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ACT store scoops PotY

CANBERRA'S Coleman Court Pharmacy has been named as the Pharmacy Guild of Australia's 2022 Pharmacy of the Year (PotY).

After being presented to all 5,900 community pharmacies across the country in 2021 (PD 20 May 2021), the 2022 Awards format returned to its traditional model, with the public being able to nominate stores for the first time, judging panel member and Guild SA Branch President, Nick Panayiaris, said at APP today.

"We returned to the normal assessment process but due to the border closures and COVID-19 restrictions had to innovate with our judging format by conducting a live and virtual visit of each pharmacy.

"Once again the standard has been exceptional and has highlighted just how progressive and innovative pharmacies are in ensuring their practices and business models are meeting the needs of the

communities they serve," he said.

The ACT-based pharmacy stood out amongst more than 2,000 nominations in how it has succeeded in developing into a community health hub.

"The pharmacy downsized and made the conscious decision to rationalise non-pharmacy lines from their operations... to focus on healthcare services and information," Panayiaris said.

They also actively empowered employees to develop projects and ideas, taking ownership and responsibility in driving new opportunities in their community pharmacy.

"One key initiative has developed into the pharmacy becoming a centre for men's health services - an area which is often overlooked and underserved."

The Coleman Court Pharmacy also took out the Guild's Excellence in Professional Innovation Award, with the Excellence in Business Management title going to Amcal Life Clinic Pharmacy Donnybrook WA, while Tasmania's TerryWhite Chemmart Rosny Park claimed the Excellence in Community Engagement gong.

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Today's issue of PD

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Medication costs a growing challenge

GROWING numbers of Australians are struggling to afford vital medicines due to increases in the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) general co-payment, the Pharmacy Guild of Australia reports.

Following the latest annual hike in the co-payment in Jan, which saw the price of some PBS subsidised medicines rise to \$42.50 per prescription, the Guild said 27% of patients were struggling to meet the costs of their medications.

“More than one in six voters say they or their families have been unable to purchase medicines due to cost,” the Guild said in a statement released this morning.

“This is a two-point jump since January, when the price of medicines on the PBS [co-payment] went up again.

“Non-concession card holders who have been unable to purchase medicines (12%) have also been unable to afford other essentials such as petrol (12%) and groceries (12%), pointing to an unacceptable choice between immediate needs and health-preserving prescription

medicines.

“Parents with children at home are finding it increasingly hard to afford medicines, with 39% saying they or their family had found it difficult to purchase the medicines they need, up seven points since Jan.

“In regional areas, 28% of people without a concession card have found medicines difficult to afford, a significant five-point increase since Jan,” the Guild noted.

“Women without a concession card are still most affected by medicine unaffordability, with over a third (34%) aged 35 to 54 and nearly a third (31%) of women aged 18-34 struggling to afford, along with middle income households (30%).”

With the Federal election due in May, Guild National President, Trent Twomey, noted that health and cost of living are set to be key issues on the minds of voters as they head to the ballot box.

“Families are being forced to choose between medicines and immediate needs like food or the fuel,” he said.

“This is bad news for their health

and wellbeing and will translate into a higher burden on hospitals and emergency healthcare.

“This is also a false economy for a government trying to rein in costs while people are struggling.

“There aren’t many levers the Government can pull to reduce the cost of living, but it does have the ability to make PBS medicines more affordable for middle income households.

“For many households, these medicines are the cost of staying alive,” Twomey added.

A golden jubilee

AMCAL is today celebrating 50 years of Amcal Tooronga serving the local community in Glen Iris, Vic.

The milestone commemorates the foundation of the pharmacy half a century ago by brothers Ian and David Robinson, with the store now in the hands of a new generation which continues to look after local families.

The momentous landmark is showcased on the **last page** of today’s **Pharmacy Daily**.

ACCC won't oppose EBOS acquisition

THE Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) today confirmed it would not oppose the proposed takeover of Australian Pacific Health Supplies by EBOS offshoot EBOS Medical Devices Australia.

EBOS and Pacific Health Group distribute a range of medical devices to private and public hospitals and clinicians, while Pacific Health Group also manufactures and distributes allografts via its Australian Biotechnologies business.

The ACCC said “in general, the

majority of the parties’ offerings are complementary and not in direct competition”.

A review of the deal focused on the overlap in certain medical devices used in spinal and orthopaedic surgery, with ACCC Commissioner Stephen Ridgeway saying after consulting private and public hospital customers, industry bodies and competitor distributors and manufacturers, “most market participants did not express concerns regarding the proposed acquisition”.

More info at acc.gov.au.

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Irish adherence

AUTHORITIES in Northern Ireland have allocated £8 million to a new community pharmacy program supporting the phased introduction of a new medicines adherence service.

The first phase of the program will support patients discharged from hospital with complex medication needs.

The funding boost, reported in UK trade publication *Chemist+Druggist*, was agreed after extensive discussions between Community Pharmacy Northern Ireland and regulators.

It follows a decision by community pharmacies in Northern Ireland last Nov to stop offering unfunded medicine adherence services to new patients, in the light of increasing workforce pressures and a lack of investment by the Government in the sector.

System is missing out on pharmacists

EMPOWERING pharmacists to work to their full scope of practice will not leave other primary healthcare providers idle, Pharmacy Guild of Australia National President, Trent Twomey, believes.

