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Today's issue of PD

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

- TerryWhite Chemmart
- SHPA

Optimal med use

THE Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia has a MedsAware webinar on 16 Aug during Deprescribing Week.

Register for it on [page five](#).

Hundreds may not be eligible for RPTA

THE Rural Pharmacy Network Australia (RPNA) has serious concerns for hundreds of smaller pharmacies in rural and remote Australia that will not be eligible for funding designed to offset losses due to 60-day dispensing (60DD).

Pharmacies dispensing under 22,913 scripts per year in MM5-7 will not be eligible for the newly announced Regional Pharmacy Transition Allowance (RPTA).

According to the Department of Health Fact Sheet, "pharmacies receiving the Regional Pharmacy Maintenance Allowance (RPMA) which are forecast, on average, to offset the estimated reduction in dispensing related remuneration (from both the government and patient co-payments) following the doubling of that allowance, will not receive the Regional Pharmacy Transition Allowance".

The government is assuming that RPMA funding will function to offset losses from 60DD for the lowest volume pharmacies in MM5-7, but this amount includes pre 60DD RPMA funding, which is not new money, asserted RPNA.

Further, the Rural Network modelling suggests that the RPMA "doubling" for many of these pharmacies will not be sufficient to ensure they do not go backwards.



"In fact, these pharmacies are at risk of being far worse off overall than those receiving the transition payment," the organisation stated.

"A pharmacy dispensing around 20,000 scripts per year could be worse off than a pharmacy dispensing around 50,000 scripts by around \$120k over the four-year transition period.

"This is clearly not an equitable outcome for these pharmacies and their communities," RPNA added.

The purpose of the RPMA is to support access to PBS medicines and pharmacy services, but now it has "morphed into a mechanism to offset the impact of 60DD".

"This is a shifting of the goal posts which will make it very difficult for small rural and remote pharmacies moving forward," shared the RPNA.

While the government's attempt to extend a lifeline to rural pharmacies is an acknowledgment of the important role that rural pharmacies play, there are strong concerns across the Rural Network about whether the funding is sufficient and whether it is being allocated equitably.

"Many rural pharmacies will still be going backwards financially, some more than others, and adjustments will still need to be made in terms of opening hours, staffing, and pricing," said RPNA.

"It is difficult to see how this will not have a flow on effect to rural patients, especially in the most vulnerable communities.

"These are towns where access to health services are limited and the pharmacist may be one of the few, if not the only, healthcare professional available to patients.

"Many of these pharmacies have been serving their communities for decades, holding fragile local health systems together, and now their ability to continue to operate as they were before, is in jeopardy."

The Rural Network has written to the Government appealing for a review of this situation and calling on all pharmacies below the threshold, to contact and join the RPNA to assist its common cause.



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Sanofi's epilepsy med shortage advice

PHARMA company Sanofi-Aventis has notified the TGA about a shortage of vigabatrin (Sabril) tablets that was triggered by a global recall and is expected to last until 30 Sep.

Sanofi has also advised that the oral 500mg powder sachet form of Sabril is available and should cover patients' needs until the tablets are available again.

The TGA is working with Sanofi and the specialists who prescribe vigabatrin to limit the impact of this shortage on patients living with epilepsy who need this medicine.

To help develop advice following the shortage, the TGA has formed a medicine shortages action group that includes the PSA and the SHPA.

Stroke bootcamp

AS A hardcore, military-style exercise group, bootcamp is certainly not for the timid.

But an innovative take on the stereotypical idea of bootcamp is getting "great results" for people recovering from stroke, according to University of South Australia, which is offering its own five-week one. Learn more [HERE](#).



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Struck off in NSW

THE Health Care Complaints Commission recently prosecuted a complaint against pharmacist Michael Stanley Lowe before the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

It was alleged that in Jun 2020, while owning three pharmacies in Sydney, Lowe was charged with offences of dealing with property suspected of being proceeds of crime, supplying a commercial quantity of a prohibited drug, and various motor vehicle offences, and was later convicted of these offences.

