

Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features two pages of news, plus the **November MIMS Update**.

Updated NSW vax standards

THE NSW Ministry of Health has updated the NSW Pharmacist Vaccination Standards to include the Moderna COVID-19 bivalent vaccine.

Under the revised standards pharmacists in the State can only administer the bivalent shot as a booster dose to adults aged 18 years and older, in line with the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation Guidelines.

Pharmacists are also required to have written approval from a medical practitioner before providing a Novavax booster.

Pricing policy fuels meds shortages

MANUFACTURERS of generic medicines are working with the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) to tackle current supply chain issues impacting access to a range of treatments, the Generic Biosimilar Medicines Association (GBMA) says.

Responding to reports of medicines shortages impacting medications including antibiotic, amoxicillin, a spokesperson for the organisation told *Pharmacy Daily* that Australia was not alone in facing supply challenges.

"The pandemic has pulled the curtain back on how vulnerable Australia is to international disruption of the supply of vital medicines," the spokesperson said.

"Australia is not alone with medicine shortages however as an island nation, a small destination market and a net importer (90%) of medicines, we are particularly vulnerable.

"This has been exacerbated by nearly a decade of policy impacts

that has driven down the price of many generic medicines to an unsustainable low-level.

"This is why we negotiated a five-year agreement with the Commonwealth, that is aimed at better protecting Australians against global supply chain disruptions.

"From Jul next year, members of the affordable medicines sector will be empowered to increase their respective stockpile buffers of medicines to four to six months.

"This includes vital medicines such as amoxicillin.

"This initiative is the cornerstone of the GBMA's Strategic Agreement.

"In the meantime, as mentioned above, our members will continue to collaborate with the TGA to resolve any shortages.

"As always, patients and their safety and wellbeing, remain our top priority."

Pharmacy Guild of Australia Victorian Branch President, Anthony Tassone, told *Pharmacy Daily*



that the current supply shortages of amoxicillin were "frustrating for patients, pharmacists and prescribers", especially given the volume of prescriptions for the antibiotic (*PD* 03 Nov).

"We hope that with the strategic agreements that have been struck between the Federal Government and Medicines Australia and the GBMA with the obligation of increased on-shore stock holdings from Apr 2023 for a range of low cost but high volume PBS-listed medicines, that going forward such stock shortages will be less frequent and shorter in duration."

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Dispensary Corner

THE cold war potentially dived to an even lower temperature after the recent release of figures showing Cuba is outstripping the USA in terms of average life expectancy.

The shock figures showed a significant decline of almost a year in US life expectancy to 76.1 years - meaning the average American will die almost three years earlier than people living in the Caribbean socialist enclave.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report showed US life expectancy for men is now 73.2 while for women it's 79.9, with the organisation saying about half the decline in the data was due to COVID-19.

However other contributing factors included unintentional injuries such as overdoses and car accidents.

Newsweek noted that Cubans have access to free health care under the country's key socialist principals, which has also driven a high ratio of medical professionals and a strong focus on prevention and primary care.



Capital Chemist backs cancer clinic

CANBERRA-BASED cancer patients will have their initial consultation at the University of Canberra's Cancer Wellness Clinic funded under a partnership with the Capital Chemist Group.

Under the deal, the pharmacy group will donate \$15,000 a year over three years, to enable the clinic to provide patients at any stages after their diagnosis with a free consultation.

Announcing the agreement, Capital Chemist Charnwood proprietor - former Pharmacy Guild of Australia Pharmacy of the Year Award winner - Samantha Kourtis (**pictured**), said it would provide patients with access to unique and effective treatment.

"As community pharmacists, we feel the heartbeat of our community, we experience it every day - everyone has been touched by cancer," she said.

"We see many patients during and after cancer treatment, and we see the challenges and struggles they face, so helping to fund a

program that offers nutrition, exercise and mental health support is so important."

