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Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features two pages of news.

Free RATs make economic sense

IMPLEMENTING a policy making rapid antigen tests (RATs) freely available to all Australians is "highly likely to be cost-effective", researchers from Flinders University believe.

In an article published in The Conversation, the authors said, "even minor reduction in COVID-19 transmission rates due to increased early isolation would justify the additional costs associated with the policy".

Constraining the spread of COVID is important for many reasons, including avoiding short- and long-term health effects, [and] reducing burden on the health system," they said.

"Easy and equitable access to testing is a cornerstone of the public health response

"It also makes economic sense."

Numbers don't stack up for Woolies

RETAIL powerhouse, Woolworths, will not pursue its proposed \$872 million takeover bid of pharmacy wholesaler, Australian Pharmaceutical Industries (API) (PD breaking news).

In a statement to the Australian Securities Exchange (ASX) this morning the Woolworths Group said that, after reviewing API's books the proposed deal (PD 02 Dec 2021) did not stack up.

"Following the completion of a comprehensive due diligence process, Woolworths Group has advised API that it has withdrawn its proposal as it has not been able to validate the financial returns it requires in line with the group's capital allocation framework," the statement said.

Woolworths is the second bidder to pull the pin on a bid to take control of API in recent months, with rival wholesaler, Sigma Healthcare, abandoning its cash plus scrip offer in Nov 2021 (PD 05 Nov 2021) due to the "context of the competitive bid process, with its changing transaction and economic considerations".

The move leaves Wesfarmers in pole position to secure API and its coveted Priceline Sister Club loyalty



scheme database.

The Western Australian retail conglomerate currently holds a 19.3% stake in API, which it had pledged to use to block Woolworths' bid (PD 15 Dec 2021), with the API Board confirming that the Scheme Implementation Deed (SID) announced by the companies after Sigma's withdrawal (PD 08 Nov 2021), "remains in place and is on track of completion in the first quarter of calendar year 2022".

Commenting on Woolworths' decision to withdraw its bid, a spokesperson for the Pharmacy Guild of Australia said it highlighted the recognition that providing

healthcare and delivering quality use of medicines was different from the provision of normal items of commerce.

"The Guild acknowledges and thanks Woolworths for its interest in our sector," the spokesperson said.

"We also would like to thank them for their consultation with the Guild throughout the process."

The spokesperson also voiced the organisation's appreciations that the supermarket giant has committed to the voluntary code of practice for limiting the sale of COVID-19 rapid antigen tests to help ensure access to them.

Telehealth meds reviews to continue

ACCREDITED pharmacists will continue to be authorities to provide Home Medicine Reviews (HMRS) and Residential Medication Management Reviews (RMMRs) via telehealth "for the immediate future".

The Pharmacy Programs Administrator (PPA) noted the Commonwealth Department of Health had also backed the continued use of telehealth

services for the provision of the MedsCheck program.

The PPA noted that the Department will review the programs in the coming weeks to decide whether there is a need to further extend the use of telehealth arrangements based on the progress of the pandemic.

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Workforce shortages increase stress

PHARMACY workforce shortages combined with the pressures of the COVID-19 pandemic are increasing the risk of pharmacists experiencing burnout, Pharmacists' Support Service Executive Officer, Kay Dunkley, warns.

Speaking on the latest episode of Raven's Recruitment's *Your Pharmacy Career Podcast*, Dunkley said getting a good work/life balance was key to reducing the risk of burnout.

"It's easy for me to say these things and much harder [to do], particularly given there's currently a shortage of pharmacists," she said.

"There's people who can't get a locum, who can't take holidays, can't fill shifts so they're working extra shifts - it really does put a lot of pressure on pharmacists.

"And look it's happening right across the healthcare sector - there's a big shortage of nurses and doctors in public hospitals at the moment simply because people are just taking time off, or leaving because they're burnt out.

"That then creates more stress for the people who are still there, so we've really got to look at how in our day-to-day lives we can integrate adequate rest and recovery breaks."



Dunkley stressed the importance of taking lunch breaks and finding a way to relax during the working day, whether through meditation or getting out for a walk.

"Taking breaks is critical," she said. "You do get into this mouse wheel when you just go, go, go, and you don't think you can stop, but it's really important to stop."

While encouraging pharmacists to manage their workloads and stress levels throughout the day is important, Dunkley added that taking holidays was also key to reducing their risk of burnout.

"In the long-term having holidays regularly is critical," she said.

"You don't relax having a long

weekend.

"You don't fully relax even having a week off, you need to have a couple of weeks off.

"Even though it can be hard to find locums, you won't be able to keep going unless you do take some holidays and refresh."

Dunkley's advice comes as surging COVID-19 cases heap further pressure on the workforce, with pharmacy owners reporting calling staff back from annual leave to keep stores open.

CLICK HERE to listen to the podcast.

MEANWHILE pharmacists experiencing stress can seek support from the PSS on 1300 244 910.



Dispensary Corner

SPANISH pharmacists are warning patients against buying COVID-19 rapid antigen test kits (RATs) through unauthorised retailers.

With demand for RATs surging around the globe, the College of Pharmacists of Malaga has said non-pharmacy retailers were unlikely to know how to store the tests appropriately, which could lead to users recording inaccurate results.

"Buying the tests in pharmacies is a guarantee for patients against insecurity and the multiple risks involved of acquiring them in other shops," the College's President, Francisco Florida, said.

"A clear example of this are the conditions under which the tests must be kept and that can hardly be fulfilled outside of pharmacies.

"It may be the case that you take a test not purchased at the pharmacy, it comes out negative... when in reality the test was defective and you have COVID-19."

RACGP warns GPs are at breaking point

GROWING pressure on primary care providers is pushing general practice to breaking point, the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) warns.

RACGP President, Dr Karen Price, said the sector needed more support urgently to meet the demands placed on it by the COVID-19 pandemic.

With the nation shifting from

PCR testing as the primary diagnostic tool to rapid antigen tests, Price called for the implementation of a system to record positive cases.

"GPs simply don't have the administrative capacity to officially lodge all COVID-19 cases, so we need governments to step up and set up a system so that all cases are recorded and everyone has access to care," she said.



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