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Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features three pages of news plus a full page from **Sigma Healthcare**.

Blood pressure

PHARMACIES can help their patients keep tabs on their blood pressure with the Medical Industries Australia Blood Pressure Monitor, from \$59.99 including GST. See **page four** for more information.

Sunday sessions

DELEGATES attending next month's Australian Pharmacy Professional Conference (APP) are being urged not to make a hasty getaway, with a "meaty" schedule lined up for the event's final day. Conference Convenor, Kos Sclavos, said the Sun sessions will cover key topics including full scope of practice, pharmacy trends, advertising compliance and message delivery in a COVID-19 context.

Pharmacy has key contraception role

EMBEDDING the provision of bridging contraception through community pharmacies can help boost the uptake of effective contraception, a study reveals.

Data from the Bridge-it Study, conducted by researchers of the UK and Australia, found the provision of a three-month supply of the progestogen-only pill (75 µg desogestrel/day) after dispensing the emergency contraceptive pill (levonorgestrel 1.5 or 3 mg) at no cost to patients, and giving information about local sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services, "had positive impacts on contraceptive practices in the short-term, and potentially in the longer term through overcoming some of the existing barriers to access and through increasing users' confidence in accessing contraception".

"The accessibility and convenience of the pharmacy setting was pivotal in making effective contraception more accessible," the authors said.

"Implementation appeared to be acceptable, welcomed and feasible to be routinely embedded within pharmacy practice.

"If widely implemented, provision

of bridging contraception within community pharmacies has the potential to increase access to contraception and prevent more unintended pregnancies for women."

The researchers reported that many of the women involved in the trial reported that "being approached within the pharmacy and being offered a bridging method acted as a necessary prompt to change contraceptive practices".

"Many participants emphasised the pharmacy setting in particular as being pivotal to overcoming barriers faced in accessing contraception, some of them personal, including lack of time and embarrassment and some structural, such as difficulties accessing healthcare appointments within traditional settings," the authors said.

"Similarly, pharmacists and SRH clinical staff highlighted the accessibility and convenience of pharmacies as pivotal in overcoming such barriers, particularly for young people and students.

"While ease of access seemed to be a key mechanism of impact, analysis of screening log data and pharmacist interview data did



highlight the ingrained nature of such barriers, with lack of time and potential embarrassment noted as key barriers to participation in the study."

The authors noted that a number of participants said that not being able to continue to access the progestogen-only pill through community pharmacy beyond the initial three-month supply was a significant barrier to longer term use of the contraceptive.

While supportive of the intervention a number of pharmacists noted that existing challenges related to store staffing, competing priorities and high workloads were challenges to embedding the program on a permanent basis.

The study was published online in *BMJ Open*.

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API takeover timetable released

AUSTRALIAN Pharmaceutical Industries (API) shares are expected to cease trading on 22 Mar, if Wesfarmers' bid to acquire the company is backed by shareholders and the Federal Court.

Should the deal go ahead, Wesfarmers will gain access to Australia's fourth largest loyalty program - the Priceline Sister Club, which boasts a membership of 29% of the Australian population.

Details of the expected timetable for the takeover have been released to shareholders and the Australian Securities Exchange (ASX) as part of the scheme booklet (PD 15 Feb).

Shareholders are set to cast their votes on the proposed bid during a virtual meeting on 17 Mar, with the deal to be brought before the Federal Court at 10.15am (AEDT) on 21 Mar for approval, in the event that it is passed.

Should the Court give the green-light for the takeover to proceed, API's directors will decide if they



are to pay a Special Dividend and determine entitlements for such a dividend by 7pm (AEDT) on 27 Mar, with any such payment to be made to shareholders on 29 Mar.

Entitlements to 'scheme consideration' will be determined by 7pm (AEDT) on 29 Mar, with Wesfarmers to complete its takeover of the group on 31 Mar.

In a letter to shareholders accompanying the scheme booklet, API Chair, Kenneth

Gunderson-Briggs, noted that the the company's directors "have carefully considered the scheme, taking into account API's current position and medium and longer term potential, and believe that the scheme is in the best interests of API shareholders".

The scheme booklet noted that the API share price could fall in the near-term, if the scheme is not implemented, and no superior offer is made for the business.

Vic firm fined over RAT imports

VICTORIAN-BASED company, TCF Trading Co Pty Ltd, has been issued with a \$13,320 infringement notice relating to alleged unlawful importation of COVID-19 rapid antigen tests (RATs).

The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) reported that TCF had imported 70,000 units of the RATs that were not listed on the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods (ARTG) at the time of importation.

In a statement released yesterday the TGA said the RATs were seized at the border "resulting in an estimated financial impact to the business of up to \$1 million", at close to \$14 per unit.

