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## Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features four pages of news.

## PBS Safety Net lowering in Jul

CUTS to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) Safety Net announced in the Federal Budget in May will come into effect from 01 Jul.

The measures will see the Safety Net for general patients fall from \$1,542.10 to \$1,457.10, while the concessional patient Safety Net will drop to \$244.80 from \$326.40.

The \$12.50 cut to the general co-payment promised by the new Federal Government during the election campaign will come into effect from 01 Jan 2023.



## Qld sees high demand for free flu vax

MORE than 78,000 Queenslanders have received a free influenza vaccination through the State's community pharmacy network since the program was announced two weeks ago, the Pharmacy Guild of Australia reports.

Guild Queensland Branch President, Chris Owen, said the scheme offering free shots to all Queenslanders who are not eligible for Commonwealth-funded flu jabs through the National Immunisation Program (NIP) has proven popular, with more than 112,000 bookings being made through the [www.qldfreevax.com.au](http://www.qldfreevax.com.au) website.

"There have been unprecedented numbers of people accessing our free online booking service," he said.

"The website has had more than 665,000 visits and over 112,000 bookings made since it was launched on 26 May.

"The Queensland Government's announcement on 23 May that all Queenslanders can receive a free influenza vaccination has accelerated the number of people getting their influenza vaccines, with over 78,230 free influenza vaccinations administered



in Queensland community pharmacies in that time.

"Since the beginning of March, we've had the privilege of administering more than 283,300 influenza vaccinations through community pharmacies in Queensland."

Owen noted that vaccine supply shortages have emerged following the surge in demand caused by the free vaccination program in Queensland and similar schemes in NSW, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and Western Australia.

However, he urged people to be patient and check on the Guild's booking website for appointments.

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".



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## RACGP against OTC budesonide push

WITH the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) set to review calls to down-schedule asthma preventer medication, budesonide, to Pharmacist-Only later this month, opposition is growing.

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) has hit out at suggestions that the scheduling change was needed to improve access to effective treatment patients with asthma, living in regional, rural, remote and very remote locations, and reduce their reliance on salbutamol.

The proposal suggests that budesonide should be moved to Schedule 3 when it is provided in single-ingredient inhalers for the maintenance treatment of asthma in people aged 12 years and older, where the maximum daily dose does not exceed 800 micrograms.

The unnamed organisation behind the push to down-schedule the medication noted that the pharmacy network is well distributed across

Australia, including in areas "underserved by other healthcare professionals".

It added that "pharmacists are highly trained healthcare professionals that could provide a greater contribution to the management of asthma for all patients".

However, in a submission to the TGA the RACGP said the move could be harmful for patients "given that pharmacists are not clinically trained to diagnose and treat asthma and there is potential for misdiagnosis that can risk patient safety".

Speaking with *Australian Doctor*, RACGP Expert Committee - Quality Care Chair, Professor Mark Morgan, said patients should be directed to their GP for treatment, rather than having a pharmacist provide the medicine over-the-counter (OTC).

"I'd actually go the other way and say, if patients are purchasing OTC salbutamol, it's important that questions are asked around control,



use and safety of that decision and that patients are encouraged to see their GP," he said.

"We need to be able to physically examine the lungs, work with spirometry and look at the patient's other medical conditions and lifestyle - all of that requires a comprehensive and long-term approach to care."

Morgan added that issues around access to GP services in rural areas was a myth in the age of telehealth.

## Supplements key to med reviews

PHARMACISTS are being urged to counsel patients on the use of dietary supplements, with the International Sports Pharmacists Network saying it is critical when conducting comprehensive medication reviews.

The organisation noted that discussions around supplement use was particularly important when it came to supporting athletes to make informed decisions.



## Nicorette launches quit support app

NICORETTE has partnered with behavioural support scientists to develop a Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) mouth spray with NRT usage tracking and structured counselling via a smartphone app.

Patients can 'spray, tap and track' through the Nicorette QuickMist SmartTrack when they experience cravings, and track their NRT usage via Near Field Communication (NFC) technology.

The technology assists healthcare professionals to create a personalised quit plan with achievable milestones, and allows them to monitor progress.

