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Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features four pages of news, a cover page from **Vision Initiative** plus a full page from **PharmaSave**.

The eyes have it

VISION Initiative is offering free CPD-accredited eye health training for pharmacists to help them care for the sight needs of their patients.

Established in 2002, Vision Initiative is supported by the Victorian State Government, and aims to prevent avoidable blindness and address the impact of vision loss within the community.

It focuses on people aged 40 plus, providing up to date training, information and other resources for primary health care professionals - including encouraging people to seek regular eye examinations particularly if they have risk factors for a range of vision-related conditions.

For more details on the program see the **cover page** of today's *Pharmacy Daily*.

Pharmacists must support each other

PHARMACISTS are being encouraged to check-in with their colleagues and offer each other support, following the release of data from the US showing the profession's suicide rate is higher than the general population.

The longitudinal analysis of suicides among pharmacists between 2003 and 2018, reported that the age-adjusted rates for pharmacist suicides in 2004, 2009, and 2014 were 19.6, 20.1, and 18.2, respectively, per 100,000, while the age-adjusted rate for the general public was 14 per 100,000 in 2017.

The study, published in the *Journal of the American Pharmacists Association*, noted that "pharmacists were significantly more likely to have a reported job problem, current treatment for mental illness, and less likely to have a substance abuse issue," than the general population.

Pharmacists' Support Service (PSS) Executive Officer, Kay Dunkley, told *Pharmacy Daily*, that there was very little information about suicide rates in pharmacists in Australia, but stressed the need for the profession to work together to support each other.

"As a profession we all need

an increased awareness of the importance of checking in with our colleagues and offering our support, not just in relation to suicide, but also overall wellbeing," she said.

"To be able to care for others we need to care for ourselves and to do this we need to be working in supportive environments with a strong team who look after each other.

"Any death by suicide is a tragedy and reaching out to someone who is struggling can make a big difference.

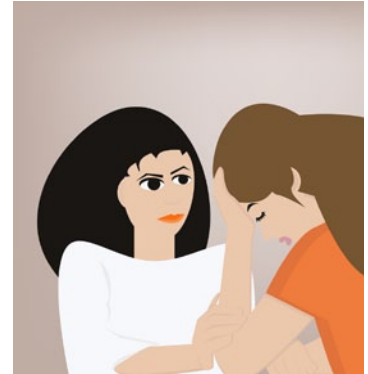
"If you are concerned do not be afraid to ask if a colleague is having thoughts of suicide.

"If they are struggling or having thoughts of suicide encourage them to seek help."

Dunkley noted that despite the increased pressures and stresses caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the suicide rate in the general population in Australia had not increased.

"PSS has not seen an increase in callers reporting thoughts of suicide during the pandemic despite call numbers to PSS increasing overall," she said.

"Suicide is usually a response to



existential suffering when someone feels they have no other option to escape that pain or an unbearable situation.

"So even though pharmacists have been under extreme pressure in recent years from bushfires, floods and COVID-19 with many now experiencing exhaustion and burnout this will not necessarily lead to increased suicidal thoughts in members of the profession."

Pharmacists who are experiencing a crisis situation, which may or may not include thoughts of suicide can seek support from the PSS on 1300 244 910, the Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 437 or Lifeline on 13 11 14.

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UTIPP-Q delivering appropriate care

PHARMACISTS involved in the controversial Urinary Tract Infection Pharmacy Pilot - Queensland (UTIPP-Q) are delivering “safe and appropriate care” a leaked draft report reveals.

Details of the report, compiled by Pilot Lead and Queensland University of Technology (QUT) School of Clinical Sciences Head, Professor Lisa Nissen, revealed by *The Australian*, indicated that pharmacists have the appropriate skills to prescribe and dispense medicines to treat uncomplicated UTIs.

The Australian reported that of 2,409 patients who participated in the trial, and were able to be contacted by researchers, 87% said their symptoms were resolved after pharmacist initiated antibiotic treatment.

Despite reports by the Australian Medical Association Queensland Branch (AMAQ) that nine patients ended up in hospital with sepsis, kidney or bladder infections due to

“ineffective or delayed treatment” as a result of the pilot (*PD* 09 May), Nissen’s report found just four patients visited a hospital emergency department after being treated by a pharmacist.

The Australian reported that one of the four patients experienced an allergic reaction, another was diagnosed with a superbug, while a third patient was given IV antibiotics, and the fourth was admitted with appendicitis.

