatologists.

"They equip pharmacists in their important role educating patients, monitoring adherence and explaining the role of biosimilars," he said.

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Dispensary Corner

COVID-19 is presenting numerous challenges for the pharmacy sector and society more broadly.

Staff shortages caused by sickness, isolation requirements and burnout have meant that pharmacists are attempting to do more with less support.

That has in some cases led to patients having to wait for prescriptions to be filled, an issue highlighted by British publication, the *Swindon Advertiser*.

The local newspaper reported that "patients were forced to queue for almost an hour outside a Swindon pharmacy", last week, seemingly oblivious to reports of workforce shortages currently impacting British pharmacies.

The story, highlighted the plight of one chivalrous gentleman, whose wife was waiting to pick up a medication for her heart condition.

"I've been sitting in the car waiting but she's had to stand outside in the cold and it's moving so slowly," he said.

"I don't understand what's going on with the pharmacy, but it shouldn't take that long to get your prescription.

"It's just not right."



Pharmacy crisis warning

A LACK of pharmacist training facilities in Ireland is likely to fuel a healthcare workforce crisis, Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU) President, Dermot Twomey, warns.

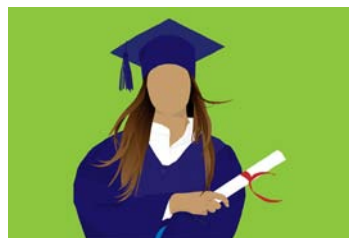
With three institutions currently offering pharmacy degree programs in the Emerald Isle, Twomey said not enough pharmacists were being trained to meet the increasing demands being placed on the sector.

"Ireland has just over 6,700 registered pharmacists," he said.

"Annually we are training just 2.4% of that number, this is simply not enough, and is leading to major problems for community pharmacies across the country.

"This needs to be addressed urgently.

"At this rate, the sector will soon be unable to cope with retirements, let alone the pressures caused by our growing population that is increasingly older, as well as greater demands on the sector as a whole.



"For too long Ireland has relied on the UK and other countries to train our healthcare workers, in particular pharmacists.

"The UK is also experiencing a shortfall of an estimated 3,000 community pharmacists, which will only exacerbate the shortages here in Ireland.

"Brexit and the challenges of COVID have also highlighted how unsustainable outsourcing education is.

"We cannot expect other countries to fill the gaps of our education system any longer, particularly for skills essential to our healthcare system."

Florida to extend scope of practice

NEW legislation being proposed in Florida, US, will see pharmacists plug holes in the State's health workforce through collaborative measures.

Under the proposed legislation qualified pharmacists will be able to test, screen and treat minor health issues, while opening the door to pharmacist prescribing when working with doctors to manage chronic conditions, including asthma and type-2 diabetes, US broadcaster ABC reports.

University of Florida Consultant Pharmacist, Dr Casey Trest, said the measures would allow pharmacists to "prescribe blood

pressure medications or anything that the doctor recommends in a normal protocol, as long as it's written out and you're following the protocol like the laws state now".

Trest added that the legislation was likely to continue to expand pharmacists' scope of practice to the point where certain pharmacists will be able to step in to cover gaps in the health system created by a shortage of doctors.

"If the burden can be taken off of the healthcare system the way it is right now especially, then why not utilise it to the full extent that we can," he said.

Guild Update

Opportunity Analysis

THE COVID-19 response has significantly affected pharmacy operations, with owners and their teams often having to make changes to procedures and processes daily.

The Guild is here to help, and Guild Members have access to a range of tools to support you in planning and preparing your business alongside and beyond the current pandemic response.

One of these key tools is the member exclusive **Opportunity Analysis** tool, which helps you to assess the potential income available in pharmacy programs and services.

The OA helps you understand your revenue or remuneration potential from 7CPA programs, as well as the opportunity unique to each pharmacy.

The OA service is provided as a partnership between The Pharmacy Guild of Australia and Pharmacy Platform.

The mutual goal is to raise the standard of services across the pharmacy profession and support pharmacy owners in operating a sustainable business model for your pharmacy, by optimizing 7CPA-funded programs and supporting the growth of innovative fee for service patient services.

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