

Today's issue of PD

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From intern to pharmacy owner

PHARMACY Guild of Australia/MIMS 2019 Intern Pharmacist of the Year, Lucinda Marks, discusses her career on the latest episode of Raven's Recruitment's *Your Pharmacy Career* podcast.

Marks outlines her rapid rise from internship at Capital Chemist Calwell in the ACT in 2019, to taking on the role as a pharmacist in charge during the COVID-19 pandemic, and on to becoming a pharmacy owner.

CLICK HERE to listen now.

Floods hit pharmacy infrastructure

PHARMACIES in flood-affected parts of south east Queensland and northern NSW are being forced to work around infrastructure interruptions, as internet outages knock IT platforms offline.

Speaking to **Pharmacy Daily** on Fri, Blooms The Chemist Tweed City Central Retail Manager, Troy Biles, said issues with internet access had created challenges when it came to scanning electronic prescriptions and recording the provision of free COVID-19 rapid antigen tests (RATs) to concession cardholders through Project COVID.

"The internet's been down, phone lines have been down, so it's very challenging times," she said.

"Pretty much everything's got to be manually dispensed, the e-scripts aren't always working, Project COVID is not working, the NDSS (National Diabetes Service Scheme) is not working.

"So we've got to write them down and enter them all in once we get service."

In addition to the challenges internet outages have created for recording dispensing and the provision of services, Biles noted that EFTPOS systems have also been down, forcing people to use cash to

pay for products, with ATMs running out of funds.

As one of the only pharmacies open in the area, people were coming from up to 100km away to have prescriptions dispensed.

"A lot of the people we're seeing [at the moment] I've never seen before in my life, and I've been here for 26 years," she said.

"I don't know half the people coming in, because they're coming from so far away."

Biles said the pharmacy has operated as a hub for the

community, with the store offering whatever help it can to support those impacted by the floods.

"We've had people in tears... they've had no power, so I've offered to charge their phones while they go to the supermarket," she said.

"We're just trying to do as much as we can for them... people are trying to get in contact with them, but there's no reception [at home], there's a lot of people not really knowing if their loved ones are alive or not."



Collaboration key to meds supply

NEIGHBOURING pharmacies in northern NSW are working together to support their communities, as floods restrict access to supplies.

Murwillumbah pharmacy owner, Skye Swift - who hitched a ride to work last Mon on the jetski of former Surfing World Champion Mick Fanning - told **Pharmacy Daily** it was essential that stores work together during times of crisis.

"It has been a nightmare, we have not had an order [come in] for a week, and we have been the only pharmacy open for three days," she said on Fri.

"But the beautiful thing is that our neighbouring pharmacies, their pharmacy assistants have been able to open the pharmacy to lend us their stock, so the camaraderie there is beautiful.

"The community pharmacy network is essential, the Pharmacy Guild of Australia has contacted us to see how they can help, the Symbion warehouse has been in contact, they can't drive stock out

to Murwillumbah, so I've said to them, 'leave it at a Tweed Heads pharmacy'.

"I just went to Blooms [the Chemist] there, and the guy there rang me and said 'your stock's here', he's been wonderful."

Swift said that coming on the back of severe floods in 2017, the community's strength was being tested.

"It's heartbreaking... they've recovered [from the last floods] and they've lost everything again," she said.

"[But] I see resilient people, we've had one and a half hour waits on prescriptions, [and] we've not had one disgruntled customer, they've been beautiful.

Swift added that it had been professionally rewarding to be able to support the community during the latest crisis.

"We're a small independent pharmacy, so I think something that is important to note the fact that we go above and beyond every



time," she said.

"For me it's been absolutely beautiful being there, because people are panicked, because they've lost their medications, many of them essential.

"They can't get on to their doctors, their pharmacies may be shut, and I just feel privileged to be able to be there and just reassuring them, and as soon as I say to them, 'it's okay, I'm going to look after you', they just start to cry, because they're not used to being looked after like that."

SHPA releases CVD standard

THE Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) has released a new pharmacy practice standard for treating cardiovascular disease (CVD).

