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Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features three pages of news plus a full page from Australia Biotechnology Group.

Planet Remedy

BLENDING essential oils together, Australia Biotechnology Group's Planet Remedy range aims to provide relief from common ailments. See **cover page** for more.

Infant COVAX

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has granted provisional approval for a paediatric dose of Moderna's COVID-19 vaccine (COVAX) for use in children aged six months to less than five years.

Under the approval two doses of the vaccine should be administered 28 days apart.

Pharmacists picking up COVAX pace

COMMUNITY pharmacists are currently administering more doses of COVID-19 vaccines (COVAX) every day than general practitioners, following the decision to expand eligibility for second booster shots.

With Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) data showing more than eight million COVAX doses have been delivered through the pharmacy network, Pharmacy Guild of Australia Acting National President, Nick Panayiaris, stressed the need for pharmacists to keep up the pace.

"The dedication and commitment of community pharmacists and their staff has helped to vaccinate millions of Australians across the country," he said.

"But we must not be complacent and with the current rise in COVID-19 case numbers, it is more important than ever for people to get their vaccinations and their boosters.

"The number of people who

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have already had a vaccination in a community pharmacy highlights the confidence patients have in their highly skilled and trained community pharmacist.

"People trust their pharmacists and pharmacy staff.

"We still have a way to go with the current surge of cases and combined with the flu this winter, protection through vaccination is critical. It is also important to get your flu vaccination.

"And getting that protection

through community pharmacies is easy and accessible.

"Pharmacies are open late and at weekends, and this reflects the willingness of community pharmacists to adapt and adjust to meet the needs of people wanting to get a COVID-19 vaccination.

"This is highlighted by data from the Department of Health, which shows that at present community pharmacies are daily delivering more COVID-19 vaccinations than general practitioners."



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*Reference: 1. Lang C, et al., *Planta Med* 2015;81:968-974. Supported by Engelhard Arzneimittel GmbH & Co. KG.



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PPA seeks RAT scheme extension

PLANS to halt the COVID-19 rapid antigen test (RAT) Concessional Access Scheme at the end of this month should be scrapped, union group, Professional Pharmacists Australia (PPA), believes.

With case numbers increasing across the country, PPA CEO, Jill McCabe, urged the Federal Government to reverse its plans to pull the pin on free RATs for concession cardholders.

"As much as we'd all like the COVID-19 pandemic to be over, the reality is infections and hospitalisation rates are rapidly increasing, as the new Omicron variants take their toll," she said.

"We must acknowledge that with spiraling rates of COVID-19 infections, vulnerable Australians need more help than ever to protect their health.

"The provision of free rapid antigen tests has been vital in helping the elderly, people living with a disability and immunocompromised people to

monitor their health and exposure to COVID-19.

"The Federal Government must continue to provide free rapid antigen tests to concession cardholders to ensure these important members of our community are adequately supported and that their health is better protected."

McCabe's call for the scheme to be extended followed similar appeals from the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia and the Pharmacy Guild of Australia (*PD* 13 Jul).

PSA National President, Dr Fei Sim, said "governments should be encouraging more testing, not less", while Acting Guild National President, Nick Panayiaris, said the move was "at odds with everything else being done at the moment".

"With cases surging we need every means available to help the most vulnerable in our community manage the impact of the virus to keep them as safe as possible.

"If the scheme is removed it will



add pressure to government testing hubs and also potentially add to delays in accessing antivirals - delays that could see patients unable to get these medications within the required five days of the first symptoms appearing."

However, Minister for Health and Aged Care, Mark Butler, said it was "about the right time" to end the scheme.

"The price has come down dramatically," he said.

"Pensioners and concession cardholders can still get their allocation of up to 10 tests before the end of this month, which should carry them through for a period of time."

MDR revenue growth continues

MEDTECH firm, MedAdvisor (MDR), is reporting 43.7% growth in its Australian business' operating revenue for the 2022 financial year.

