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Free flu jabs put pressure on supplies

COMMUNITY pharmacies could see shortages of supplies of influenza vaccines in the coming weeks, with demand for free shots through state-funded programs expected to exceed the number of doses pre-ordered for the 2022 flu season, industry sources claim.

One Community Pharmacy Obligation (CSO) wholesalers has told pharmacies that flu shot “suppliers have advised that all their holdings are fully exhausted” (**PD** breaking news).

The wholesaler added the State Governments had given them “no prior notice of these programs”.

A second source confirmed that CSO wholesalers made orders for flu vaccines in line with pre-orders from pharmacies at the end of 2021, noting that low demand for flu jabs last year had left them carrying the cost of large quantities of unused vaccines.

They added that wholesalers are now directing pharmacies to state-based National Immunisation



Program centres to seek access to vaccines, but said they were being sent back to the wholesalers.

“There is no inventory in our distribution centres,” they said.

A total of 16.8 million flu vaccines have been released by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) since Mar, 9.2 million of which have been allocated for patients who are eligible for National Immunisation Program-funded jabs, while 7.6 million doses have been allocated

to the private market.

Meanwhile the latest With Vaccines Influenza Report Card revealed people aged five to 19 years, adults aged 20 to 24 years and children under five years have the highest flu notification rates this year.

Despite being eligible for flu shots through the NIP the report found that “to date just 14% of children under five years have received their annual influenza vaccine”.

Today's issue of **PD**

Pharmacy Daily today features two pages of news, plus full pages from:

- **Flordis**
- **MIMS June Update**

Career podcast

MELBOURNE-BASED pharmacists, Lisa Nguyen, shares her experiences as a pharmacist in the latest episode of Raven's Recruitment's *Your Pharmacy Career* podcast.

Nguyen is the founder of Astrid, a female-led dispensary with the vision to reinvent the traditional pharmacy model.

Astrid is a boutique specialty pharmacy, pioneering in cannabinoid medicine, plant-based therapies and nutraceuticals, located at the heart of South Yarra in Melbourne.

[CLICK HERE](#) to listen now.

Stores can opt-in to SA flu jab blitz

SOUTH Australian pharmacies are not obliged to participate in the State's free influenza vaccination program, a SA Health spokesperson told *ABC News*.

Following the announcement of the free jab scheme through community pharmacies and general practices last weekend, the State Government has confirmed providers can charge members of the public for administering shots.

“Providers were updated with information on how they can invoice for vaccines administered and be reimbursed for those

administered since 29 May,” SA Health said.

“While we encourage all health providers to join the scheme, it is not mandatory, and individual GPs and pharmacies may continue to charge for the vaccine.

“If patients have pre-paid for vaccines administered on or after 29 May, any potential reimbursement should be discussed between the provider and the patient.”

Pharmacy Guild of Australia SA Branch Director, Peter Schwarz, said the program was announced before SA Health made contact.

Blooms makes Top End debut in Darwin

BLOOMS The Chemist has launched itself into the Northern Territory, opening four pharmacies across Darwin.

Pharmacy proprietor, Claire Ross, who owns two of the new stores in Darwin Galleria and Darwin Plaza, said the brand's arrival in the NT would deliver support for patients living with chronic health conditions.

“Blooms The Chemist offers a range of important health services including blood pressure evaluation, diabetes monitoring, sleep apnoea testing, iron screening and perinatal advice,

with a strong purpose to improve outcomes around the two biggest health concerns in the Territory – diabetes and high blood pressure,” she said.

“Our Blooms The Chemist pharmacies expand the reach and support of community pharmacy in the Darwin area, providing essential health skills, knowledge and recommendations, working closely with other healthcare specialists in the Territory.”

Blooms CEO, Emmanuel Vavoulas, said the group was excited to enter the NT market.



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Dispensary Corner

NAVIGATING the legal system can be challenging, but generally speaking it's not a good time to make demands when you are the one sitting in the dock.

