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Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features four pages of news, plus a full page from TerryWhite Chemmart.

TWC wins Award

TERRYWHITE Chemmart is celebrating being named as the winner of the Inside Retailer Awards 2022, Customer Experience of the Year - Medium to Large company - title.

See **page five** for more.

NPS update

NPS MedicineWise has updated its COVID-19 treatment hub to include a new consumer fact sheet on oral antiviral medications.

The hub features a new article covering the latest evidence relating to Lagevrio (molnupiravir).

CLICK HERE for more.

Indie pharmacies stronger together

PHARMACY groups, Pharmacy Alliance and Pharmacy Platform, are set to merge to "protect and grow the interests" of independent pharmacies, as large corporations look to enter the sector.

The Platform Alliance Group (PAG) will unite close to 1,200 stores, with a turnover in sales of \$2 billion, to deliver the scale and capability to adapt quickly to changes in the community pharmacy market, Pharmacy Platform Director, Steve Kastrinakis, said.

"Coming together was clear to me - we are stronger together and our purpose is simple, we want a strong future for independent pharmacies across Australia," he said.

"The pandemic saw community pharmacy both adapt to, and change, at a rate never seen before.

"We need to be equally as agile and innovative in the way in which we choose to support our members going forward.

"This merger will arm us with the scale and capability to do so."

Kastrinakis said the deal, which comes 18 months after the Advantage Group merged with Instigo (PD 30 Sep 2020) to create Pharmacy Platform, would improve the overall member experience.

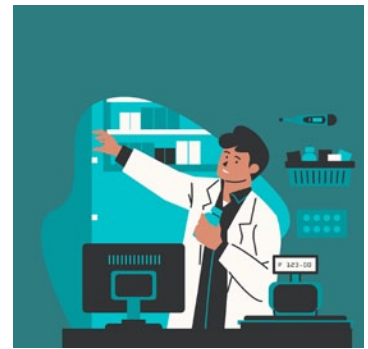
"Independent pharmacies are able and positioned to respond to community health needs faster, and in a more personal manner, and we aim to continue to support them with doing so," he said.

"The pandemic has demonstrated the value of community pharmacy, with a shift in the market share away from franchises towards independent pharmacies.

"However, this has also made the industry more attractive to large corporations, like Wesfarmers and Woolworths.

"We know independent pharmacists want local solutions for their respective communities and seek tailored and personal support to meet their owner-oriented goals."

The group's CEO, David Fenlon (formerly Blackmores Australia New



Zealand Managing Director), said PAG will deliver improved offers and models designed to increase supplier return on investment.

Fenlon said the Pharmacy Alliance and Pharmacy Platform brands will continue to operate independently for the foreseeable future.

The Board of the new entity includes Arrotex CEO, Dennis Bastas, former Pharmacy Platform Director, Michael Flannery, and Pharmacy Alliance Managing Director, Simon Reynolds, alongside Kastrinakis and Fenlon.

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Interactions push COVID pills into S4

EVIDENCE showing risks of drug-drug interactions, potential impacts on liver and kidney function, and pregnancy warnings related to COVID-19 oral treatments are behind Paxlovid (nirmatrelvir and ritonavir) and Lagevrio (molnupiravir) being scheduled as prescription-only medications.

Speaking during a Pharmacy Guild of Australia webinar last week, Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) Head, John Skerritt, told pharmacists that medicines safety was a key factor behind the scheduling decision.

Skerritt said Pfizer's Paxlovid has "a few issues, it can't be used in pregnancy and breast-feeding, it can't be used in certain people with reduced kidney and liver function, but the most important thing for prescribers and pharmacists to be aware of is because of the ritonavir component it has quite severe drug-drug interactions".

