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Qld leads the way with free flu jabs

MOVES to provide free influenza vaccines to Queenslanders aged six months and older, shows the State Government "out in front" of other jurisdictions, Pharmacy Guild of Australia Queensland Branch Director, Gerard Benedet, believes.

The move announced yesterday afternoon (*PD* breaking news) came days after Queensland Health Minister, Yvette D'Ath, called on the Federal Government to expand access to National Immunisation Program vaccines to remove the cost barrier of getting the shot (*PD* 19 May).

Under the program pharmacies will receive a payment from the State Government of \$21.95 (including GST) for each dose they administer - with pharmacists eligible to provide the vaccines to patients aged five years and older.

Benedet told *Pharmacy Daily* that pharmacies participating in the state's NIP pilot would be able to claim the full \$21.95 payment as an administration fee.

However, for stores not involved in the pilot, the funding will cover the cost of the vaccine from their own stock, as well as the administration of the shot.

"This shows that the Queensland Government is thinking about keeping people out of the hospital system, and is very much out in front," Benedet said.

"I suspect other States and Territories will follow Queensland."

Pharmacy Guild Queensland Branch President, Chris Owen, welcomed the decision to use pharmacies to roll out the free vaccines.

"With the announcement of this initiative, we are pleased to see the continued and necessary growth in community pharmacists' role in the administration of influenza vaccines to the community," he said.

"On average, patients visit a community pharmacy 18 times a year and this initiative ensures that as many Queenslanders as possible have access to preventative health measures with the flu vaccine."



Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) National President, Associate Professor Chris Freeman, said the organisation would continue to lobby for subsidised pharmacist-administered vaccination services, to boost immunisation uptake.

"We urge all States and Territories, and the new Federal Government, to follow Queensland's lead by ensuring pharmacists can deliver flu vaccinations without consumers facing out-of-pocket expenses," Freeman said.

Today's issue of *PD*

Pharmacy Daily today features four pages of news, plus full pages from:

- TerryWhite Chemmart
- Sigma Healthcare

TWC Vic PotY

TERRYWHITE Chemmart (TWC) Leongatha has taken out the network's 2021 Victorian Pharmacy of the Year title.

The store's owners received the award at the TWC Next Level in Melbourne yesterday. See **page five** for more.

Sigma pressure

SIGMA Pharmaceuticals is today showcasing the Medical Industries Australia blood pressure monitor, available at a specially discounted price by contacting Sigma Customer Service on 1300 132 293 - details on the **last page**.



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*Reference: 1. Lang C, et al., *Planta Med* 2015;81:968-974. Supported by Engelhard Arzneimittel GmbH & Co. KG.

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Pfizer, Merck team up



LAST weekend about 200 people from patient groups, the local community and the pharmaceutical industry undertook Anna's Walk, an annual bladder cancer fundraiser walk taking them from Sydney's North Narrabeen to Mona Vale.

The event honours the life and memory of Anna Lynch who died of bladder cancer in 2017 aged just 45.

Participants included representatives of the Pfizer-Merck

alliance, an immuno-oncology collaboration established in 2014 to jointly develop new medicines.

Pictured undertaking the trek are, from left; Hilda O'Shea, Merck Healthcare; Sarah Jones, Pfizer Australia; Adam Lynch, founder of BEAT Bladder Cancer Australia; Kimberly Mason and Mia Modaro, Pfizer Australia; Christine La Rose, BEAT Bladder Cancer; and Aileen Kelleher, Merck Healthcare.

Blooms celebrates top retail managers

BLOOMS The Chemist Forestville's Kim Spencer has been named as the group's 2022 Retail Manager of the Year.

Addressing the network's Retail Managers Conference at the Fairmont Resort and Spa in the Blue Mountains last night, Blooms CEO, Emmanuel Vavoulas, said it was important for the group to recognise the contribution retail managers have made to the brand's growth.

"Building a strong internal culture with the right people across our network is a key priority for Blooms The Chemist," he said.

"After a few years of disruption, we are delighted to again host the conference in person and acknowledge together the enormous contribution our retail managers bring to the business and their communities."

