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Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features three pages of news and a full page from TerryWhite Chemmart.

Practice review

THE Australian Rheumatology Association and NPS MedicineWise, as part of the Targeted Therapies Alliance, will send out *PBS Practice Review* reports this week to approximately 450 rheumatologists across Australia.

The reports contain individualised data on their prescribing of Disease Modifying Anti-Rheumatic Drugs (DMARDs) and other medicines used to manage rheumatoid arthritis. The Targeted Therapies Alliance has developed health professional and consumer resources for a range of conditions.

PBS co-payment cuts are coming

NO MATTER who wins the Federal Election the maximum price patients will pay for medicines listed on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) is set to fall.

After Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, announced a Coalition Government would cut the current PBS general co-payment by \$10 a script to \$32.50 (*PD* breaking news) from 01 Jan 2023, Labor Leader, Anthony Albanese, went a step further announcing he would cut the fee to \$30 per prescription.

The Coalition's election pledge mirrored a measure erroneously announced as part of the *Treasury Laws Amendment (Cost of Living Support and Other Measures) Bill 2022*, by Assistant Treasurer, Michael Sukkar, but was subsequently scrubbed from the parliamentary record, Hansard (*PD* 01 Apr), which he said would come into effect yesterday.

While the cut falls short of the Pharmacy Guild of Australia's call for a \$19 maximum co-payment, the organisation's President, Trent

Twomey, described the move as a "genuine win for patients".

"On behalf of patients, we and our partners the Australian Patients Association, Chronic Pain Australia and Musculoskeletal Australia are thrilled that both major parties have now committed to making medicines more affordable if they are elected," he said.

"A bipartisan commitment to address the cost of prescription medicines is a win for patients around the country who have been doing it tough and is a step in the right direction to restoring universal access to the PBS.

"Community pharmacies see patients struggling to afford medicines from prescription to prescription and from paycheck to paycheck.

"As the cost of living rises, patients are increasingly finding themselves being forced to choose between putting food on the table or buying the medicines they and their families need.

"We don't want to see Australians



ending up in emergency, in hospital, or with long term damage to their health because they have been forced to delay or skip taking essential medicines due to cost.

"This announcement is an acknowledgement of the importance of medicine affordability at a time when Australians are struggling with the cost of living."

Twomey added that the Guild would "continue to advocate for the maximum PBS co-payment to be regularly reviewed and lowered by government as a way to relieve the hip pockets of Australians and ensure patients who are prescribed medicines actually have the means to take them".

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Qld launches NIP pharmacy pilot

MORE than 70 community pharmacists across Queensland are being authorised to provide National Immunisation Program (NIP) funded influenza vaccines under a pilot program.

The trial will see selected pharmacies provide free flu shots to patients aged 65 years and older, bringing the State into line with the rest of the country (**PD 28 Mar**).

Pharmacy Guild of Australia Queensland Branch President, Chris Owen, welcomed the State Government's decision, saying it will ensure equitable access to flu vaccination services.

"We're just coming into flu season and this announcement could not have come at a better time," he said.

"Supporting all community pharmacies to provide all eligible Queenslanders with access to NIP funded vaccinations is a logical next step.

"The Queensland Government

deserves to be commended for rolling out this pilot.

"[It] will mean better access to affordable influenza vaccines for patients aged 65 and over who live in regional areas of Queensland who may not be able to access a GP or other NIP vaccine provider.

"Community pharmacies servicing Warwick, Kingaroy, Ayr, Maryborough, Hervey Bay, Pialba, Mareeba, Ingham and other regional areas have been invited to participate.

"There are many communities in Queensland that do not have GP clinics or hospitals but do have access to a community pharmacy."

Owen added that the decision to launch the trial was an important step towards pharmacists being authorised to work to their full scope of practice.

"Community pharmacists are capable, accessible and well-equipped primary health care providers who want to better



support patients," he said.

"While it is vital to allow access to NIP funded vaccines in community pharmacies within some rural and remote areas of the state, every eligible Queenslanders should have access to NIP funded vaccinations at a location that is convenient and accessible, just as it was with the COVID-19 vaccination program.

"One of the key lessons from the pandemic is the more accessible a vaccine is, the higher the uptake will be and the higher the uptake, the more successful we will be in suppressing the virus."

PBS lists Jorveza

EOSINOPHILIC oesophagitis (EoE) treatment, Jorveza (budesonide) is now available on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS).

Head of Concord Hospital's Gastroenterology Department, Dr Peter Katelaris, said the listing was critical to improving patient outcomes.

"Prior to the TGA approval of Jorveza in Sep 2020 for adults living with EoE, pharmacological treatment required the use of off-label, repurposed inhaled corticosteroid asthma medications which had issues related to appropriate drug delivery to the oesophagus," he said.

"With the advent of this easy to use, purpose designed, and evidence-based topical therapy, Jorveza will be considered the first-line treatment option when topical steroids are required for EoE."

Buvidal granted updated PBS listing

THE Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) has extended access to Buvidal (buprenorphine) to target opioid dependence at all stages of management from 01 May.

The updated listing will allow prescribers to initiate weekly treatment of the medication without having to transition patients from daily dosing of buprenorphine.

It also extends the flexibility of Buvidal with the approval of a higher monthly dose of 160mg.