However, Italian-born anti-vaccination activist, Antonio Mureddu, who appeared before an Irish Court earlier this week facing a series of charges for motoring offences, has taken the unique approach of demanding an appearance fee for future hearings, after his case was adjourned until 13 Jun.

"I am standing here as a living man," he told the Court.

"I am here for this matter.

"If you are going to adjourn this it is going to cost you €1 million.

"I'm not coming next time."

However, police warned the 44-year-old conspiracy theorist that a warrant could be issued for his arrest if he did not attend the next hearing.

It is not the first time Mureddu has displayed a confrontational style, having previously stated that he did not accept the jurisdiction of the Court.

In addition to dealing with motoring offences, Mureddu is facing the prospect of a prison sentence for allegedly encouraging a seriously ill COVID-19 patient to leave the hospital where they were being treated, against medical advice (PD 29 Nov 2021).

The 67-year-old patient, Joe McCarron, ended up back in the hospital two days later, and succumbed to the virus.

Paine Tassie's Pharmacist of the Year

TASMANIAN Hospital pharmacist, Michelle Paine, has been named the State's 2022 Pharmacist of the Year.

Announcing the honour at the Tasmanian Pharmacist of the Year Awards last night, Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) State Chair, Kelly Beswick, lauded Paine's commitment to medicines safety and her service as the lead pharmacist in the implementation of the Medication Safety Smart Pump Project, across Tasmania's hospital system.

"Michelle has led major quality improvement and safety initiatives throughout her career, with this latest project resulting in a significant advancement in minimising medication errors in the use of intravenous medications," Beswick said.

"Michelle led a team of pharmacists to develop protocols for the smart pumps which incorporate a library of drugs, doses and infusion rates.

"There are now over 840 live IV medication protocols within Tasmanian public hospitals utilising the smart pump technology.

"This means that Tasmanians receiving IV medicines at any public hospital in the state will benefit from significantly safer treatment as a result of Michelle's work."

The awards, which are run by the SHPA, the Pharmacy Guild of Australia and the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) in conjunction with the University of Tasmania, also recognised the contributions of Launceston's Melissa Johnson, who was named as the Early Career Pharmacist of the Year, and Lifetime Achievement Award recipient, Robert Beaumont.

Guild Tasmanian Branch President, Helen O'Byrne, noted that Johnson had been recognised by peers for her commitment to the profession and for working to improve the wellbeing of the community.

"Since becoming a co-owner at TerryWhite Chemmart Mowbray in 2019 Melissa has championed medicine safety in her community, delivering thousands of vaccinations and investing in technology that has ensured continuity of care and improved levels of service for her patients,"



O'Byrne said.

Presenting the Lifetime Achievement Award, PSA Branch President, David Peachey described Beaumont as a "true quiet achiever and a role model for others".

"Rob is a genuine innovator and a 'gold standard pharmacist' who has worked across most sectors of pharmacy, including ownership of multiple pharmacies, public and private hospital practice, and for Medicare," he said.

"He has quickly embraced opportunities in new professional pharmacy services as they arise, implementing and delivering them with enthusiasm and skill – wound care, MedsChecks, sleep apnoea services and vaccinations to name but a few."

Sale and return on oral COVID drugs

PHARMACY owners are being encouraged to access sale and return arrangements to ensure they have supplies of oral COVID-19 medicines in their dispensaries.

In an alert to its members, the Pharmacy Guild of Australia has reported that MSD has extended its sale and return offer for Lagevrio (molnupiravir) to 31 Aug.

Under the conditions, MSD requires pharmacies to purchase the medication through their

preferred wholesaler by 31 Aug to access the offer, which is "only valid for the 'return' of one pack of Lagevrio when stock expires at the end of Jan 2023".

The Guild noted that the Commonwealth Department of Health has advised that sale and return arrangements are in place with wholesalers.

A number of wholesalers have confirmed that they will pass on sale and return arrangement to community pharmacies.