Vavoulas lauded Spencer for her ability to consistently



deliver outstanding results and nurture growth, while providing extraordinary customer service.

Accepting the award, Spencer praised her colleagues across the group's stores noting "over the past year community pharmacy has been on the frontline helping customers navigate the vaccination program, amongst other healthcare services, and we have all played a pivotal role in providing the best advice and support for our customers during what has been a difficult period".

Pictured, Kim Spencer with Blooms the Chemist CEO, Emmanuel Vavoulas.



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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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SHPA joins ALP support chorus

THE Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) has added its voice of congratulations to new Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and his government (*PD* yesterday), with the organisation saying it “looks forward to working constructively with the incoming Health ministry team to ensure Australians have more equitable access to vital, lifesaving medicines through the world-class Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) regardless of where they receive their hospital care”.

SHPA President, Peter Fowler, said the Society welcomed the ALP’s commitment to reduce PBS co-payments as well as investing in and listing PBS medicines as a top priority.

Fowler noted that hospital pharmacists manage 25% of PBS expenditure as well as the majority of government spending on chemotherapy.

He also welcomed Albanese’s pre-election commitment to establish 50 new Medicare urgent care clinics which will be delivered next year to take pressure off hospitals.

“Hospital pharmacists, along with our healthcare colleagues, call on the new government to further address these pressures, by commissioning a 10-year National Pharmacy Workforce Plan,” Fowler said, along with lifting Federal hospital funding contributions.

FIP celebrates strong results for 2021

THE International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) has published its annual report for last year, hailing a strong 12 months in which the global pharmacy profession has “persevered to deliver to our populations through the variant and asynchronous waves of COVID in different countries”.

FIP President, Dominique Jordan, said pharmacists and pharmacies everywhere were becoming “more central to care”, with the Federation working hard during 2021 to advocate greater support, calling on governments and policymakers to improve protection for pharmacists and other health workers and “invest more in health systems for care that is sustainable, so that we are better prepared for future pandemics”.

Despite a decision not to hold face-to-face meetings, membership engagement was stronger than ever due to a program of “carefully designed online events”, alongside weekly communication with members.

More than 160 webinars, symposia and global summits took place virtually during the year, including a series providing insights into each of the FIP Development Goals which help identify the priorities of nations and regions in the decade ahead to 2030.

Key achievements through the year included the development of a toolkit for medicines reconciliation, the appointment of 20 pharmacists from across the globe to the One FIP Data and Intelligence Commission, and FIP’s representation of the profession at



the 74th World Health Assembly where important topics included pharmacy’s commitment to preventing antimicrobial resistance.

A nutrition and weight management toolkit for pharmacists was released during the year, while FIP convened a high level round-table with other health professionals to discuss opportunities to increase global vaccination coverage.

FIP shared research on community pharmacy, issued a call for action on air pollution as a threat to global health, and urged pharmacists to be a digital “driving force” in incorporating evidence-based technologies into daily pharmacy practice.

Other issues on FIP’s agenda last year included a toolkit to improve practice environments for women in pharmaceutical science and pharmacy education, action on sustainability and the climate crisis, and an urgent call to prevent

a predicted massive shortfall in health workers by 2030.

2021 also included the biggest ever World Pharmacists Day, with campaign materials in 26 languages and celebration of the work of the profession across the globe.

FIP’s finances ended the year strongly too, with total income of \$3.4 million - significantly lower than budgeted because no global FIP Congress took place - but with a commensurate reduction in expenses which meant the organisation recorded a \$241,000 operating profit for the year.

The full report, which also details work-in-progress such as the FIP Atlas, a new handbook for mental health, the FIP Seal accrediting pharmacy training providers, and guidance for pharmacists on supporting self-care, is available for download by **CLICKING HERE**.

UK farcimab tick

FARCIMAB, a new medicine for people with progressive eye diseases, such as age-related macular degeneration and diabetic macular oedema, has been approved by the UK Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency.

