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Discounts to continue

DISCOUNTS currently being offered on Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) listed medicines priced between \$42.49 and \$30, will be grandfathered under Labor's proposed cut to the maximum general co-payment.

With both major parties announcing election pledges to reduce the general co-payment over the weekend (**PD 02 May**), moves to grandfather discounts will allow pharmacies to retain their current prices for PBS-listed products that have been eligible for competition, but would become ineligible under the proposed co-payment.

Shadow Health Minister, Mark Butler, told **Pharmacy Daily** that "no one will be worse off under Labor's cut to the general patient co-payments".

"We are committed to ensuring that scripts currently discounted will still be able to be discounted and count towards the safety net," he said.

An industry source told **Pharmacy Daily** that the Coalition had indicated that it would also take steps to ensure patients would retain access to existing discounts on medicines with a PBS list price



above the \$32.50 co-payment, Prime Minister, Scott Morrison announced last week (**PD breaking news**).

The source described the move to grandfather current discounts as a "de facto increase in the dollar discount".

With discounting of PBS medicines with a list price above the general co-payment currently prohibited, legislative changes will be required to ensure patients can continue to access cut price medicines, while ensuring the prescription continues to count towards the safety net under either party's proposed co-payment reduction.

Today's issue of PD

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

TWC names Tassie PotY

TERRYWHITE Chemmart (TWC) Valley Road Devonport, has taken out the group's 2021 HEART Awards Tasmanian Pharmacy of the Year (PotY) title.

Accepting the honour, pharmacy owner, Susan Lee, said it was "great to be recognised for the work we've done and keep doing for the Devonport community".

"Together with the team, taking care of our customers is what we wake up every morning to do," she said.

The Devonport succeeded TWC Prospect Vale as the group's Tasmanian PotY (**PD 28 Apr 2021**), and joins the network's 2021 NSW PotY, TWC Delory, as a finalist for the national title.

See **page four** for more.



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Stock up on oral COVID-19 treatments

PHARMACISTS are being urged to ensure they have access to Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) listed anti-virals, Lagevrio (molnupiravir) and Paxlovid (nirmatrelvir and ritonavir).

Speaking during a Federal Department of Health webinar yesterday, Pharmaceutical Society of Australia National President, Associate Professor Chris Freeman, said community pharmacies needed to ensure they could dispense both medications “in a timely way”.

“We don’t want people walking away from the pharmacy not getting that medicine and then not coming back in to get it, because they may be feeling okay,” he said.

“It’s important that they get that course [of medicine].

“It’s encouraged pharmacies to be stocking both of these medicines to ensure timely access to dispensing.”

Acknowledging the high cost of the recently listed anti-virals, Freeman noted that MSD has

offered a sale or return policy for Lagevrio, “providing some safety”.

Hosting the webinar, Deputy Chief Medical Officer, Professor Michael Kidd, noted that the Department of Health has been advising prescribers against issuing scripts in an effort to ensure supplies are available for patients who meet the eligibility criteria for the anti-virals through the PBS.

Freeman noted that private scripts for the medicines would put pharmacists “in quite a challenging position”, and recommended that they advise patients that supply is limited.

“One option is to send those patients to a state health clinic for assessment and supply of the medications through the National Medicines Stockpile,” he said.

“There are some points where you can manoeuvre the patient’s expectations to a certain point, but also that there is an outcome that can meet their need.”

He added that pharmacists should



liaise with prescribers, “letting them know that you are receiving these prescriptions privately and that the process at the moment is for those patients to go to the state or territory health clinics to have those medicines dispensed”.

With both Lagevrio and Paxlovid having a wholesale price of more than \$1,000, Freeman suggested “many patients don’t know that they’re that expensive and may rethink their absolute need to get them” knowing the cost.

UniSA inter pro focus group

RESEARCHERS from the University of South Australia are recruiting pharmacists and podiatrists to participate in an inter professional focus group.

