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Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features two pages of news.

Novo lawsuits

NOVO Nordisk has filed lawsuits against two compounding pharmacies in Florida, US, who are allegedly offering contaminated copycat versions of semaglutide, the ingredient found in Ozempic and Wegovy.

Novo Nordisk said that it had conducted tests on the compounded products allegedly being sold as semaglutide from Wells Pharmacy and Brooksville Pharmaceuticals.

One sample from Wells Pharmacy allegedly had a level of unknown impurities of 33%, and samples from Brooksville Pharmaceuticals allegedly has lower levels of the active ingredient than described on the label, along with impurities, according to the lawsuits.

The lawsuits are a continuation of Novo Nordisk's legal battle with compounding pharmacies offering what they claim is semaglutide.

Exclude VAD from the Criminal Code

THE Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) has supported independent MP Kate Chaney's push to amend the Criminal Code to permit telehealth consultations for voluntary assisted dying (VAD) services after the Federal Court ruled on Thu that they are illegal.

SHPA has voiced its support to the Attorney-General for the proposed bill scheduled early in 2024.

SHPA believes the definition of 'suicide' should also be updated in the Commonwealth Criminal Code to exclude VAD which would support practitioners to provide these services via telehealth within legal boundaries.

SHPA President Tom Simpson said the use of electronic communication to transfer information and prescriptions between prescribers, pharmacists, patients and their carers is essential to ensure equitable access to care, leaving no Australians disadvantaged.

"Patients seeking assessment for VAD, especially those from rural and remote areas, are uniquely disadvantaged by the current Code as most states only have one VAD service centre and pharmacy."



Without telehealth options, these very ill and vulnerable patients, or the VAD practitioners themselves, are forced to travel long distances to access or provide treatment, Simpson added.

"This is an unnecessary and inhumane hurdle these patients, their families and their care teams should not face.

"As a VAD-credentialed pharmacist myself, I know firsthand the challenges faced not just by patients, but by practitioners who want certainty that they are practicing within the law."

Simpson commented that if a doctor phones a pharmacist for advice on administering a VAD medication, the answer currently

is 'I can't tell you that over the phone' - an answer that puts the focus on not breaching the Code, rather than recognising that there's a doctor and a patient at the other end of the line.

"In effect, VAD practitioners must currently choose between patient-centred care and legal-centred care," he said.

Simpson explained that medical and technological advancements have come such a long way since the Code was amended in 2005 to "protect individuals from being incited to suicide".

"Medical professionals can use telehealth appropriately to deliver VAD services and it is necessary to ensure all Australians, no matter where they live, can access these services," he said.

In the letter to the Attorney-General, SHPA outlined additional challenges imposed by the Code on pharmacy practice including the inability to provide administrative information to approved practitioners, training, transmit prescriptions electronically, discuss VAD medicines and administration, as well as respond to questions or even use a translator during telehealth calls. *JG*

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ATO clarifies GST on pharmacy items

THE Australian Taxation Office (ATO) stated it may have created the impression that all general-purpose compression socks and travel socks are GST-free.

If pharmacists have treated general-purpose compression socks and travel socks as GST-free in good faith, the ATO won't devote compliance resources to reviewing the GST treatment of these products for tax periods up to and including 29 Feb 2024.

However, if your pharmacy has treated sports or athletic compression socks and maternity socks as GST-free, the ATO is encouraging pharmacists to make a voluntary disclosure, as these types of socks weren't covered in the ATO Interpretive Decision it withdrew recently.

GST will apply to compression socks when they're designed for or widely used by people to prevent illness or disability.

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Dispensary Corner

A CHEMICAL manufacturing facility, Brenntag Great Lakes, in Wisconsin in the US, has drawn the ire of the nation's Food and Drug Administration for making hand sanitisers with the same equipment it uses to make products with toxic industrial solvents and chemicals, such as automotive brake parts cleaner.

The FDA indicated that Brenntag's hand sanitiser could be contaminated with class 2 solvents which include those that have irreversible toxicity, including neurotoxicity.

According to the FDA, the company allegedly told the regulator that, although it had planned to set up dedicated equipment for the hand sanitiser, this plan was "not well effectively communicated to the production team".

But, in a statement to the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, Brenntag entirely denied that hand sanitisers were made on the same equipment and said the alleged violation was due to a "documentation error".

Toxic hand sanitisers became an alarming problem in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic when demand for the germ-fighting gels skyrocketed and manufacturers rushed products to market.

Though methanol contamination is not the concern in this case, hundreds of products that flooded the market were found to contain methanol, a toxic alcohol that can cause harm via inhalation, ingestion, and skin absorption, the FDA reported.

PenCS honours Growlife

GROWLIFE Medical was named the winner of the PenCS 2023 Patient-Centred Care Award on Fri, for its aim to foster Australia's healthiest community.

General practice pharmacist at Growlife Medical Lauren Koch said, "the Growlife Medical team are honoured to accept this award for Patient-Centred Care from PenCS".

The patient, family and the community are at the heart of what the Growlife Medical team does across its four Brisbane practice (Sherwood, Oxley, Fairfield and Highgate Hill), Koch explained.

"Our 'helicopter-view' approach to population health allows for data-driven quality improvement projects to be developed based on areas of need within our varied patient populations.

"The ease at which data analysis and review is conducted using the PenCS software is integral to this approach and we thank them for this award and providing us the opportunity to showcase our quality improvement projects."

The 2023 PenCS Awards saw 22 finalists recognised for achievements in primary healthcare with respect to Primary Health Networks and Aboriginal



Community Controlled Health Organisations across Australia.

Held at the Playhouse, NIDA Theatres in Sydney, eight award winners were recognised from around the country for their outstanding contribution to data-driven quality improvement in general practice and Aboriginal member services using health informatics, each receiving a trophy and a cash prize of \$500 - learn more about the awards [HERE](#). *JG*

Pictured: pharmacist Koch and Growlife dietician Jess Cartright.

Call to participate in Griffith's audit study

PHARMACISTS are invited to join Griffith University's pilot audit focused on exploring processes involved in managing vaginal thrush within community pharmacies in Australia.

This is an opportunity for pharmacists to consider their own processes for managing thrush, with similar audits done in the past for the non-prescription medicine supply within community pharmacies.

Besides contributing to valuable research, participation will give community pharmacists the opportunity to go into a draw to win one of two \$500 vouchers.

This research is part of a Master of Pharmacy student's dissertation project (GU ref no: 2023/901).

Community pharmacists can [CLICK HERE](#) for more information or email pharmacy student Yasemin Kacar [HERE](#).

FIP Congress to South Africa

THE 82nd FIP World Congress, to be held in Cape Town from 01 to 04 Sep 2024 will bring delegates from all over the world to the African continent.

It will also bring the opportunity to experience the real world of pharmacy in the country, FIP stated.

The Cape Western Province Branch of the Pharmaceutical Society of South Africa has developed professional tours through which Congress delegates can explore pharmacy in South Africa beyond the educational presentations on offer.

A few hand-picked tours have been designed to showcase the diversity of pharmacies in South Africa, from world-class facilities to basic, community-level health establishments.

There will be opportunities to get insights into the pharmaceutical industry, supply chain management and education at the Congress.

The tours will also cater to the community pharmacy sector.

To learn more [CLICK HERE](#), and for the full Congress program see [HERE](#).