The standard recommends patient to pharmacist ratios, quality improvement indicators specific to specialist cardiology pharmacists, and details how to add innovative, emerging cardiology services to core practice to ensure best care.

SHPA Cardiology Chair, Adam Livori, said the standard highlighted present to future pathways for cardiology pharmacy services.

"These new standards define cardiology pharmacy services, guide implementation and encourage adaptability of models of care to address the dynamic landscape of health care across the system," he said.

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Dispensary Corner

US-BASED pharmacy chain, CVS, is planning to dominate the metaverse, filing a number of trademarks for the virtual world created by Facebook's parent company, Meta.

Under the filings made to the US Patent Trade Office, CVS is seeking to trademark its logo and to provide an online pharmacy offering downloadable virtual products including, "prescription drugs, health, wellness, beauty and personal care products," *CNBC* reported.

The company said it was committed to engaging with health consumers "wherever they are, even in the metaverse".

"We're regularly looking at new and innovative ways to engage consumers through a digital-first, technology-forward approach," a CVS spokesperson told *CNBC*.

"We will continue to explore these and other options to improve the consumer experience and launch new consumer-centric services."

While the company is keen to engage with patients in the virtual world, the trademark filings note that "downloadable virtual goods, namely, a variety of consumer goods, prescription drugs, health, wellness, beauty, personal care products, and general merchandise [are] for use online and in online virtual worlds", just in case users were unsure why their virtual ivermectin script was failing to stave off COVID-19.

Aged care needs urgent action: PSA

MOVES to embed pharmacists into residential aged care facilities are gaining momentum after a new report from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) found use of antipsychotic medications remains high.

The first quarterly report on the AIHW National Mandatory Quality Indicator Program found more than 40% of residents were prescribed nine or more medications, while 50% of patients were prescribed anti-psychotics without any diagnosis of psychosis.

Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) National President, Associate Professor Chris Freeman, said the report's findings were troubling.

"It feels like Groundhog Day when it comes to medicine-related problems in aged care, as worrying data continues to emerge," he said.

"The AIHW report has revealed that more than 40% of Australia's aged care residents are taking nine or more medicines, an indicator

that has a direct correlation to medication-related harm and 100% chance that each of those residents have a clinically significant drug interaction.

"With more than 19,000 Australians in residential aged care prescribed antipsychotics with no indication, the level of chemical restraint must be addressed.

"The evidence is clear, the more medicines someone is prescribed, the more likely it is to cause harm.

"Pharmacists therefore need to be an embedded part of the aged care equation if medication misadventure is to be minimised and rectified.

"As the custodians and experts of medication safety, embedding pharmacists in aged care is the obvious solution to address the long-standing issue of polypharmacy and chemical restraint in aged care facilities.

"This is not speculative, including pharmacists as part of the aged care workforce will improve



medication management, reduce medication-related harm, and improve quality of life for aged care residents," Freeman said.

"The Government can't continue to beat around the bush on this matter, especially when the lives of Australia's most vulnerable are at stake. The solution to this crisis is right under their noses.

"PSA is once again calling on the Morrison Government to end the neglect by embedding pharmacists in Australia's aged care facilities."

NPSA gets ACCC collaboration approval

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wholesalers will be authorised to continue to work together "for the purpose of facilitating the supply of, and access to, medicines and pharmacy products" until 28 Feb 2023, under the final decision by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC).

The move will allow members of the National Pharmaceutical Services Association (NPSA) to co-ordinate activities necessary to ensure equitable access to medicines during supply shortages arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.



The authorisation has been granted on the condition that the NPSA will provide a report to the ACCC at the end of each month, or within five business days of any material recommendation, meetings, discussions, developments or decisions.

Champix sub

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has granted Section 19A approval for APO-Varenicline 1mg tablets from Canada, to be imported and supplied in Australia due to a shortage of Pfizer's Champix branded varenicline.

The approval has been granted until 28 Feb 2023, with the TGA noting that current shortages of Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods listed preparations of Champix are likely to remain until 31 Oct 2023.

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