The clinic aims to make the initial consultation the first step in developing a holistic allied health treatment plan aimed at mitigating treatment-related side effects, Exercise Physiology Clinical Supervisor, Melanie Moore, said.

"Being able to offer the first consultation free is an incentive to get more people through the doors of the clinic, and started on a supportive care plan that can really make a difference," she said.

"We know now, more than ever, that healthcare affordability is a challenge, so being able to help support patients with a donation of this magnitude is incredible."

Cancer patient, Cassandra Bennett, who recently had her first consultation at the clinic, said the program "gives a patient a certain level of control" when it comes to their treatment.

The 42-year-old, who was initially diagnosed with brain cancer in



2018, said being able to access the service was essential for patients in order to take control of their health.

"When you get a diagnosis like this, someone tells you when you have a surgery, when you take your medicine, so being in control of this treatment plan is important," she said.

"As a cancer patient, you often see a change in your financial position, so being able to access these services for free means that money can go to other services."

Guild opens nominations for lotY 2022

NOMINATIONS for the 2022 MIMS/Pharmacy Guild of Australia Intern of the Year (lotY) Award are now open.

Guild National President, Trent Twomey, said the lotY title recognised interns participating in the Guild's Intern Training Program, who go above and beyond in their role.

"The lotY Award recognises the next generation of pharmacists, and Guild interns whose actions epitomise what it means to be a community pharmacist," he said.

"Interns can nominate themselves and we encourage



them to do so if they feel they have shown exemplary work during their internship year.

"Similarly, Guild interns can be nominated by their preceptor, employer or pharmacist and pharmacy colleagues."

Nominations close on 31 Jan 2023 - [CLICK HERE](#) to nominate an intern.

\$20b opioid bill

US PHARMACY giants CVS Health and Walgreens are set to pay close to \$7.8 billion each, to settle disputes relating to the nation's opioid crisis.

The deals are expected to mark the end of multiple lawsuits that have been filed by governments across the US, who have claimed that the pharmacy groups filled prescriptions that should have been flagged as inappropriate.

Meanwhile, rival pharmacy group Walmart has also reached a similar \$4.9 billion settlement.