Lowe also failed to notify Ahpra within seven days of being charged with these offences.

It was also alleged that Lowe failed to disclose changes to his criminal history in his Application for Renewal of Registration submitted in Oct 2020.

In its decision of 11 Aug 2023, the Tribunal found the complaint proven.

The Tribunal also found Lowe's convictions rendered him unfit in the public interest to practise and that he was guilty of unsatisfactory professional conduct.

As a result, the Tribunal cancelled Lowe's registration as a pharmacist and imposed a non-review period of three years.

The full decision can be found [HERE](#).

FIP's global survey open

THE FIP Community Pharmacy Section (CPS) is conducting a Global Survey on Workforce Sustainability and Supporting Positive Practice in Community Pharmacy, in collaboration with the University of Newcastle, Australia.

The organisation is urging all community pharmacists to participate and if you are not in community pharmacy, FIP is asking people to share this invitation with community pharmacy colleagues.

The findings of this survey will shape informed recommendations for potential policies and strategies to improve the professional well-being of pharmacists at a global level.

Additionally, CPS will curate a global repository for this data to enable community pharmacists to



share and learn from the continuing professional development of others in the area of positive practice.

Access the survey, [HERE](#), until 31 Aug, and FIP stated that all responses will remain confidential.

The survey consists of multiple sections related to professional practice, workplace pressures, mental health, and wellbeing, and is expected to take 10-15 minutes to complete.

PCOS Guideline

A NEW Monash University-led international partnership has delivered a guideline to improve the lives of women with polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), a neglected health condition.

The 2023 International Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) Guideline, [HERE](#), and AskPCOS Patient App, led by the Monash Centre for Health Research and Implementation at Monash University, was launched online and is published in four international journals, *Fertility and Sterility*, *Human Reproduction*, *Journal of Endocrinology and Metabolism*, and *European Journal of Endocrinology*.

Learn more [HERE](#).

Smash it like Hulk

RESEARCHERS are exploring how superhero-like avatars can help people manage chronic and persistent pain.

The new 'Superhero Therapy' engages patients in virtual reality where they 'swap' their body with that of a superhero to convince the brain and nervous system that the body is invincible, healed and no longer in pain.

Lead researcher and 2023 SA Young Tall Poppy of Science, Dr Daniel Harvie, says mixing brain science with virtual reality could help solve persistent pain - see more [HERE](#).

Pandemic handling lauded by review

AN INDEPENDENT review of the Western Australian Government's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic has "recognised the state's successful management and response to the crisis".

The review, conducted by John Day, Emeritus Prof Margaret Sears, and Dr Michael Schaper, has commended Western Australia's approach to managing economic, health, and social outcomes during the pandemic.

"The review's recommendations, shaped by extensive stakeholder consultation and expert analysis, reinforce our commitment to a strong and coordinated response to potential future threats," stated a spokesperson from the WA Government.

The review underscores the tireless efforts of healthcare professionals and the broader public sector in safeguarding the community's health and wellbeing, the spokesperson said.

The government's immediate acceptance of all 35 recommendations aims to further demonstrate its dedication to strengthening

pandemic preparedness.

A notable recommendation is the development of a state-wide campaign to address vaccine misinformation and disinformation, promoting accurate information about vaccines to counter confusion and distrust.

Premier Roger Cook praised the state's accomplishment, acknowledging, "this review confirms our world-leading response, providing principles and tools essential for future challenges".

"Our COVID-19 fatality rate of 0.074%, the lowest in Australia, reflects our collective determination."

Health Minister Amber-Jade Sanderson expressed gratitude to healthcare workers and the public, noting, "with over 2.6 million vaccine doses administered and a robust testing and contact tracing system, Western Australia's response has been exceptional".

The review's recommendations are set to pave the way for a more resilient and coordinated response to future health threats, shared the spokesperson.

