

## Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features three pages of news.

## Great comps lined up for APP

**DELEGATES** attending this year's Australian Pharmacy Professional Conference (APP) on the Gold Coast later this month, will be in line to win some impressive prizes.

On top of the Guild's car giveaway, conference convenor, Kos Sclavos, has revealed that several sponsors are offering the chance to win holidays, a Vespa and more.

Given the recent flooding events in south east Queensland and northern NSW, the JetSki being offered by Arrotex Pharmaceuticals might be the pick of the prizes for pharmacists seeking to emulate Valera and Swift Pharmacy co-owner, Skye Swift, who hitched a lift to her Murwillumbah store with surfing star, Mick Fanning, earlier this week.

**CLICK HERE** to enter the Guild's car competition.

## Guild flags RAT audits

**SEVERAL** community pharmacies are facing Commonwealth audits over potential breaches relating to the free rapid antigen test (RAT) scheme for concession cardholders, the Pharmacy Guild of Australia warns.

Speaking during a Guild update last night, the organisation's National President, Trent Twomey, urged pharmacy owners to abide by the program's business rules and avoid supplying RATs directly to residential aged care facilities (RACFs).

"A few pharmacies have been flagged for audit, because they are seen to be providing on bulk, RATs to RACFs on behalf of the patient," he said.

"That is technically in breach of the rules, and we have had pharmacies [who have done that] - we know who they are and the Department [of Health] knows who they are, so I'm here to just remind you to please stop doing it.

"All Australians with healthcare concession, pension and Veteran Affairs cards are entitled to these, but only a family member or direct carer can get them on their behalf.

"[For] a facility, even if you have a contract with an RACF for the provision of their medications, you

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cannot provide to the facility on bulk their RATs."

Twomey said responsibility for the provision of RATs to RACFs has been given to State and Territory authorities.

"There's a whole heap of RATs being made available for RACFs out of the national stockpile," he said.

"If an individual in a RACF wants them, somebody needs to come in and get them for them, or you need to deliver them directly."

**MEANWHILE**, Twomey noted that 93% of Australia's community pharmacy network has participated in the program to date, distributing more than 15 million RATs to three million eligible consumers, with \$100 million paid to community pharmacies through the program.

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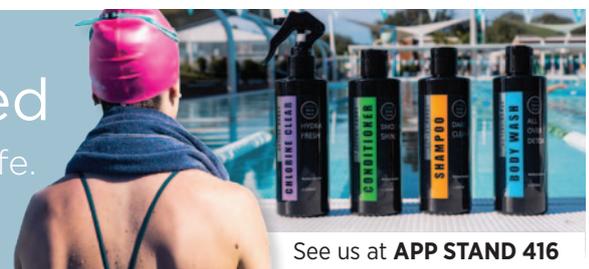


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## Pharmacists don't hide in a crisis

**PHARMACISTS** in flood-affected parts of south east Queensland and northern NSW are being praised for going to extreme lengths to ensure patients retain access to medicines.

Pharmacy Guild of Australia National President, Trent Twomey, said that he was "constantly amazed and impressed" by the efforts pharmacists and pharmacy assistants go to in times of crisis, during a webinar last night.

Twomey highlighted the unique story of how Murwillumbah-based pharmacist, Skye Swift, got through flood waters on Mon to open her pharmacy, by catching a lift on a JetSki, with surfing world champion, Mick Fanning.

"That's what community pharmacists do," Twomey said.

"They don't hide around their dining-room table, hiding behind telehealth, they will get there by whatever means they possibly can

to ensure that their communities don't go without."

While acknowledging the efforts of many pharmacists working in flood-affected areas, Twomey noted that several pharmacies have been destroyed as a result of the floods.

"I've been getting heartbreaking reports every day of people who have literally lost all homes, that have lost their pharmacies," he said.

For those whose stores have escaped without significant damage, the Guild President, noted that state-based emergency supply orders, and the Commonwealth's continued dispensing instruments remain in place, enabling pharmacists to dispense prescription medicines to patients, "if needed", without a prescription.

"They don't have to have been your patients," he said.

"If you can use something like the My Health Record to establish what



that person has been on, that will suffice.

"But remember sometimes that person's pharmacy no longer exists, so please, be like Skye, get to work whatever way you can, and if the Guild can ever be of assistance to you or your family, just call."

Twomey also advised pharmacists who were struggling with the impacts of the floods to contact the Pharmacists' Support Service on 1300 244 910.

## Novavax seeks booster approval

**NOVAVAX'S** COVID-19 vaccine could be in line to receive Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) approval for use as a booster in the coming weeks.

Addressing a webinar hosted by the Pharmacy Guild of Australia last night, the Head of the TGA, Adjunct Professor John Skerritt, revealed the regulator had "just received a submission from the company" to have the vaccine listed as a booster.