New Products

- **Daunorubicin (hydrochloride) and cytarabine (Vyxeos)** is a liposomal formulation of a fixed combination of daunorubicin and cytarabine in a 1:5 molar ratio. Daunorubicin has antimitotic and cytotoxic activity, which is achieved by forming complexes with DNA, inhibiting topoisomerase II activity, inhibiting DNA polymerase activity, affecting regulation of gene expression, and producing DNA-damaging free radicals. Cytarabine is a cell cycle phase-specific antineoplastic agent, affecting cells only during the S-phase of cell division. The 1:5 molar ratio has been shown *in vitro* and *in vivo* to maximise synergistic antitumour activity in acute myeloid leukaemia (AML). *Vyxeos is indicated for the treatment of adults with newly diagnosed, therapy-related AML or AML with myelodysplasia-related changes.* Vyxeos powder for injection contains daunorubicin 44 mg and cytarabine 100 mg and is available in a pack of 1 vial.
- **Fluocinolone acetonide (Iluvien)** is an intravitreal corticosteroid implant. *Iluvien is indicated for the treatment of diabetic macular oedema in patients who have been previously treated with a course of corticosteroids and did not have a clinically significant rise in intraocular pressure.* Iluvien is contraindicated in the presence of pre-existing glaucoma or active or suspected ocular or periocular infection including most viral diseases of the cornea and conjunctiva, including active epithelial herpes simplex keratitis (dendritic keratitis), vaccinia, varicella, mycobacterial infections, and fungal diseases. Iluvien intravitreal implant contains fluocinolone acetonide 190 mcg and is available in a single use applicator in a pack of 1.
- **Pemigatinib (Pemazyre)** is a small molecule kinase inhibitor of FGFR1, 2 and 3. It inhibits FGFR 1-3 phosphorylation and signalling and decreases cell viability in cancer cell lines with activating FGFR genetic alterations, including point mutations, amplifications, and fusions or rearrangements that result in constitutive activation of FGFR signalling. Constitutive FGFR signalling can support the proliferation and survival of malignant cells. *Pemazyre has provisional approval for the treatment of adult patients with locally advanced or metastatic cholangiocarcinoma with a fibroblast growth factor receptor 2 (FGFR2) fusion or rearrangement that has progressed after at least one prior line of systemic therapy.* Pemazyre is contraindicated with concomitant St. John's wort. Pemazyre tablets are available in 4.5 mg, 9 mg and 13.5 mg packs of 14.
- **Treosulfan (Trecondi)** is a prodrug of a bifunctional alkylating agent with cytotoxic activity to haematopoietic precursor cells. The activity of treosulfan is due to the spontaneous conversion into a mono-epoxide intermediate and L-diepoxybutane. The epoxides form alkylate nucleophilic centres of deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) and are able to induce DNA cross-links which are considered responsible for the stem cell depleting and antineoplastic effects. *Trecondi is indicated in combination with fludarabine as part of conditioning treatment prior to allogeneic hematopoietic stem cell transplantation (alloHSCT) in adult patients with acute myeloid leukaemia (AML) or myelodysplastic syndrome (MDS) at increased risk for standard conditioning therapies; and, in combination with fludarabine, with or without thiotepa, as part of conditioning treatment prior to alloHSCT in paediatric patients older than one month with malignant and non-malignant diseases.* Trecondi is contraindicated in active non-controlled infectious disease; severe concomitant cardiac, lung, liver, and renal impairment; Fanconi anaemia and other DNA breakage repair disorders; pregnancy and lactation; and with concomitant administration of a live vaccine. Trecondi powder for infusion contains treosulfan 5 g and is available in a pack of 1 vial.

New Presentation

- **Brexucabtagene autoleucl (Tecartus)** is now available in an intravenous infusion bag containing a target dose of 1×10^6 anti-CD19 CAR T cells per kg body weight in approximately 68 mL of suspension.
- **Tozinameran (Comirnaty (Tris/Sucrose Presentation))** is now available as a concentrate for suspension for injection (dilute to use) containing tozinameran 3 mcg/0.2 mL after dilution in packs of 10 or 195 ten dose vials with a maroon cap.

New Indications

- **Belimumab (Benlysta)** is now indicated for the treatment of active lupus nephritis in adult patients who are receiving standard therapy.
- **Brexucabtagene autoleucl (Tecartus)** is now indicated in adult patients ≥ 18 years of age with relapsed or refractory B-cell precursor acute lymphoblastic leukaemia.
- **Pembrolizumab (Keytruda)** is now indicated for the treatment of patients with high-risk early-stage triple-negative breast cancer (TNBC) in combination with chemotherapy as neoadjuvant treatment, and then continued as monotherapy as adjuvant treatment after surgery; and in combination with chemotherapy, for the treatment of patients with locally recurrent unresectable or metastatic TNBC whose tumours express PD-L1 (CPS ≥ 10) as determined by a validated test and who have not received prior chemotherapy for metastatic disease.
- **Secukinumab (Cosentyx)** is now indicated for the treatment of active enthesitis-related arthritis in patients 4 years and older who have had an inadequate response or were intolerant to at least one NSAID and at least one DMARD; and for the treatment of active juvenile psoriatic arthritis in patients 2 years and older who have had an inadequate response or were intolerant to at least one NSAID and at least one DMARD.
- **Tozinameran (Comirnaty (Tris/Sucrose Presentation))** now has provisional approval for the active immunisation to prevent coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) caused by SARS-CoV-2, in individuals 6 months of age and older.

This list is a summary of only some of the changes that have occurred over the last month. Before prescribing, always refer to the full product information.