The group will be part of a project to identify whether inter professional learning experiences regarding medicine use in clinical practice could be beneficial to Australian endorsements for scheduled medicines podiatrists and pharmacists.

Participation in the project involves attendance at an online focus group via Zoom.

The group will include six to eight podiatrists or pharmacists and discussion will be on their thoughts around inter professional education involving podiatrists who prescribe medicines and pharmacists.

CLICK HERE to register.

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Dispensary Corner

AN IRISH pharmacy is counting the cost of a dispensing error that saw a toddler being overdosed with diazepam.

The child was prescribed doses of 2.5mg after undergoing a surgical procedure, but the pharmacy dispensed a liquid suspension with directions to administer 2.6ml twice a day, in Aug 2018, with 1mg equal to 0.001ml.

Dublin Circuit Civil Court heard the then 15-month-old child had to be weaned off the drug under medical supervision, having suffered severe withdrawal symptoms after ceasing treatment.

The Court was told the toddler's parents had endured "an extremely difficult period... not understanding why she had not been behaving the way she had or that the instructions had involved excessive sedation followed by significant withdrawal symptoms".

Judge, James O'Donoghue, approved the \$30,000 settlement offer to compensate the family.

NPS seeks consultation

NPS MedicineWise CEO, Katherine Burchfield, is calling for a review of the unilateral decision to defund the agency from 01 Jan 2023, announced in the Federal Budget (**PD 05 Apr**).

In a statement issued this morning, Burchfield noted the independent organisation has been a "critical arm for the National Medicines Policy" over the last 24 year, building "a unique set of expertise, assets and networks that is dedicated to supporting quality use of medicines and medicines safety".

"Having listened to voices from across the health and aged care sectors, we are calling for a review of the Federal budget decision, with in-depth consultation before these changes are implemented," she said.

"We have a central focus on quality use of medicines, and are a trusted, 'go to' resource and independent voice that is highly valued by consumers and frontline health professionals, particularly general practitioners.

"Our value and impact comes from our independence from any particular health professional discipline, and government.

"Benefits to consumers are



central to our work and we achieve this using our expertise in behaviour change, bringing education, information and insights together to support evidence-based decision making across all health professional groups and health conditions."

Highlighting the success of NPS MedicineWise, Burchfield said that the organisation has delivered a net return on investment of more than 2:1 to the Federal Government through more than \$1.1 billion in direct savings for the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and the Medicare Benefits Schedule.

She added that while the organisation will operate beyond 31 Dec, it will not have the remit or finances to continue in its present form.

Wesfarmers eye health growth

RETAIL conglomerate, Wesfarmers, is set to announce details of its plans to strengthen the competitive position of wholesaler, API, and its pharmacy partners at the group's strategy day in Jun.

Addressing the Macquarie Conference earlier this week, Wesfarmers Managing Director, Rob Scott, said "the API businesses will be the foundational assets" of the group's new Health division.

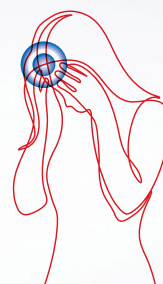
"We see good long-term potential in the growing health, wellbeing and beauty sector," he said.

"We are focusing on listening to, and learning from, the API team while we embed the group's financial and commercial discipline and assess opportunities for investments.

"As we progress with integration, we will increase our focus on strengthening the competitive position of API and its pharmacy partners."

Wesfarmers has also been linked with the acquisition of Ramsay Healthcare's Pharmacy division.

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TerryWhite Chemmart

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*“It feels great to be recognised for the work that we’ve done and keep doing for the Devonport community!
Together with the team, taking care of our customers is what we wake up every morning to do.
Thank you to everyone at TWC and for the whole TWC network for this acknowledgement
– Susan Lee, Network Partner (TerryWhite Chemmart Valley Road Devonport, Tas.)”*

Pictured above: Susan Lee and some of her winning Valley Road Team accepting the award last night from TWC Executive General Manager Nick Munroe and Group Operations Manager Michael Beaumont.



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