The app features motivation techniques such as a formal commitment statement; coping and relapse prevention tips; awareness of smoking behaviour; and a personalised quit journey.

The product was developed in response to increasing demand among Australian smokers for more digital support on their quitting journey, according to recent research, with 88% seeking to access their health information digitally, and nearly 60% using smartphones to track health stats.

Nicorette claims that patients are 2.5x more likely to quit using Nicorette QuickMist SmartTrack.

## California state takes on big pharma

THE Californian Government is preparing to take on the state's three major pharmaceutical companies by producing its own line of generic prescription medication and selling it at below-market value.

The bill (SB-852), which allows the state's top health agency to partner with one or more drug companies by Jan 2023 to make or distribute a broad range of generic or biosimilar drugs that are cheaper than brand-name products, was overwhelmingly approved this week.

"People need these drugs, but prices are through the roof, so we're saying there's a role for

the state to bring prices down," said the bill's author, state Sen. Richard Pan (D-Sacramento).

The bill specifically calls for the production of insulin, which is currently priced between US\$300-\$400 per vial without insurance, with one in four people who have diabetes unable to afford the life-saving drug.

California Governor Gavin Newsom has proposed a US\$100-million initiative, which would see the state use that money to contract with an established drugmaker to begin supplying CalRx insulin, while the state constructs its own manufacturing facility.

## Viatrix is rebranding. All packaging will soon feature the Viatrix logo

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[Click here to learn more.](#)







### Sigma's sleepout

**SIGMA** Healthcare's Chief Commercial Officer, Jeff Sells, and Guardian pharmacy boss, Kurt O'Brien, will be sleeping rough on 23 Jun for the Vinnies CEO Sleepout.

The pair will participate in the Victorian event at the Timber Yard in Port Melbourne, alongside 181 other business leaders.

Sleepout regular, O'Brien, has raised more than \$20,000 for the charity over the last three years, while Sells is taking part for the second time, having raised \$5,645 in 2018.

All proceeds go towards breaking the devastating cycle of homelessness and poverty in Australia by providing essential services to those who need it most.

Click [HERE](#) to support O'Brien and [HERE](#) to back Sells.

## Allergy meds polluting SA waters

**TRACES** of a banned recreational drug found in South Australia's local water catchments could be attributed to allergy medication and laundry detergents as opposed to illegal drug taking, an article published in *Science of the Total Environment* has revealed.

After investigating the matter, researchers from the University of South Australia said the low levels of designer drug methcathinone, which had been consistently detected in the state's waste waters, were most likely a result of the oxidation of pseudoephedrine and sodium percarbonate in the sewerage system.

Traces of the substance, which can induce neurotoxic effects such as tremors, convulsions, agitation and insomnia, can result from the degradation of pseudoephedrine, used to relieve nasal or sinus congestion, combined with

chemical reagents in household bleach and detergents containing percarbonate.

Researchers arrived at the finding after collecting and analysing a total of 448 waste water samples from eight treatment plants in South Australia between Jun 2020 and Aug 2021.

The scientists found that the proportion of methcathinone to pseudoephedrine (1.53%) was relatively consistent in all cases, which supported their theory of oxidation.

UniSA wastewater epidemiologist Associate Professor Cobus Gerber said, "because methcathinone can be synthesised from over-the-counter cold remedies containing pseudoephedrine, as well as the in-sewer oxidation by bleach and percarbonate, it can be difficult to determine the source of its presence in our wastewater.



"Normally, consumption of these designer recreational drugs is sporadic, supply driven and sourced through online shopping.

"It doesn't follow a consistent pattern, which prompted us to investigate further.

"It is probably the only illegal drug found in wastewater that can also be attributed to prescribed medication."

Methcathinone is one of the most common designer psychoactive substances found in wastewater in Australia, North America, parts of Europe and China.

### DDS launches new partner program

**DISCOUNT** Drug Stores (DDS) has unveiled a new franchise partner program, Promotional Optimisation Program (POP), designed to improve in-store promotional performance.

POP will support pharmacy teams in the management and implementation of monthly campaigns and promotional in-store performance, via new technology and support initiatives.