The regulator added that it has not granted any special exemptions to import or supply unapproved RATs into the Australian market.

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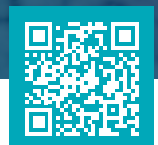
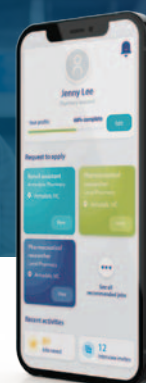
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Loyalty reaps its own reward

A **LONG-TIME** customer of Discount Drug Stores (DDS) in Menai, NSW, has claimed a \$20,000 cash prize, as the pharmacy group celebrates its 20th anniversary.

The month-long in-store competition was open to all customers who joined the group's Discount Plus loyalty program (PD 07 Dec 2021).

Menai DDS owner, Quinn On, said he was delighted that one of his patients won the award.

"It was great to see one of our long-time customers take out the \$20,000 prize," he said.

"The new loyalty program has been really successful, and it was a great way to include our customers in the DDS 20th anniversary celebrations by inviting them to take part in the competition.

"We are very proud to be part of a pharmacy brand that gives back to their loyal and valued customers and can't wait to celebrate other milestones with DDS in the years ahead."

The winner - who wished to remain anonymous - said the prize money would contribute towards a home renovation and "a much-needed holiday".

"We really can't thank DDS enough for this life changing contribution to our current circumstances," they said.

TWC fuels EBOS growth

STRONG performances by EBOS Group's community pharmacy retail brands, including TerryWhite Chemmart (TWC), are key factors driving revenue growth in recent months, the company says.

Releasing its financial results for the first half of the 2022 financial year, EBOS reported revenue growth of 12.8% compared with the same period in 2021, with the company's healthcare division delivering a 17% bump in earnings before interest and tax.

EBOS CEO, John Cullity, said the sector's success had been driven by its community pharmacy wholesale and TWC businesses, with Pfizer's decision to rollback from its direct distribution model also providing a boost.

In its investor presentation, EBOS noted that the TWC network has grown to more than 480 stores, with 16 new pharmacies joining the group in the six months to 31 Dec 2021.

EBOS added that TWC had seen "above market growth in network sales, with total sales up 7.4% and like-for-like sales up 5.6%" in the first half of the financial year.

The TWC network also saw a 9.9% increase in dispensary sales in the latest reporting period, while script volumes grew by 6.5%.

Commenting on the success of the company's healthcare segment, Cullity acknowledged the "tireless efforts" of community pharmacists



over the last two years.

"The commitment to our communities by all pharmacists and their teams during the pandemic has been nothing short of extraordinary," he said.

"From day one of the pandemic pharmacists have remained open, providing guidance, care and comfort to their patients and customers."

Cullity also noted the role the TWC network has played in the rollout of COVID-19 vaccination and booster shots, with the group administering 23% of all pharmacy delivered doses in Australia as of 12 Jan.

Over the last 12 months TWC pharmacists have administered more than one million vaccines - including COVID-19, flu and pertussis shots.

EBOS also noted that TWC has cemented its place as Australia's second largest pharmacy advertiser.



Dispensary Corner

KEEPING fit during COVID-19-induced lockdowns was a challenge for many of us with gyms closed and personal trainers restricted to coaching one client at a time.

However, Sydney-based gym-junkie, Steve Ayad, worked his way around the rules to get his fix by trading access to a St George facility for cocaine, when his local gym was forced to close due to COVID restrictions.

Ayad's exercise plans were exposed when he was arrested by NSW Police on 21 Jul 2021, after an extensive surveillance campaign, the *Daily Telegraph* reported.

Sutherland Local Court heard that in the five weeks leading up to Ayad's arrest, NSW Police intercepted more than 25,000 calls and text messages, which revealed his secret workouts.

"On 07 Jul 2021 the accused contacted (a male associate) in relation to gaining access to a gym to use during the Covid-19 public health order lockdown which has closed all gyms," court papers reported.

"Police allege the accused arranged for people to supply cocaine to (the gym owner) in exchange for access to his gym during the COVID lockdown."

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EDITORIAL

Editor in Chief and Publisher – Bruce Piper

Editor – Nicholas O'Donoghue

Contributors – Adam Bishop,

Myles Stedman

info@pharmacydaily.com.au

ADVERTISING AND MARKETING

Sean Harrigan, Hoda Alzubaidi

advertising@pharmacydaily.com.au

BUSINESS MANAGER

Jenny Piper

accounts@pharmacydaily.com.au

Suite 1, Level 2, 64 Talavera Rd
Macquarie Park NSW 2113 Australia
PO Box 1010 Epping NSW 1710 Australia
Tel: 1300 799 220 (+61 2 8007 6760)

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