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Dispensary Corner

THE mayor of the Florida city of Tampa came across a big catch during a recent fishing expedition, about 31.7 kilograms of cocaine, valued at around US\$1.1 million (A\$1.69 million), *Yahoo News* has reported.

Jane Castor was enjoying a vacation day off Marathon, in the Florida Keys, on 23 Jul when a family member spotted something in the warm Atlantic waters.

At first she thought it was “shade as opposed to something shady”, perhaps small fish clustered under some debris in the ocean, she told *Fox 13 news*.

But the “closer we got, I was like, ‘oh, that would be a bale of cocaine,’” she said.

Castor said she had no doubt about what she was seeing.

Her more than three decades on the Tampa police force, including six years as its chief, allowed her to recognise the drug stash with absolute certainty.

The family loaded the microwave-sized package onto their boat.

Tightly packed bundles were visible under layers of plastic film.

Castor saved the location of the find in her watch and called the Monroe County Sheriff’s Office.

The US Border Patrol seized the shipment shortly thereafter.

On 24 Jul, officials announced the find on social media, attributing it to “a recreational boater” with a photo of the stash: 25 bricks of cocaine, each stamped with a purple butterfly.

Rural incentives double

IN A move aimed at alleviating the chronic shortage of healthcare workers in remote and rural regions, the NSW Government has announced a doubling of incentives for healthcare professionals willing to relocate to underserved areas.

The incentives, previously set at \$10,000, will now be increased to \$20,000, as part of the government’s commitment to addressing critical staff vacancies.

It is understood that the scarcity of healthcare workers, particularly those equipped with emergency skills, has been a long-standing issue compounded by wage caps and the disruptive impact of the pandemic on rural health services.

This shortage has led to disparate health outcomes between rural and urban populations, prompting urgent action, the gov’t statement said, adding that the Rural Health Workforce Incentive Scheme lies at the core of this strategy.

This initiative aims to offer an array of financial and non-financial benefits, including boosted salaries, sign-on bonuses, retention payments, relocation assistance, housing provisions, additional leave, and access to continuous training and education.



Notably, these incentives are tailored to reflect the remoteness of the areas, with higher values assigned to more isolated regions.

Premier Chris Minns expressed confidence in this approach, highlighting the importance of accessible healthcare services for all NSW residents.

NSW Health Minister Ryan Park (pictured) echoed this sentiment, emphasising that these measures, coupled with the expansion of the Single Employer Model, “will encourage healthcare professionals to explore and advance their careers in rural NSW”.

“As the NSW Gov’t takes these proactive steps, it is anticipated that the enhanced incentives will attract a surge of skilled healthcare workers to these areas, ultimately bridging the healthcare gap and improving the overall health outcomes for the region’s diverse communities,” Park said.



Weekly Comment

Welcome to *Pharmacy Daily’s* weekly comment feature. This week’s contributor is **Amit Saha, MPharm, MBA, Head of Technical & Innovation, LaCorium Health.**



Aluminium-free antiperspirant

ALUMINIUM-BASED compounds, such as aluminium chloride, aluminium chlorohydrate, and aluminium zirconium, are frequently used in antiperspirants to form a gel-like plug on the sweat gland openings, reducing the flow of sweat to the skin’s surface.

There have been debates and studies regarding the safety of aluminium-containing antiperspirants. Some concerns are because aluminium is absorbed by the skin and can potentially accumulate in the body over time.

However, the research on this topic has been inconclusive, and regulatory agencies such as the US Food and Drug Administration have stated that the use of aluminium-containing antiperspirants is generally safe.

Aluminium is one of several factors that has been suggested as a cause for Alzheimer’s disease.

However, the balance of evidence does not support a specific role for aluminium in Alzheimer’s disease.

Despite this, the negative publicity does create doubt in a user’s mind!

With the progress of science, effective control of excessive sweating can be achieved without using aluminium these days and is worth a go.

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