The trial’s steering committee concluded the pharmacists followed the pilot’s treatment protocols in each instance.

A spokesperson for the Pharmacy Guild of Australia Queensland Branch, welcomed the positive feedback reported by *The Australian*.

“We look forward to the release of the QUT evaluation report,” the spokesperson said.

“It’s clear from the information in *The Australian* that the UTIPP-Q delivers for women and is a major



advancement for women’s health.

“From its inception to its extension, the UTIPP-Q has always been about providing high-quality health services to women across Queensland and from everything we’ve read today, it’s achieved that.

“Not every community has access to GPs - and even those that do, sometimes women have to wait weeks before getting an appointment.

“This scenario forces women with a UTI to go to an overcrowded emergency department or suffer in pain.”

AIH site update

THE Australian Immunisation Handbook (AIH) website is undergoing a comprehensive upgrade later this month.

From 24 May the site will add a range of additional features such as the ability to copy a link to a specific section on a page, “new” and “updated” indicators to identify fresh content, and prominent highlighting of important information.

The existing collapsible menus will be removed, to make the site easier to navigate, while a new version of the companion mobile app is also being released along with enhancements to the National Immunisation Catch-Up Calculator (NICC) to support kids aged under 10 years.

The website address will continue to be unchanged at immunisationhandbook.health.gov.au.

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▼ This vaccine is provisionally approved and is subject to additional monitoring in Australia. This will allow quick identification of new safety information. Healthcare professionals are asked to report any suspected adverse events at www.tga.gov.au/reporting-problems.

References: 1. Moderna Data on File. 2. Spikevax Product Information, 18 February 2022.

3. <https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines/getting-your-vaccination/booster-doses#winter-dose>. Accessed 25 March 2022.

Moderna Australia Pty Ltd. Level 6, 60 Martin Place, Sydney, NSW 2000.

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FIP training seal

A NEW training program which empowers pharmacists to build “leadership identity and skills” has been awarded the FIP Seal under the International Pharmaceutical Federation’s (FIP) Provision and Partnerships Programme.

The training is being delivered under a new partnership between FIP and UK-based training company Curriculo Solutions, which specialises in leadership and management skills development and career management.

The project was unveiled during an FIP Digital Event last week, with FIP lead for provision and partnerships, DSalia Bajis, saying the initiative aligns with FIP Development Goal 9 (Continuing professional development strategies).

The training program is titled “Pharmacists for the future,” with FIP’s Young Pharmacists Group members set to utilise it to help plan their future career development.

The release webinar is live at pharmacydaily.com.au/videos.

Infant vaccination role for pharmacy

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) is evaluating an application to extend its approval of Moderna’s COVID-19 vaccine (COVAX) to immunise children aged six months and older.

In a statement released last week the regulator noted that the mRNA-based vaccine has been granted provisional approval for immunisation to prevent COVID-19 in individuals aged six years and older, and as a booster for adults aged over 18 years.

Under the application, the TGA is assessing a proposed two-dose schedule of 25 micrograms in 0.25mL, for infants aged six months to five years, compared to the 50 micrograms in 0.25mL administered to children aged five to 11 years, and 100 micrograms in 0.5mL doses given to patients aged 12 years and older.

“mRNA vaccines use a genetic code to enable the production of the coronavirus spike protein,” the TGA said.

“Immune cells then recognise the spike protein as foreign and begin building an immune response against it.

“The RNA from the vaccine does not change or interact with our



DNA in any way.”

With several jurisdictions across the country automatically authorising pharmacists to administer COVAX in line with TGA approvals, a green-light from the regulator for the vaccine to be used in infants, would further expand the scope of practice for pharmacists in the relevant States.

If approved pharmacy organisations are likely to renew their calls for increased

remuneration for administering primary doses of the COVAX to younger patients.

Sources have described the current \$16 fee for administering an initial dose of a COVAX as “inadequate”, noting that paediatric vaccines take longer to provide.

MEANWHILE, the US Food and Drug Administration is expected to approve Pfizer’s COVAX as a booster for children age five to 11 years later this week.

LINKEDIN WEBINAR FOR NAPSA MEMBERS

Raven’s Recruitment is excited to provide all NAPSA members the opportunity to attend a not to be missed webinar; “LinkedIn: Your Professional Reputation Online” featuring one of Australia’s foremost LinkedIn experts, Karen Hollenbach.

The webinar will be held via Zoom on Wednesday the 18th May 2022 from 6:00pm - 7:00pm (AEST). Book your spot via NAPSA.

