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AUSTRALIAN OWNED

## Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features two pages of news.

## Sign up to THN

PHARMACISTS are being encouraged to register to participate in the free Take Home Naloxone (THN) program, by professional indemnity insurer, Pharmaceutical Defence Limited (PDL).

In a practice alert the insurer said it "supports the free supply of naloxone" to patients deemed to be at risk of experiencing or witnessing an opioid overdose, or adverse event.

PDL also warned pharmacists to be vigilant when checking the validity of prescriptions for Schedule 8 medications, noting it "continues to see notifications involving forged prescriptions".

# Guild pushes for OTC COVID antivirals

HEALTH officials are being urged to authorise pharmacists to prescribe COVID-19 antivirals, to boost timely access to the medications.

Speaking on the ABC's RN Drive program yesterday, Pharmacy Guild of Australia Acting National President, Nick Panayiaris, said that given the importance of having patients commence treatment within five days of the onset of COVID-19 symptoms, Australia should follow New Zealand, the US and a number of other jurisdictions in empowering pharmacists to initiate treatment.

"We feel we can provide a solution in terms of timely access and utilisation of these medicines in a timely manner, by being able to prescribe under a protocol for certain patients," he said.

"We deal with patients every day and we do a lot of the background checking, in terms of interactions and appropriate use of medicines - that's the core of what we do.

"This is genuinely about patient access to medicines."

Panayiaris said that arguments against the expansion of pharmacists' scope of practice to enable them to prescribe, echoed views that were made about the profession's ability to administer COVID-19 vaccinations.

"We've done 7.7 million of them, but apparently we couldn't do them because of the fact that we weren't competent enough," he said.

"Yes they are very different tasks at the end of the day, but we've proven that when there is a case for timely access, especially to medication, or any of those services, when it's within our competencies to, and with any training that's required, that we can meet the challenge."

However, Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) NSW/ACT Chair, Dr Charlotte Hespe, told the ABC that authorising pharmacist prescribing of COVID-19 antivirals would not improve current access issues for patients.



"At the moment the big time delay for an awful lot of our patients is not about getting the prescription, it's actually getting the medication," she said.

"A vast number - particularly in my state of NSW - of the pharmacists don't even have the medications and it takes them 24/48 hours to access the medication.

"So I need them [pharmacists] to spend their time getting the medications on their shelves, then doing the checking and dispensing."

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## Dispensary Corner

**UNACUSTOMED** to sunshine and dry weather, Irish people are being urged to follow Australia's slip, slop, slap, seek and slide advice as temperatures soar this week.

While other parts of Europe are sweltering with the mercury hitting 40°C, residents of the island nation are being warned to protect themselves against oppressive conditions of close to 26°C.

Dublin-based pharmacist, Thomas Conefrey, stressed that while getting out in the sun would boost vitamin D levels "we should all be taking some common-sense steps to make sure that we do not over-expose ourselves to the sun".

"It is really important that everyone enjoys the warm weather responsibly and to visit their local pharmacy for advice on how to protect themselves," he said.

Conefrey added that in addition to applying sunscreen regularly, follically challenged people should wear hats.

## Cyber preparedness key

**INCREASING** digitalisation in the health sector is forcing community pharmacy owners to look to measures to bolster their cyber-security, the latest *CommBank Pharmacy Insights* report reveals.

The Commonwealth Bank of Australia's (CBA's) 2022 report found the sector has become increasingly confident in the use of digital technologies, including electronic prescriptions.

Launching the report, CBA Health CEO, Albert Naffah, said pharmacists were now looking to the next phase of digital opportunities and strengthening their protections against cyber risks.

"As community pharmacists leverage the benefits of digital technology, they are also being careful to deploy optimum security systems to safely protect their patients' data privacy and guard against the threat of cybersecurity incidents," he said.

Naffah noted that pharmacists have welcomed the rollout of electronic prescriptions, moving away from paper systems, a shift that has also been backed by patients who increasingly expect digital services to manage their medications and repeats.

"This has driven innovation in



operations and business models including offering new services, exploring new roles and an increase in digital channels," he said.

"Digitisation creates tremendous opportunities to better connect the patient journey.

"Greater awareness of and access to e-scripts is a key enabler of this.

"While paper and fax options for prescriptions remains prominent, most pharmacists are positioning for a continued uptake in e-scripts among patients and healthcare professionals."

Meanwhile, the report found that pharmacy owners were optimistic about growth drivers, including the expansion of professional services, the creation of new revenue streams and population growth.

## TWC launches diabetes clinic

**TERRYWHITE** Chemmart (TWC) is rolling out a new education program to support the network's pharmacists to better care for patients living with diabetes.

The program, developed in partnership with Sanofi, will be a clinic offer to help identify patients with Type 2 diabetes and provide support to establish a healthcare plan to better control they symptoms.

TWC Chief Pharmacist, Brenton Hart, said the program presents a new opportunity through structured and blended learning for pharmacists to improve their knowledge "in this complex area of practice".

"We know that through education we can help patients better manage their condition, and we are building a reputation for being the pharmacy brand of choice for patients living with diabetes," he said.

Hart added that the group was committed to delivering world-class education and innovation to TWC pharmacists.

## DRAW THE LINE... when it comes to Children's Pain Relief



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