The program will include a new app to help franchise partners easily record and document in-

store promotions, as well as an updated floor stand optimisation offering, which includes a variety of recycled and recyclable stands, which DDS Head, Patrick Stoll said will reduce waste and in-store clutter.

"DDS is making value and convenience even easier, for customers and franchise partners alike," he said.

"Overall, POP will help execute, implement, and truly measure the opportunities around promotions and campaigns in new and clever ways."

### Arrest made after pharmacy robbery

**NSW** Police have arrested a 50-year-old man in relation to a robbery at a Riverina pharmacy last week.

The man allegedly entered a pharmacy on Green Street in Lockhart around 12.30pm on 30 May, and walked behind the dispensary counter to the medicines safe.

Police reported that he then threatened a female member of staff with a piece of wood before fleeing the store with a stash of prescription medicines.

He was arrested at his home



a short time later and taken to Corowa Police Station where he was charged with robbery armed with an offensive weapon.

## DRAW THE LINE... when it comes to Cold and Flu relief



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## Dispensary Corner

**PHARMACISTS** it may be time to get your PADI licence and strap an oxygen tank to your back, because molecules found in the seabed appear to offer a solution to antimicrobial resistance, a US researcher believes.

University of Illinois, Professor Brian Murphy, revealed that a mud sample he collected during a scuba diving trip in 2016 in Lake Michigan, contained bacteria that created two previously unknown molecules.

Subsequent lab tests revealed the pair formed a compound that could kill the bacteria that causes tuberculosis, *Science Focus* reported.

The discovery has prompted Murphy to pilot a "citizen science project", encouraging recreational divers to collect samples of sponges laden with bacteria in the hope of identifying more potential super-bug killing compounds, and ease our reliance on existing antibiotics.



## Indian interest in Boots

**WALGREENS** Boots Alliance's plans to sell off its British Boots pharmacies are gaining momentum following a binding offer from Indian billionaire, Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries, and venture capital firm, Apollo Global Management.

India's *Economic Times* first reported Reliance was looking to partner with Apollo to make a bid for the pharmacy group in Apr.

The consortium's bid has been given a boost by reports that rival bidders, British billionaire retail brothers, Mohsin and Zuber Issa, are planning to walk away after Walgreens asked them to increase their offer.

Walgreens put its British pharmacy business on the market in Dec 2021, with a price tag of US\$8.8 billion.

However, bidders have valued it at around US\$6.25 billion when making non-binding offers.

The *Economic Times* reported that Reliance and Apollo have



engaged with major global banks and financial institutions to secure funding for the proposed deal.

However, a deal has yet to be reached to finance the bid, with market turmoil caused by the Russian invasion of the Ukraine complicating matters, with potential bidders, Bain Capital, which owns Virgin Australia, and CVC Capital Partners, also dropping out of the process.

## Guild Update

### International Men's Health Week

**INTERNATIONAL** Men's Health Week is celebrated every year around the world from 13 to 19 Jun.

It is an important opportunity to highlight the importance of men's health, and to promote and support the health and wellbeing of men and boys in our communities.

Men's Health Week focuses on not just physical health, but also men's mental health and emotional wellbeing.

During the week, health challenges faced by men in Australia and worldwide are highlighted and events held to improve the physical, emotional and mental health of men and boys.

Through a series of promotions, events and publicity around the country, Men's Health Week is designed to provoke thought and discussion about what needs to be done to improve male health.

The theme of Men's Health Week 2022 is Building Healthy Environments for Men and Boys - focusing on creating physically, mentally and emotionally healthy environments in the home, workplace and in social settings.

## BD makes meds management purchase

**MEDICAL** product giant, Becton Dickinson and Company (BD) is seeking to expand its pharmacy footprint, with the purchase of medication management solution business, Parata Systems, *Forbes* reports.

The company, which produces a range of products, including dispensing robots, is set to offer US\$1.5 billion in cash to acquire Parata from Frazier Healthcare Partners.

The deal will enable BD to provide "new innovative pharmacy automation solutions for hospitals, retail pharmacy, long-term care and home



settings," a spokesperson said.

BD CEO, Tom Polen, said Parata has a "highly attractive financial profile and compelling value proposition" for the business, that would further the company's growth strategy around smart, connected care and enabling new care settings.