Philips cops fine

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has issued infringement notices totalling \$133,200 to Philips Electronics over breaches of the *Therapeutic Goods Act 1989*, relating to a number of its CPAP and bi-level PAP machines.

The regulator alleged that Philips failed to provide it with information in the timeframes required by law, in relation to the deterioration of 10 products.

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

New Products

- **Anifrolumab (Saphnelo)** is a human immunoglobulin G1 kappa monoclonal antibody that binds to subunit 1 of the type I interferon receptor (IFNAR1) with high specificity and affinity. This binding inhibits type I IFN signalling thereby blocking the biological activity of type I IFNs. Anifrolumab also induces the internalisation of IFNAR1, thereby reducing the levels of cell surface IFNAR1 available for receptor assembly. Blockade of receptor mediated type I IFN signalling inhibits IFN responsive gene expression as well as downstream inflammatory and immunological processes. Inhibition of type I IFN blocks plasma cell differentiation and normalises peripheral T-cell subsets, restoring the balance between adaptive and innate immunity that is dysregulated in multiple autoimmune disorders. *Saphnelo is indicated as add-on treatment in adults with moderate to severe, active systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE), despite standard therapy.* Saphnelo concentrate for infusion contains anifrolumab 300 mg/2 mL and is available in a pack size of 1 vial.
- **Bimekizumab (Bimzelx)** is a humanised IgG1/κ monoclonal antibody. It has two identical antigen binding regions that bind and neutralise IL-17A, IL-17F and IL-17AF cytokines. Levels of IL-17A and IL-17F are elevated in several immune mediated inflammatory diseases and drive chronic inflammation and damage across multiple tissues. In human *in vitro* disease models, dual neutralisation of both IL-17A and IL-17F with bimekizumab suppresses the expression of inflammation related genes and proteins to a greater extent than inhibition of IL-17A alone. *Bimzelx is indicated for the treatment of moderate to severe plaque psoriasis in adults who are candidates for systemic therapy or phototherapy.* Live vaccines are contraindicated in patients treated with Bimzelx. Bimzelx solution for injection contains bimekizumab 160 mg/mL and is available in a pack size of two 1 mL pre-filled pens.

New Indications

- **Lenvatinib (Lenvima)**, in combination with pembrolizumab, is now indicated for the first-line treatment of advanced renal cell carcinoma in adults.
- **Remdesivir (Veklury)** now has provisional approval for the treatment of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) in paediatric patients (at least 4 weeks of age and weighing at least 3 kg) who have pneumonia due to SARS-CoV-2 and who require supplemental oxygen; and adults and paediatric patients (weighing at least 40 kg) who do not require supplemental oxygen and who are at high risk of progressing to severe COVID-19.
- **Risankizumab (Skyrizi)** is now indicated for the treatment of active psoriatic arthritis in adults who have responded inadequately to or are intolerant to one or more disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drugs (DMARDs). Skyrizi may be used with or without conventional synthetic disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drugs (csDMARDs).
- **Testosterone (AndroForte 2)** is now indicated for the treatment of hypoactive sexual desire dysfunction in postmenopausal women.

New Contraindications

- **Clarithromycin (Klacid)** is now contraindicated in patients with hypomagnesaemia; and with concomitant lomitapide.
- **Methotrexate (DBL Methotrexate Injection)** is now contraindicated with live vaccines.
- **Testosterone (AndroForte 2)** is now contraindicated in patients with a history of thromboembolism and in women with normal reproductive function.

Safety Related Changes

- **Ertugliflozin (Steglatro)** is no longer contraindicated in patients with eGFR persistently < 45 mL/min (CKD stage 3B).
- **Ertugliflozin/metformin hydrochloride (Segluromet)** is no longer contraindicated in patients with eGFR persistently < 45 mL/min (CKD stage 3B).

This list is a summary of only some of the changes that have occurred over the last month. Before prescribing, always refer to the full product information.