Addressing the opening session of the Australian Pharmacy Professional Conference on the Gold Coast this morning, Twomey, noted that “multiple studies have shown that pharmacist prescribing is clinically safe, efficacious, and a cost-effective way to improve access to healthcare and health outcomes”.

“Without community pharmacists working to their full scope of practice in Australia patients and the healthcare system are clearly missing out,” he said.

“With an ageing population, an increased incidence of mental health and ever increasing chronic disease burden, there is more than enough work for all primary healthcare professionals - especially if we respect each other and we

work together.”

However, Twomey stated that recent commentary from Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RAGCP) and Australian Medical Association (AMA) representatives regarding pharmacist prescribing had lacked respect for the profession.

“They have attacked our ethics, they have attacked our professional integrity and they are attacking the North Queensland Pharmacist Scope of Practice Pilot (NQPSPP),” he said.

“There was one piece that really got under my skin by a certain doctor, an office holder of one of those organisations.

“The article compared pharmacists to dogs, and concluded by saying she would rather have a dog prescribing medicine than a pharmacist.

“This is evidence enough that both the RACGP and the AMA are completely unhinged.

“They claim that the pilot will



fragment care - that’s just simply not true... you can’t have fragmented care if there’s no care.

“A recent independent survey of patients in North Queensland found that more than two-thirds of patients have to wait over a week to see a GP,” Twomey noted.

“The study went on to find that more than a quarter of patients regularly see a GP other than their own, and 27% of the population had to attend an emergency department because they could not get a GP appointment,” he said.



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New EMA Chair

THE European Medicines Agency (EMA) Management Board has elected Dr Lorraine Nolan as its new Chair.

Nolan, who is Chief Executive of the Irish Health Products Regulatory Authority, and was previously EMA's vice-Chair will lead the EMA Board for three years, taking over from Dr Christa Wirthumer-Hoche who has been in the role for six years.

PBS - signatures needed

THE Federal Health Department has confirmed that special arrangements for PBS Safety Net Claims put in place during the COVID-19 pandemic are ending, with the previous requirements for patient or agent signatures reinstated effective next month.

An update from Services Australia notes that "from 01 Apr 2022, all PBS Safety Net applications must include the signature of the applicant or their agent on either the issuing pharmacy's computer generated Prescription Record Form (PRF), or the PBS/RPBS Safety Net prescription record form and application for a Safety Net card form".

The pharmacist signature must also be included in the pharmacist declaration section on all PRFs, including those sourced from external pharmacies, and present next to each item or sticker recorded on the PRF, although multiple items supplied on the same date can be grouped together with one signature.



Pharmacists must not certify the PRF unless the applicant or agent has already signed it.

The Department said it would return any Safety Net cards issued from 01 Apr 2022 that don't meet the requirements.

However public hospitals submitting Safety Net claims are exempt from the requirement for external PRFs to be signed by a pharmacist until 31 Mar 2023.

The interim arrangements which relaxed the requirements for signatures were put in place initially in Aug 2020, aiming to mitigate the risk of virus transmission to patients and/or pharmacy staff.



Dispensary Corner

FORGET sniffer dogs - a research team in France has found that trained ants may be effective in detecting cancer in human patients.

A study published in the journal *iScience* last month found that "ants can rapidly be conditioned to associate the odour of cancer cells with a reward" after looking at how a particular species called *Formica fusca* reacted to two different types of breast cancer cells.

Apparently it's all about so-called volatile organic compounds (VOCs) which previous studies have found are associated with particular types of cancers.

In a proof-of-concept trial, the researchers found they were able to teach the ants to tell the difference between laboratory samples of cancerous and non-cancerous cells with a similar accuracy to other experiments using cancer-sniffing dogs.

"Ants are thus equivalent to dogs - the most studied bio-detectors - in terms of detection abilities," the report said, noting that the six-legged creatures were actually easier to train and had much lower maintenance costs - only requiring honey and frozen insects twice a week.

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MHRA approves COVID-19 prophylaxis

BRITAIN'S Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has granted approval for AstraZeneca's Evusheld (tixagevimab/cilgavimab) to prevent COVID-19 in people whose immune response is poor.

Administered as two intramuscular injections, Evusheld is a combination of two long-acting antibodies, which work by binding to the spike protein on the outside of the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

It's authorised to be used before being exposed to the risk

of COVID-19 infection in order to prevent disease.

The MHRA noted that for most people the best way to prevent infection is vaccination, with the approval of Evusheld only for use in adults who are unlikely to mount an immune response from COVID-19 vaccination, or for whom vaccination is not recommended.

A clinical trial found Evusheld reduced the risk of developing symptomatic COVID-19 by 77%, with protection continuing for at least six months following a single dose of the medication.

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Amcal Tooronga

Proudly serving the local community for 50 years

Starting out as Robinson's Pharmacy, by brothers Ian and David, Amcal Tooronga pharmacy has been owned and operated across two generations. Andrew (David's son), Yean, Ben and their friendly pharmacy team are proudly continuing to support the local community by delivering expert advice and superior service beyond the 50 years.

Through eras of innovation, technological advancements and obstacles faced in the past few decades, their endurance and ability to remain focused on the customer is reflected by the generations of families who continue to visit.

On behalf of the team at Amcal, we would like to congratulate Amcal Tooronga on their milestone achievement.

"Having a group of like-minded people that you can share ideas and stories with and be inspired by is an huge benefit of the Amcal network. Amcal continues to make healthcare accessible to all Australians with 'Expert Advice' being a crucial element."

Andrew Robinson – Owner of Amcal Tooronga

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