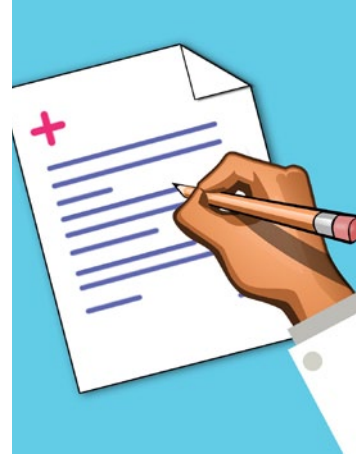
"It's really important to look at the product information, because unfortunately the list is so long that a lot of people, especially with co-morbidities and the over 50s will be on those medicines, and for that reason the Australian Government directed the other medicine (Lagevrio) towards those in residential aged care," he said.

Skerritt added that Lagevrio was not recommended in pregnancy, breast-feeding or sexually active patients.

"I had thought at one stage that these might end up on Schedule 3, because you could argue that with appropriate recording and all that, it could have sped-up access to relevant patients," he said.

"But you've got one drug with a lot of drug-drug interactions, another drug that impacts on liver and kidney function, and you've got drugs with significant pregnancy and male contraception warnings.

"Those things all push them up



into S4 for scheduling criteria."

However, Skerritt noted that the current scheduling decision would not prevent either or both medicines being downscheduled in the future.

"I remind pharmacists regularly that it wasn't that many years ago that ibuprofen was in S4," he said. "It shows historically that things start in S4 and go to S3 and so on."

No time to reflect

GENDER equity must be a founding principle for the pharmacy profession, not a KPI, the Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) believes.

Marking International Women's Day (today), SHPA CEO, Kristen Michaels, said it was not a moment to pause and reflect, but a reminder to ensure breaking bias is embedded in the organisation's daily actions.

"I believe the strongest path for women to attain leadership roles is by 'lowering the ladder', ensuring the next generation of leaders have the role models, mentors, supporters and the environments in which gender equity is a founding principle, not a key performance indicator," she said.

Michaels noted that 76% of SHPA members are female.



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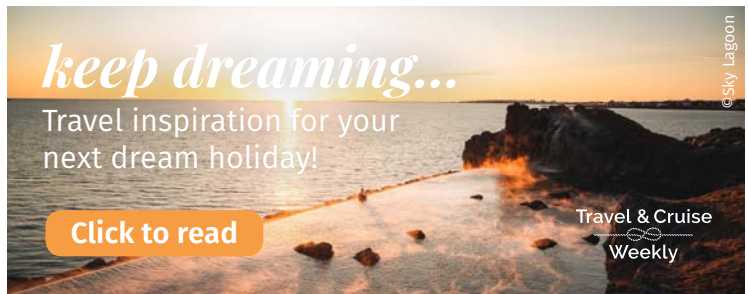
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TWC, HBF deal

TERRYWHITE Chemmart (TWC) has entered a partnership with health insurer, HBF, to deliver pharmacy-based health and wellbeing services to patients.

The agreement will enable eligible HBF members to receive influenza vaccinations, access dose administration aids, or have a private health check at TWC pharmacies without having to pay out-of-pocket fees for the services.

TWC Executive General Manager, Nick Munroe, said the deal cemented the network's commitment to being leaders in health by providing Australians with access to pharmacy services.

"TWC and HBF share a common goal which is to improve the health and wellbeing of Australians by providing better access to health services," he said.

Time to tackle meds disadvantage

STEPS need to be taken to address issues around medicines affordability, which are notably impacting women, Pharmacy Guild of Australia Tasmanian Branch President, Helen O'Byrne, believes.

Marking International Women's Day, O'Byrne noted that "there is still a long way to go before women achieve full equality in Australia", with female patients disproportionately reporting concerns about their ability to pay for medicines.

Having spent 30 years as a pharmacist in Launceston and the West Tamar, O'Byrne said her role had given her "a frontline insight into the origin of some of society's most stubborn social problems".

"They often begin with the smallest inequities and bias," she said.

"Women make up more than 60% of patient visits to community pharmacies, as individuals but also carers for their children or elderly parents.

"As the cost of living soars and many individuals and families are noticing the impacts of rising petrol and grocery prices, we are increasingly seeing patients, especially women, making choices about which prescribed medicines they can afford month to month.

"Common and life-saving medicine for diabetes, asthma, stroke prevention, ADHD, long-acting contraception, and inflammatory bowel diseases, just to name a few."