He noted that Novavax had yet to supply the necessary data to support its application.

Skerritt said the TGA hoped to be in a position "to make a decision by the end of Mar", but added that "the ball is still in Novavax's court, because you've got to have the data before we can assess it".

## Putin's threats spark iodine pill surge

**EUROPEAN** pharmacists are reporting a spike in demand for iodine medications following Russian President, Vladimir Putin's decision to put the nation's nuclear deterrence force on high alert.

The Belgian Pharmacists' Union alongside the Finnish Association of Pharmacists and Dutch pharmacy owners have said supplies of the products have been stretched in recent days, *Euro News* reported.

A spokesperson for France's



Union of Community Pharmacists told *TheLocal.fr* that people were worried about the threat "of a nuclear strike or a missile that falls near Chernobyl".

The spokesperson noted that iodine cannot be taken as a preventative measure.

## Herbalist cops fine over 'miracle' claims

**UNFOUNDED** claims about a "miracle" treatment for COVID-19 have landed a NSW-based herbal medicine practitioner with a \$2,664 fine.

The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) reported that the individual promoted herbal and complementary products to treat and prevent COVID-19 infection, in breach of the *Therapeutic Goods Act 1989*.

"The advertising allegedly claimed the products were 'a miracle COVID treatment that



no-one is speaking about," the TGA said.

"The goods themselves were advertised to 'address COVID infection by reducing viral load, ...combats cytokine storms and lowers risk of lung damage'."



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## Dispensary Corner

**FEARS** that Scotland's free COVID-19 rapid antigen test (RAT) program might be scrapped and will force consumers to pay for the devices in the future, has prompted a run on the products in pharmacies.

Local banner group, CA Mackie Pharmacies told *Glasgow Live* that it has had to put restrictions in place to limit how many kits people could pick up, after British Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, announced the free RAT program will come to an end on 01 Apr in England.

One of the group's owners, Professor Clare Mackie, said there has been a "doubling if not tripling" of demand for RATs since news the patients in England will be charged \$36.75 for a pack of seven tests.

"It would appear stockpiling is rife," she said.

"Pharmacies can currently give out tests without any information, but as of 01 Apr we are reverting back to the previous system of getting all patient details for test provision."

While the scheme is set to be abandoned in England, Scotland's First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, has yet to say if her government will follow suit.



## Amcal launches vaccination push

**SIGMA** Healthcare's Amcal banner is aiming to strengthen its health services offering with the launch of the Your Vaccination Destination campaign.

The program has been designed to shift patients' focus on vaccination services from being a seasonal offering to a year-round service, with COVID-19, influenza, travel and family vaccines being provided in-store.

Amcal boss, Kurt O'Brien, said the campaign will be backed by a strong customer marketing program.

"Your Vaccination Destination is about optimising the services we already offer to not only make it easier for patients to access them, but increase opportunities for our franchise partners to strengthen customer-patient relationships," he said.

"Pharmacy is typically reliant on the promotion of vaccination during certain peak times, such as flu season, but we're throwing out the rulebook to present a compelling consumer message – we are the one destination, dispensing all vaccinations, year-round.



"Vaccinations have always been, and particularly over the past 12 months, one of our most popular health services with demand only expected to increase as we respond to new COVID-19 variants and prepare for international borders reopening.

"Introducing Your Vaccination Destination is the first step to an expansive plan for our pharmacies to prosper as this momentum continues – ensuring they have the support and tools they need to provide people across Australia with their year-round vaccinations."

Amcal Chief Pharmacist, Brinley Hosking, said the introduction of a new online booking tool for franchisees would help pharmacists to effectively manage appointments and reduce the amount of time

## Ukrainian pharmacists in the firing line

**HAVING** held firm to meet the healthcare needs of their communities during the COVID-19 pandemic, pharmacists in war-torn Ukraine are being ordered to open their stores or face the consequences.

News agency, *Interfax Ukraine*, reported that the country's Health Minister, Viktor Liashko, intends to "take measures against pharmacies that do not work", as the Russian invasion continues.

"A serious conversation began with the owners of pharmacies,

which guaranteed opening yesterday, but [they] did not open today," he said.

"Tomorrow there will be no more conversations with them... appropriate decisions will be made regarding all unscrupulous pharmacy chains that sabotage the work.

"No one will speculate on the war, we are all in the same conditions. I will note again: pharmacies must work, pharmacies in hospitals do not have the right to be closed."

spent on administration.

"The newly launched Booking Tool forms part of a wider commitment to ensuring our pharmacy teams are prepared and supported for the upcoming vaccination season," she said.

"The online platform makes it easy for our customers to log in, select a category and book the vaccination they, or a family member, need at their local Amcal pharmacy, year-round."



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