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## Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features two pages of news, plus a full page from Nova Pharmaceuticals.

## Elactalyte deal

NOVA Pharmaceuticals is launching its new electrolyte range, Elactalyte, with a \$60 e-voucher deal.

See page three for more.

## EMA backs Pfizer booster for teens

THE European Medicines Agency (EMA) has approved the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine as a booster for children aged 12 years and older.

The EMA's human medicines committee said that the available evidence was sufficient to conclude that the immune response to a booster dose in adolescents would be at least equal to that in adults.

The EMA has also approved Moderna's vaccine for children aged six to 11 years.

# RACGP attacks on NQPSP 'unhinged'

MEDICAL groups are being accused of peddling "falsehoods" about the North Queensland Pharmacy Scope of Practice Pilot (NQPSP), to retain control over patients, rather than deliver better patient outcomes.

Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) spokesperson, Dr Krystyna de Lange, said that the pilot program was "a disaster waiting to happen", adding that it would "lead to a fragmentation of care".

"It is proposed that pharmacists will – completely unsupervised – diagnose, treat and prescribe for serious conditions after undertaking a course equivalent to around three weeks full time training," she said.

"After that, they will have the license to manage health conditions which, if not handled carefully, can prove fatal.

"I cannot overstate how dangerous this is.

"Quality primary care is founded in continuity and a collaborative, team-based approach.

"The GP won't be aware of what the pharmacist is doing and vice versa, so we will struggle to achieve that continuity of care, which is so vital - especially for people with

complex health needs including multiple chronic conditions.

"The left hand won't know what the right hand is up to, and I strongly believe that this will lead to adverse health outcomes."

However, Pharmacy Guild of Australia Queensland Branch President, Chris Owen, told Pharmacy Daily that the College's attacks on the trial were "unhinged".

"Clearly, the RACGP's new motto is 'never let the facts get in the way of a press release'.

"Their ongoing attacks on the ethics and professionalism of pharmacists together with their attacks on the regulator, Queensland Health, are unhinged.

"Claiming that the NQPSP will 'fragment care and lead to poorer patient health outcomes' is just fiction – how would they know – the pilot hasn't commenced yet.

"Not surprisingly, the RACGP can't provide any evidence to back up their falsehoods.

"Why? Because the international evidence from the UK and Canada clearly shows the substantial benefits to patients and health



systems from utilising pharmacists to their full scope of practice.

"The RACGP fails to recognise that they are not the only prescribers in our health care system, we have nurse practitioners, physios in emergency departments in Queensland, optometrists and podiatrists – attacking the skills and expertise of non medical prescribers is all about control.

"It's clear that the RACGP wants to control patients not produce better patient outcomes."

Meanwhile, Mackay-based GP, Dr Stephanie Dawson-Smith, has launched an online petition urging the Queensland Government to drop plans for the NQPSP, which has received more than 5,000 signatures to-date.

## NPS COVID treatment information hub

PHARMACISTS will be able to access key information about recently approved antiviral and monoclonal antibody medicines that can be used to treat COVID-19, through NPS MedicineWise's new hub.

The hub will provide clinical information, resources and links to help health professionals and their patients stay up to date with the latest approvals,

evidence and guidance.

Frequently asked questions about the use of COVID-19 oral antiviral medicines in residential aged care will be available through the hub.

It will also include a medicine table summarising key information about oral antivirals, molnupiravir and nirmatrelvir, and the intravenous medication, sotrovimab.

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## Dispensary Corner

**EFFORTS** to expand pharmacists' scope of practice are moving up a notch in the UK, with one pharmacy group hoping to deliver new services including in-store births, liposuction and dental procedures.

Alitam founder and CEO, Feisal Nahaboo, said that the COVID-19 pandemic had seen medical professionals gravitate towards cooperating with pharmacists to deliver health services during lockdowns.

"This is creating an organic process whereby diverse medical disciplines don't just collaborate, they work together under one roof," he said.

"It is now clear that within a decade we will see new medical and wellbeing centres, which we are labelling 'super pharmacies', transforming the healthcare system in all aspects."

Nahaboo said the pharmacies would slash waiting times for health services and deliver on-demand healthcare, while relieving pressure on the public system.

Dispensary Corner suspects that the 'super pharmacy' model would not be welcomed with open arms by medical professionals in Australia.

## Vax pay gap 'insulting'

**DISCREPANCIES** between the funding models for administering COVID-19 vaccines through general practice and community pharmacies are "insulting" the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) National President, Associate Professor Chris Freeman, believes.

Freeman reiterated the PSA's call for pay parity for pharmacies and GPs providing the same vaccination service, while welcoming the Therapeutic Goods Administration's (TGA's) decision to approve Moderna's Spikevax for children aged six years and older.

The PSA president noted that under the current funding model metropolitan-based pharmacies receive \$8.45 less for administering an initial dose of a COVID-19 vaccine to a child than GPs in similar locations.

Freeman called on the Federal Government to launch a Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) service for pharmacists to ensure the viability of pharmacy-based vaccination services.

"When it comes to vaccinations, you are receiving exactly the same service irrespective of location. However, huge discrepancies still remain between pharmacist remuneration and that of other health providers," he said.

"Despite providing exactly the same service to an equally high standard, a discrepancy of \$8.45 to that of other health providers



still remains for pharmacists administering childhood doses.

"It is simply insulting.

"Toward the end of last year, we saw what can be achieved with better resourcing, as a \$10 increase to vaccination payments for boosters precipitated record weeks of vaccinations - but now it is time for the Government to take the next step and remunerate pharmacists equally by providing a single MBS payment.

"This is critical to keeping the vaccine rollout program on track, particularly in relation to childhood vaccines, where they have reverted back to very low payments for pharmacists.

"Subsequently, only half of the pharmacy network has opted to provide immunisations to this group.

"How much longer is it going to take them to recognise just how nonsensical this is?"

## API deal delivers boost for MDR

**MEDTECH** firm, MedAdvisor's (MDR's) five-year deal with Australian Pharmaceutical Industries (API), which was signed in Jul 2021 (PD 30 Jul 2021), is already bearing fruit, the company says.

Announcing its results for the first half of the 2022 financial year, MDR reported its pharmacy network grew from 3,700 stores at 30 Jun 2021 to more than 4,000 as of 31 Dec 2021 - an increase of 11.2%.

"This has been driven in part by the signing of a five-year contract with API in Jul and the company's investment in its sales capability and capacity," MDR CEO, Robert Read, said.

Read noted that annual recurring revenue from the Australian pharmacy sector was up 30.4% to \$7.7 million, while pharmacy churn has remained below 3% on an annualised basis.

The company also reported that its patient users numbers jumped 35.7% in the first half of the financial year to 2.4 million.

Read added that while the company was seeking to continue to grow its overseas business, it remains committed to delivering health programs in the Australian market.

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