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Karen Hollenbach
One of Australia’s leading Independent LinkedIn Specialist Trainers and the Founding Director of Think Bespoke.



APC looks to transform workforce

PHARMACY educators are committing to training future generations of pharmacists to provide culturally safe care for First Nations People.

As part of efforts to transform the pharmacy workforce, the Australian Pharmacy Council (APC) and the Council of Pharmacy Schools of Australia and New Zealand (CPS) has launched the Leaders in Indigenous Pharmacy Profession Education Network (LIPPE).

The LIPPE will be led by Associate Professor Faye McMillan, the first Aboriginal

person to graduate as a pharmacist in Australia, with the aim of ensuring Indigenous values shape the context of pharmacy service delivery.

CPS President, Debra Rowett, said the organisation was “really committed” to ensuring the success of the LIPPE network.

“There’s a strong sense of excitement that we can make some advances through this network,” she said.

The LIPPE network will host a series of monthly webinars to help identify short- and long-term goals - **CLICK HERE** for more.

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Dispensary Corner



PHARMACY home delivery services are set to be revolutionised with a California-based pharmacy startup, NowRx, teaming up with Hyundai Motor Group, to pilot new technology.

The partnership will provide deliveries using automated logistics services that could one day see self-driving vehicles dropping off medicines to patients' homes, *DC Velocity* reports.

NowRx CEO, Cary Breese, said a shift to autonomous vehicles was part of the business's "long-term strategic vision... to further reduce delivery costs at scale".

"We can't imagine a better company to work with than the [Hyundai] Group, which has demonstrated substantial leadership in the autonomous vehicle, and other robotics and automation areas," Breese said.

As part of the initial pilot, Hyundai is providing modified versions of its Ioniq 5 fully-electric cars, which will not be fully autonomous, requiring drivers to be behind the wheel.

The cars will be used to simulate and gather information on autonomous vehicle delivery.



NPS benzo hub launch

NPS MedicineWise is rolling out a new online hub, to support health professionals and patients to reduce the risks associated with benzodiazepine use.

The hub, developed in collaboration with Reconnexion, includes resources to support health professionals to taper patients' dosing with conversation prompts to help them support users as they start to reduce their use of benzodiazepines.

The platform notes that health practitioners should seek to use non-pharmaceutical approaches, such as cognitive behavioural therapy, as a first line for the treatment of anxiety disorders and insomnia, prior to prescribing benzodiazepines for patients.

The NPS noted that taking benzodiazepines for more than four weeks "significantly increases the risk of dependence and should be prescribed with caution".

"Evidence of long-term therapeutic benefit from taking benzodiazepines is limited," the NPS said.



"For patients taking benzodiazepines longer term, support and education increases the likelihood of successful deprescribing."

The NPS added that guidelines are available to support health professionals to identify and manage patients with benzodiazepine substance use disorder.

The organisation also offers a CPD-accredited module to help primary care professionals to better support patients with insomnia.

Sydneysider cops unlawful import fine

A FORMER Sydney-based GP has been issued with an infringement notice of \$2,664, by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) for allegedly unlawfully importing unregistered anaesthetic products.

The regulator reported that the Sydneysider imported Bupivacaine Hydrochloride products into the country, which were not included in the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods (ARTG) at the time of importation.

"Bupivacaine Hydrochloride is a Prescription-Only medicine which

can be used as a local anesthetic during surgical procedures," the TGA said.

"The individual was previously a general practitioner, but surrendered their registration in 2019 and did not have approval or authority to import the goods into Australia.

"The products were seized at the border and will not be released."

People who suspect non-compliance in relation to therapeutic goods should contact the TGA about their concerns.

Pharmacy Connect program released

Pharmacy Connect program released

THE program for Pharmacy Connect, a COVID-Safe Event being held on 1-3 September at the Hilton Sydney, has been released with the theme Building better connections with patients.

The program brings together sessions delivering content on leadership and business content to support attendees to learn how to build better patient relationships.

Some of the highly practical sessions include information on buying and selling pharmacies, dealing with complaints, setting and maintaining a budget and forecasting where we may be heading with regards to rentals.

The program also includes some clinical content of interest to pharmacists.

Attendees can purchase early bird registrations confidently, as the 100 per cent COVID refund guarantee introduced for APP would be extended to Pharmacy Connect 2022 delegates.

To view the full Pharmacy Connect conference program and to register at the early bird rate, visit pharmacy-connect.com.au.



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