Addiction specialist, Professor Nicholas Lintzeris, said the new listing provided prescribers with "a more comprehensive toolkit"

for treating opioid dependence.

"Previously, some patients have been deterred and stayed away from seeking treatment due to the commitment required to receive a daily dose," he said.

"Today, with a wider range of weekly and monthly choices, we have the option to start patients who present for treatment on long-acting solutions immediately and at any stage of their management journey.

"These long-acting options effectively reduce the daily treatment burden, allowing patients more time to re-engage with the community."

APA seeks to honour pharmacy sector

NOMINATIONS for the Australian Patients' Association's (APA's) 2022 Health Industry Awards, which includes the Most Outstanding Pharmacist crown, are now open.

APA General Manager, Jas Streten, said the award, which has been sponsored by the Pharmacy Guild of Australia, aims to recognise the critical role pharmacists have played in delivering primary care during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Many Australians get their day-to-day general health advice from pharmacists," he said.

"You only have to look at the fact that community pharmacists

have delivered more than 6.5 million COVID-19 vaccinations since Jul last year to see how important they are.

"On top of this they have maintained their usual functions of looking after the health and wellbeing of their patients and the communities they serve."

The APA will also present awards to the Most Outstanding GP, hospital, health reporter and patient innovation.

In addition to patients making nominations Streten said pharmacists can also put their peers forward for the prestigious honour.

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Dispensary Corner

UNREGISTERED British pharmacist, Adnan Arshad, has escaped with a suspended jail sentence after he was busted unlawfully dispensing methadone.

The 29-year-old lied about his qualifications to secure a job at the Pearl Pharmacy in Rochdale, in Nov 2017, despite not having passed the General Pharmaceutical Council's (GPhC) registration examination, broadcaster, *ITV*, reported.

Minshull Street Crown Court heard that Arshad, had been working as a technician at the pharmacy under a previous owner, who had applied for a training grant so he could complete his training in the store.

The new owner then took on the responsibility of overseeing Arshad's training, who later said he had passed the registration exam and subsequently provided a GPhC registration number.

However, a pre-organised inspection in Apr 2019, during which Arshad presented his registration number, found it was linked to someone else.

After questioning, the 29-year-old confessed that he was not registered and had misled his employer.

He was subsequently arrested and pleaded guilty to fraud by false representation and unlawfully supplying methadone.

Arshad was sentenced to 12 months jail time suspended for two years.

Protecting data critical in pharmacy

PHARMACISTS are being urged to be conscious of their obligations to protect patient data, by Pharmacy Guild of Australia National President, Trent Twomey.

Marking the start of Privacy Awareness Week, Twomey told pharmacists that ensuring the security of patient information was key to retaining consumer confidence in the profession.

"We all recognise that patient trust and confidence is a fundamental principle of the community pharmacy sector," he said.

"We must never take this trust and confidence for granted.

"We must continue to work hard to ensure that patient privacy is a priority in our practices.

"We need to use this week to re-examine everything we do in regard to protecting the privacy of our data, including the personal information that we manage on behalf of our patients."

The Office of the Australian



Information Commissioner (OAIC) also stressed that businesses and government agencies are more likely to be trusted with personal information if they have demonstrated good privacy practices.

The latest *OAIC Notifiable Data Breach Report*, covering the six months to 31 Dec 2021, noted that Australia's health sector had recorded more incidents than any

other industry, despite a decline in cases (*PD* 23 Feb).

Speaking at the Australian Pharmacy Professional Conference (APP) in 2021, Fred IT Managed Services General Manager, Andrew McManus, warned pharmacy owners that "on average anywhere between three and five pharmacies every six to eight weeks tend to get a ransomware attack" (*PD* 25 May 2021).

Benzene prompts sunscreen recalls

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has announced the recall of batches of sunscreens due to benzene contamination.

Low levels of the potential cancer causing chemical were found in specific batches of six sunscreen products from separate sponsors.

The recall relates to:

- Cancer Council Sensitive Sunscreen SPF50+ 110ml (tube) AUST L 278913, batch #1103178
- Cancer Council Sensitive Sunscreen SPF50+ 200ml (pump) AUST L 178913 batch #1099751

- NIVEA Sun Protect & Moisture SPF30 Lotion 200ml AUST L 270876 batch #12640440-BN
- NIVEA Sun Protect & Moisture SPF50+ Roll On 65ml AUST L 286352 batch #12669940BN
- Bondi Sands SPF50+ Lotion Spray Coconut Beach 200ml AUST L 354358 batches #104263, #1104743 and #1104264
- Baby Bum Mineral SPF50+ Lotion 88ml AUST L 355134 batches #N118B and N118C. Batches of Banana Boat Sunscreen Sprays SPF50+ and Neutrogena Ultra Sheer Body Mist Sunscreen Spray SPF50+ have previously been recalled.

Priceline Beauty Prescription

PRICELINE Pharmacy showcased 50 brands and products, including 21 exclusive ranges, at last week's The Beauty Prescription Live PR tradeshow in Sydney.

The event saw the Wesfarmers-owned banner launch products from British skincare brand No7, and Vital Proteins.

Priceline pharmacist, Jeyda Shixiates, also used the event to showcase Priceline's medically certified Health Stations which monitor a range of health indicators including blood pressure and BMI.

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