It’s the first treatment approved by the UK regulator through the “New Active Substance Work Sharing Initiative”, a collaboration of regulatory authorities in countries including the UK, Canada, Singapore, Switzerland and Australia’s TGA.

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Dispensary Corner

SWISS researchers believe a group of Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins may be using “pharmacies” under the sea to treat and prevent ailments.

Wildlife biologist, Angela Ziltener, from the University of Zurich, reported that a group of dolphins in the Egyptian Northern Red Sea, appear to be self-medicating skin conditions, by rubbing themselves against specific types of coral.

Ziltener noted the dolphins would nap in coral beds and rest on sponges as if they were undergoing a health and beauty routine.

“It’s very intensive,” she said. “They don’t just go through [the coral] - they go up, they come back down again, and they rub their belly, their ventral area and the back.”

Ziltener said the research team, which has been monitoring dolphin behaviour in the area since 2009, noted that the dolphins went back to the same species of coral on a regular basis, and appeared to be fastidious in which parts of their body touched particular corals.

After assessing 48 samples of corals, sponges and coral mucus used by the dolphins, the researchers found at least 17 different bioactive metabolites, which they believe may be used to protect against dermal disease-causing pathogens.

Researchers have said that a further study of the corals ignored by the dolphins would be needed to see if they lacked the same medicinal properties.

NZ Guild decries CWH

PHARMACY Guild of New Zealand CEO, Andrew Gaudin, claims discount pharmacy chains are “distorting the traditional focus of the community pharmacy sector - from providing services to keep New Zealanders healthy and well and out of hospital, to one which is more focused on retail sales to make commercial profits”.

In an article entitled, *The Chemist Warehouse (CWH) Effect*, published last week by NZ online publication *The Spinoff*, Gaudin lamented that some customers were choosing to abandon their regular chemist for a discount pharmacy which offers free prescriptions - an offering which is permitted in NZ.

“The Government collects the \$5 prescription charge from a pharmacy whether or not the individual is charged...discount pharmacy chains offset the losses incurred from waiving prescription charges with their focus on maximising commercial profits from retail sales,” Gaudin noted.

“Community pharmacies that can’t afford to do the same are then put under even more financial pressure,” he added.

The Spinoff article reports that since CWH launched in NZ in 2017 it has now grown to 31 stores nationwide, whimsically adding that “a select group of the NZ population has fallen completely and irrevocably under its spell”.

The company has cleverly enlisted a range of celebrity brand ambassadors including former All Black Dan Carter and *The Bachelor* NZ winner Matilda Green.

The report also noted CWH outlets stayed open as an essential service during NZ’s COVID-19 lockdowns, which helped entrench the brand’s popularity.

Gaudin said the Guild believed discounters should not manipulate the co-payment policy as a marketing tool, urging the removal of the \$5 script charge to “improve patient access and pharmacy viability”.

Guild Update

Pharmacy assistant conference returns

FOLLOWING a two-year break due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Pharmacy Assistant National Conference (PA2022) returns to the Sofitel Brisbane Central from 28-29 October 2022.

With a focus on wellness and wellbeing, PA2022 is the pharmacy industry’s opportunity to acknowledge, celebrate and reward pharmacy assistants.

The Pharmacy Guild of Australia National President, Professor Trent Twomey, said pharmacy assistants have and continue to play an integral frontline role during the COVID-19 pandemic, caring for patients and the wider community.

“In the past two-years of the COVID-19 pandemic, pharmacy assistants have demonstrated immense resilience during uncertain times coupled with an expansion of responsibilities, specifically with the COVID-19 vaccination roll-out,” he said.

“PA2022 is an amazing opportunity for pharmacy assistants to engage with their peers and learn from the experience of others.

“Most importantly, it is a unique opportunity for pharmacy assistants to put themselves first and focus on their wellbeing.”

More details are available **HERE**.

Win with Dermal Therapy

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Pictured above: TWC Executive General Manager Nick Munroe and Group Operations Manager Michael Beaumont with TWC Leongatha Network Partners Phil Lo, Will Khoo and Retail Manager Lauren Presnell



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