O'Byrne added that recent research conducted on behalf of the Guild had found more than one-in-10 women who did not have a concession card skipped buying Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) listed medicines due to out-of-pocket costs.

"The PBS is the foundation of our health system, a healthcare system Australia has much to be proud of overall, but with no real universal access to the PBS, cracks will start to show and unnecessary burdens



on the system emerge," she said.

"As some of the country's most trusted professionals, I am not alone in experiencing patients, notably female, asking which medicine is more important than the other, or which of their children will be going without.

"This is a dangerous trend that will result in worse health down the track.

"Prescribed medicines are designed to work together to preserve health and ultimately save the lives of patients."

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Dispensary Corner

AN INQUEST into the 2021 death of a personal trainer in Great Britain has found he overdosed on caffeine powder, taking the equivalent of 200 cups of coffee, the *BBC* reports.

The tragic incident was attributed to a basic error of measurement, with 29-year-old, Tom Mansfield, miscalculating the dose he needed to take to boost his athletic performance.

The coroner said Mansfield simply "got his maths wrong" after attempting to measure out a dose of between 60mg and 300mg on his scale which had a minimum measurement of 2g.

The product didn't come with a measuring scoop, and he used the digital kitchen scale to pour out about 5g of the powder which he mixed into a drink and downed in Jan last year, in an attempt to take the mid-range of the recommended dose.

The inquest heard he then complained about an accelerated heartbeat before clutching his chest and collapsing.

Despite extensive efforts, paramedics were unable to revive the young man, with a post-mortem examination showing he had caffeine levels of about 392mg per litre of blood - compared to a typical coffee which produces 2mg to 4mg of caffeine in the blood.

The product's manufacturer said it was now including scoops in the packaging, and had included more prominent warnings about the dangers of caffeine toxicity and other potential side effects.

Honouring women in retail



A SHOPPING centre in western Sydney is making the most of International Women's Day today, showcasing some of the female entrepreneurs who call it home.

Among the locals at Ed. Square Town Centre in Edmondson Park is pharmacist, Natalie Isaac, from Chemistworks (**pictured**), whose story is being highlighted alongside the operators and managers of eateries, health and wellness venues and other service providers.

Isaac said she had always wanted to be a pharmacist, noting that "it's incredibly important for women to stand together in this industry, particularly being a very male-dominated industry where men make a lot of the big decisions."

"It's definitely nice to be a young woman - and an owner in pharmacy - and trying to make a difference," she said.

UK MHRA fine

BRITISH pharmaceutical manufacturer Syri Limited has been fined £51,000 and ordered to pay £104,898 in costs after an investigation by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) found a medicine it supplied was "not of the nature or quality specified in a prescription".

A child was prescribed magnesium glycerophosphate to help prevent seizures, but the item, which was compounded specially for the patient, was found to contain just 12% of the strength of the active ingredient on the label.

Syri has since improved its quality assurance procedures.



Guild Update

APP prizes

APP2022 Convenor Kos Sclavos AM says the prizes being offered to attendees of APP2022 are some of the best on offer.

"The Australian Pharmacy Professional Conference & Trade Exhibition (APP) held 24-27 March 2022 on the Gold Coast features some great competitions and prizes," Mr Sclavos said.

"Late last year, we announced our APP2022 win a car competition, where we are giving away a brand-new Mazda CX30 G20 Touring SUV worth almost \$40,000 drive away."

"Whilst the competition is open to all pharmacists, pharmacy staff, students and interns, those who attend APP and visit the 'fun zone' can also receive a bonus entry, so it's worth attending to up your chances."

"In addition to this, our exhibitors and sponsors are offering some great prizes including a Vespa valued at \$8,000 (sponsored by Havenhall), a retreat to the exclusive Eden Health Retreat (sponsored by Biolife Living), an all-inclusive five-night Fijian getaway for two worth over \$4,000 (sponsored by Sleep On The Go & e-chamber) and a JetSki, courtesy of Arrotex Pharmaceuticals."

More details [here](#).

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