In a statement to the Australian Securities Exchange (ASX), the company reported the growth was attributable to increased transaction fees, driven by COVID-19 and flu vaccination campaigns, and increased usage from Australian Pharmaceutical Industries (API) pharmacy franchisees, who started using MDR last year, and software as a service (SaaS) fees.

As of 30 Jun, more than 2.9 million Australians were using MDR - up from 2 million on 30 Jun 2021 - with patient orders increasing by more than 50% year-on-year, with in-app payments up 87% for the same period.

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Dispensary Corner

SUGGESTIONS that Uruguayan pharmacies would be haunted by “gangs of zombies” after the sector was authorised to dispense recreational cannabis in 2017, have proven to be unfounded, *La Prensa Latina*, reports.

Five years on from the legalisation of the drug, the initial rush to access the drug has waned, and pharmacists have reported that it is sold “without any problems”.

Former Secretary General of the Uruguayan National Drug Board, Milton Romani, noted the decision had not been met with a surge in use.

“There were no gangs of zombies that attacked pharmacies, as some predicted,” he said.

“The scientific research has shown that cannabis legalisation and regulation have not increased consumption.

“Chile hasn’t regulated or legalised (marijuana), and it has more consumption than Uruguay.

“In Uruguay, it grew a little at first but now has stabilised.”



Concessional cannabis

MEDICINAL cannabis producer, MedReleaf, is expanding its concessional access scheme to improve supply of pharmaceutical-grade products for concession cardholders.

Under the scheme, patients who have a Commonwealth Seniors Health Card, a Veterans Card, a Pensioner Concession Care or a Health Care Card and an active Centrelink Customer Reference Number, will be able to access selected products, when they are prescribed under the Therapeutic Goods Administration’s (TGA’s) Special Access Scheme or by an authorised prescriber.

Speaking to *Pharmacy Daily*, MedReleaf Chief Operations Officer, Nathan Davis, said the program was “all about patient access”, and preventing patients from turning to illegal sources to get cannabis.

“We’ve got an illicit market that we need to disrupt,” he said.

“This is around trying to provide



the same quality product to concessional patients as general patients... we’ll do whatever we can to make medicinal cannabis accessible [to patients in need].”

Under the concession program, eligible patients will be able to access medicinal cannabis in oil and dried flower preparations, under the IndiMed brand, from \$55.

MedReleaf stressed the scheme is only available to concession cardholders, not their dependents listed on the card.

Pharmacy slammed over data sale

US-BASED pharmacy chain, Walgreens, is facing criticism for allegedly selling loyalty scheme data regarding a woman’s purchase of a pregnancy test to baby formula brand, Enfamil.

In a post on Twitter, the woman said she had used her rewards card when buying the test and received a gift hamper containing baby formula and a box of bottles.

“There is a formula shortage, and yet Enfamil is sending on formula all willy-nilly based on the data you clearly sold them,” she said in a tweet to Walgreens.

The woman added that the gift box was insensitive to women who may be struggling to



conceive, while also noting that such marketing efforts could put women in abusive relationships at risk if their partners intercept it.

“I am aware that our data is bought and sold, especially through the use of rewards cards, but this is a lot bigger than sending me a coupon in the mail,” she said.



Guild Update

Pharmacy of the Year nominations

NOMINATIONS for the prestigious Pharmacy Guild of Australia’s 2023 Pharmacy of the Year awards close on 31 July 2022 so there is still time to get entries in.

The awards are recognised as the benchmark for excellence in the community pharmacy sector. They seek to identify highly motivated and adaptable pharmacy practices which stand out for their delivery of innovative and effective healthcare to support their community.

The awards are sponsored by Care Pharmaceuticals whose General Manager, Jonathan Biddle, said his company continued to be proud of its involvement in an event that celebrated excellence in the profession.

“The opening up of public nominations has been a great initiative and means we are hearing about more and more brilliant pharmacies,” he said.

The category winners and overall winner of the Guild Pharmacy of the Year awards will be announced at the 2023 APP Conference, held on 23-26 March 2023 at the Gold Coast Convention Centre.

Nominate [HERE](#).

