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Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features two pages of news.

RAT order issues

PHARMACISTS are being left in the dark about when they can expect fresh supplies of rapid antigen test kits (RATs), Charnwood Capital Chemist proprietor, Samantha Kourtis, told *ABC News* this morning.

The Canberra-based pharmacist told the broadcaster that she had thousands of RATs on backorder across a number of wholesalers, but had no idea when they would be delivered, or how many would be coming.

"What we're experiencing is that sometimes those backorders get cancelled," she said.

"[Or] it might also be that we've got 100 on backorder, but only three get supplied, and we're not being told in advance."

Kourtis added that pharmacists were experiencing a surge in demand for RATs following the changes in COVID-19 testing requirements.

Tas behind on kids' COVAX campaign

STATE-BASED legislation is blocking Tasmanian community pharmacies from joining the childhood COVID-19 vaccination program (COVAX) alongside more than 1,500 stores across the country.

The immunisation program for children aged five to 11 years officially commenced this morning, following the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) granting approval for the use of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine in that cohort, early last month (*PD* 06 Dec 2021).

While other jurisdictions have implemented legislation to enable pharmacists to administer COVAX in line with TGA approvals, or moved to amend rules to enable pharmacists to provide the shots to children, Pharmacy Guild of Australia Tasmanian Branch President, Helen O'Byrne, said no such measures have been implemented on the Apple Isle.

"We believe it is a mistake to limit vaccination options for this cohort to specialised child vaccination clinics and some GPs", she said.

"Community pharmacies have trusted and established relationships with many Tasmanian parents and our members are

already fielding enquiries from parents looking to have their children vaccinated.

"Crucially, pharmacies are located within local communities, with extended opening hours, making them easily accessible for time poor parents."

Pharmaceutical Society of Australia Tasmanian Branch President, David Peachey, said that bringing community pharmacies into the fold would be critical to the program's success.

"Throughout the pandemic pharmacists have continued to work hard for their communities", Peachey said.

"We see opportunity to further take pressure off Government hubs and general practice and feel we should be given the choice to offer parents of children in this age group the option to choose their local community pharmacy."

Speaking after the launch of the childhood vaccination program yesterday, Guild National President, Trent Twomey, said the rollout was an important step in Australia's efforts to protect people from the virus.

Having had both of his children immunised against COVID-19,



Twomey stressed the safety of the vaccine amongst younger patients.

"Research has shown no serious reactions in children aged five to 11 [years] who have received the vaccine, and the most common side effect is a bit of a sore arm," he said.

"And it is highly effective, with the research showing it to be 90% effective in preventing confirmed COVID-19 cases."

While the childhood vaccine rollout has officially commenced, there have been reports that a number of pharmacies and general practice clinics have experienced delays in receiving stock, or fewer doses delivered, than ordered.

Reliance on pulse oximeters concerning

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has warned that an overreliance on pulse oximeters to monitor COVID-19 patients at home "could lead to suboptimal" outcomes.

In a statement issued today the regulator noted that during the pandemic there has been an increase in demand for the devices to help estimate blood oxygen levels and assist in the

treatment of infected patients.

However, the TGA noted "recent reports have highlighted multiple factors, including skin pigmentation, can impact the accuracy of pulse oximeters".

"Some studies have shown pulse oximeters may overestimate oxygen saturation levels in people with darker skin pigmentation," the regulator reported.



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Dispensary Corner

CANADIAN authorities appear to have found a key trigger to boost COVID-19 vaccination rates - simply by introducing new restrictions at liquor and recreational cannabis stores.

The country's Health Minister, Christian Dube, has confirmed a quadrupling of demand for jobs after announcing that vaccine passports would be required to enter grog shops and marijuana locations in Quebec from 18 Jan.

First-dose appointments surged from 1,500 per day to more than 6,000 in the wake of the news, with Dube warning that other non-essential services could be added to the list of places requiring vaccination for entry as the country aims to limit the spread of the Omicron variant.

AND while we're on the subject of the pandemic, a Texas woman has been charged for endangering a child, after arriving at a COVID-19 testing site with her teenage son in the boot of her car.

Police were called to the Houston testing site established for the local school district after an official discovered the 13-year-old in the trunk.

The woman said she had put the boy in the boot because he had previously tested positive for COVID-19, and she wanted to isolate him en route to getting an updated test result.

She's now been charged with "felony child endangerment" over the incident, and has also been placed on administrative leave from the school district where she was also on staff.

Workforce issues need to be resolved

CURRENT pharmacy workforce challenges are increasingly being cited as a factor being considered by owners looking to sell stores, the latest *Attain Pharmacy Market Sentiment Survey* reveals.

Data collected in Nov 2021 found more than 41% of owners had reported that the availability of pharmacists would impact their plans to sell a store - up from 23% for the Aug 2021 survey.

Attain Director, Natalie Sirianni, said the survey had found that close to two-in-five owners were considering selling a pharmacy in the next five years, with 18% planning to bring in a junior partner, rather than selling out of their business completely.

When it came to buyer intentions, 57% of respondents reported that they were looking to purchase a pharmacy, with 18% hoping to acquire a store within the coming six months.

With strong demand from pharmacists looking to get into



ownership, and owners looking to acquire an additional pharmacy, the report found that more than 60% of respondents forecast that prices will increase in 2022, with close to 28% believing they will stay flat.

"The results from the Nov 2021 pharmacy market sentiment survey show that the pharmacy business sales market continues to be quite strong and indicates that this will likely continue," Sirianni said.

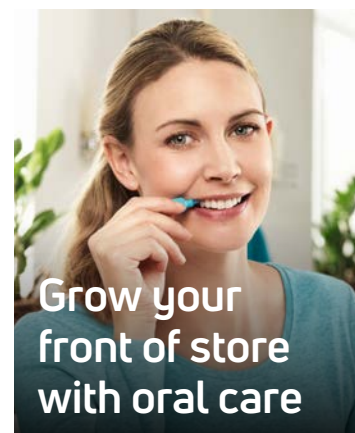
"There is very positive market sentiment for the pharmacy business sales market from both

buyers and sellers.

"The issue of pharmacist workforce is a key one that has presented itself in the data and we are hearing similar views from many of our clients.

"This will likely be a key issue that pharmacy needs to address moving forward."

Meanwhile, Sirianni said that Attain donated \$1,020 - or \$10 for each survey respondent - to the Pharmacists' Support Service.



Grow your front of store with oral care

TGA investigates pharmacies' RAT sales

SEVERAL pharmacies are being investigated by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) following a stream of complaints regarding the repackaging and sale of individual rapid antigen test kits (RATs), *The Age* reports.

At least one Victorian pharmacy is alleged to have sold RATs to the general public that had been approved for use by health professionals, rather than for self-testing.

Pathology Technology Australia CEO, David Whiting, told the publication that the company had complained to the regulator about cases where its test kits -

which have not been approved for home testing - have been split into individual units and resold.

"Splitting up rapid antigen test kits, approved for professional use, and selling them for self-testing is an illegal and inappropriate use of these test kits," he said.

"[This] could take tests away from aged care and healthcare facilities and essential workplaces, where they are vital for keeping people safe."

One pharmacy owner whose store is under the microscope said the products have been removed from sale.

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