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AUSTRALIAN OWNED

Butler, Pharmacy Guild at loggerheads

THE relationship between the Pharmacy Guild and Federal Health Minister Mark Butler has plumbed new lows, with Butler yesterday comprehensively debunking Guild claims 60-day dispensing is likely to lead to aged care residents paying \$800 a year extra for dose administration aids (**PD** 07 Aug).

A visibly angry Butler spoke to media in Canberra, saying that since announcing the move “we’ve seen some pretty desperate scare campaigns from the pharmacy lobby”, slamming the Guild’s aged care claims as “self-serving, cynical [and] complete rubbish”.

He noted that aged care facilities are funded to take responsibility for medication management for their residents, and that while in some cases this is outsourced to local community pharmacies, DAAs are the responsibility of the facilities themselves, rather than pharmacies.

“This is an absolutely new, awful low for the pharmacy lobby to try to scare older people and their families that they might have

to pay a fee that, frankly, is the responsibility of the facility,” he said.

The press conference followed Butler’s surprise announcement that he was bringing forward negotiations for an eighth Community Pharmacy Agreement (8CPA), to be finalised by 30 Jun 2024 (**PD** breaking news yesterday).

Butler noted that the Guild and the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia will continue to be signatories to any new agreement - adding that consultations for the 8CPA “will include patient groups, medicines wholesalers and distributors, and others who have a stake in the growth and development of pharmacy services that benefit all Australians”.

He also flagged an assessment of the current programs under the 7CPA “including how well it delivers for patients and consumers”, while the negotiations will also “take note of the past findings and recommendations of reviews into the sector” - presumably including the outcomes of the controversial

King Review which were rejected by former Coalition health minister Greg Hunt (**PD** 04 May 2018).

However, the Guild says the Government’s decision to bring forward the 8CPA talks is an “admission of the damage its 60-day dispensing policy and its associated funding cuts are already inflicting on patient services, aged care residents and pharmacies”.

In his press conference Butler conceded that “we need to deliver business certainty to pharmacies”, with the Guild this morning releasing details of a new survey showing almost a quarter of community pharmacies had already reduced opening hours, while more than half had increased service fees.

Patient groups and the Pharmaceutical Society have joined with the Guild in urging a pause to the planned 01 Sep implementation of 60-day dispensing, with a possible Senate disallowance motion set to “provide more time for the Government to consult and get this policy right”.

TWC support

TERRYWHITE Chemmart is promising pharmacy owners “business support from the best in the business” with a dedicated business development team, custom built IT systems and “personalised Joint Partner and Business Support Plans to drive your pharmacy performance through 60 day dispensing changes”.

See **page three** for details.

S8 dispensing sees rego cancelled

A NSW pharmacist has had his registration cancelled for a further 12 months pursuant to a ruling in the state’s Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NSWCAT) finding him guilty of unsatisfactory professional conduct and professional misconduct.

The NSW Health Care Complaints Commission alleged that over the period Oct-Dec 2020 the pharmacist, who was first registered in Feb 2018, dispensed Schedule 8 drugs of addiction to his “immediate family member and his friends and ‘friends of friends’ in circumstances where the

prescriptions variously contained no name of the patient, no address of the patient, were not signed by a medical practitioner and were otherwise illegible”.

The matter came before the NSW Pharmacy Council after an investigation by its Pharmaceutical Regulatory Unit, which found the pharmacist had dispensed items on forged scripts on at least 20 occasions.

The Council suspended the pharmacist’s registration in Mar 2021, with the matter further pursued in the NSWCAT hearing in May this year, the outcome of which was published last week.

ODT claiming

REGISTRATION and claiming for the Opioid Dependence Treatment (ODT) Community Pharmacy Program is now available in the Pharmacy Programs Administrator Portal.

For more information on the scheme and the program rules see ppaonline.com.au.

Today’s issue of PD

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

- **TerryWhite Chemmart**
- **FIP - International Pharmaceutical Federation**

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New OSA solution

NEW findings from Flinders University promises a “whole new way” of treating sleep apnoea for patients who can’t tolerate or find the Continuous Positive Airway Pressure machine (CPAP) ineffective.

The new solution combines therapies such as dental splits with alternate and emerging therapies like oxygen therapy and novel medications.

PALS goes to parliament



THE founder of Pharmacy Addressing Loneliness and Social Isolation (PALS), Jenny Kirschner, recently had the opportunity to speak to parliament about the potential of using pharmacy to address loneliness.

The Parliamentary Friends of Ending Loneliness breakfast took place at Parliament House yesterday morning, kicking off the Australian Loneliness Awareness Week as well as launching the *Social Connection in Australia State of the Nation Report 2023*.

Kirschner was joined by speakers including Ministers Andrew Giles,

Bridget Archer, and Dr Andrew Leigh, plus Dr Hugh Mackay and others from Medibank and AIA.

Assistant Minister for Rural and Regional Health, and pharmacist, Emma McBride, was also in attendance.

PALS is the first international pharmacy initiative that aims to raise awareness and address loneliness and social isolation to improve the health of patients and society - learn more [HERE](#).

Pictured: Kirschner at Parliament House with Johanna Badcock, Director Evidence and Training Ending Loneliness Together.

Aussies need to get oral health on track

AUSTRALIANS are being encouraged to prioritise their oral health, as new research from Bupa shows more than one in two (58%) put off a visit to the dentist last year.

The important reminder arrives during Dental Health Week, which kicked off yesterday.

“A visit to the dentist means a whole lot more than a simple clean and a search for cavities, we also look for signs of oral

cancer, oral infections and a range of other conditions that can have a significant impact on your health if not addressed early,” Bupa Dental Head Dentist Cathryn Madden explained.

“If you haven’t seen a dentist during the calendar year, Dental Health Week is a fantastic reminder to book one in before both 2023 and potential oral health issues get away from you,” she added.

Pharmacy Guild Update

Perverse outcomes in new allowance

THE Pharmacy Guild says there are perverse outcomes in the Albanese Government’s recently announced Regional Pharmacy Transitional Allowance (RPTA).

The Health Minister announced the \$148.2 million RPTA last month and says it’s designed to “help pharmacies adjust to the transition to 60-day prescriptions.”

The allowance applies to rural and regional pharmacies classified from MMM2 to MMM7 with payments ranging from \$52,030 to \$396,909 over the next four years.

However, it’s only applicable to those pharmacies with average script volumes equalling dispensing income of under \$1 million in the 12 months to 1 April 2023 and the Guild says this has created perverse outcomes.

In one example, if a pharmacy is rated MMM3-5, according to the government it would get an average total allowance of \$153,000 if it dispenses over 45,825 scripts.

However, if it dispenses one more script above that it stands to lose up to \$340,000.

The Guild says such outcomes could have been avoided if the government had consulted the pharmacy sector.

Dispensary Corner

SCIENTISTS in Germany have made a unique discovery about brains, fun and laughter by tickling rats.

The intriguing study at Berlin’s Humboldt University saw researchers tickling the rodents on their bellies or backs while at the same time monitoring their brain activity.

Apparently rat “laughter” is too high-pitched for the human ear, but can be captured with special microphones, and a so-called “humour centre” in their midbrain is activated when they are enjoying themselves.

Lead researcher Michael Brecht, whose previous work had also found the creatures are quite good at playing hide-and-seek, noted that “rats are very ticklish and playful animals”.

The research highlighted an area of the brain called the periaqueductal grey which appeared to be associated with the enjoyable activity, with a further phase of investigation set to look at whether similar effects are seen in other playful mammals.

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