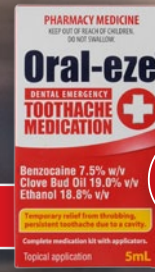


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Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features three pages of pharmacy news plus a full page from BioCeuticals.

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BIOCEUTICALS products have four key points of difference: effective formulations, compliance, evidence and conscience. Learn more on [page 4](#).

Hearing improves

THE proportion of First Nations children aged 0-14 with an ear or hearing problem has declined from 11% in 2001 to 6.9% in 2018-19.

The first annual report from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Ear and hearing health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people 2023*, was launched by Worimi man and ear, nose and throat surgeon Kelvin Kong.

The report also showed that between 91% and 98% of First Nations babies received hearing checks after birth in Qld, SA, Vic and WA.

The rate of audiology services for First Nations children aged 0-14 also increased from 12 per 1,000 population in 2010-11 to 14 per 1,000 in 2021-22.

"While First Nations people continue to experience elevated rates of ear and hearing problems, their ear and hearing health has steadily improved over the last 10 years due to new initiatives by govt, Aboriginal medical services, non-govt organisations, and specialist groups," said Prof Kong.

NIP vax fee starting soon

THE Department of Health and Aged Care and the Pharmacy Programs Administrator (PPA) have announced that the National Immunisation Program Vaccinations in Pharmacy (NIPVIP) Program will commence on 01 Jan 2024, with registration and claiming available on the PPA Portal from this date.

Under the innovative program, pharmacies can receive a payment of \$18.85 per vaccination for the administration of National Immunisation Program (NIP) vaccines in a pharmacy setting, for individuals aged five years and over ([PD 01 May](#)).

The NIPVIP Program will increase patient access and affordability of vaccinations to help protect the public from vaccine-preventable diseases, the PPA stated.

The NIP vaccines that can be administered by Australian pharmacies are determined by state and territory legislation.

Service providers who are interested in participating should familiarise themselves with the NIPVIP Program rules and FAQs which are now available on the NIPVIP Program webpage, along with a NIPVIP user guide which provides guidance on registration



and claiming for when the vaccination program goes live on 01 Jan on the PPA Portal [HERE](#).

In May, Federal Health Minister Mark Butler had stated that the program would optimise the use of the health workforce across a stretched primary care sector and improve patient access, such as in rural and remote areas.

"Australians will be able to walk into one of the thousands of community pharmacies around Australia and get safe and convenient access to any vaccine on the National Immunisation Program," said Butler. *JG*

Promising results for bowel cancer drug

A NEW tablet treatment called divarasib has shown it is very effective in treating a challenging type of bowel cancer associated with the KRAS G12C mutation.

Research published in *Nature Medicine* yesterday has shown "remarkable results", with 62% of people with protein KRAS G12C mutated bowel cancer achieving a positive response to treatment when given divarasib in combination with another cancer

treatment called cetuximab.

Lead researcher and medical oncologist Prof Jayesh Desai explained that these results are "incredibly impressive".

"The median progression-free survival for patients in the study was just over eight months and the treatment was well tolerated with manageable side effects," Desai explained.

Learn more about the research into divarasib [HERE](#).

Pont is in top ten

HOSPITAL pharmacist Dr Lisa Pont is being recognised by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) for her outstanding research into the systemic need for the better use of medicines in aged care settings.

The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) congratulated Dr Pont for her research 'Driving Change in Aged Care pharmacy practices through data', which was announced last week as one of the ten best Australian health and medical research projects chosen from among the thousands of current NHMRC-funded projects.

Pont said her research demonstrated the value of using routinely collected health data to monitor the impact of polypharmacy in aged care facilities.

"Polypharmacy is extremely common in aged care which can lead to many problems such as incorrectly prescribed doses," Pont said.

"By using real-world data, we can arm people with the appropriate tools and support needed to enact change."

As the incoming president of the International Society of Pharmacoepidemiology and outgoing Director of the SHPA, Dr Pont is now collaborating with colleagues around the world on the use of data in pharmacy research.

"At the moment, you're either a data analyst, or you're a pharmacist, but I think that's changing...the use of data is becoming much more essential in healthcare delivery."

Read Pont's research [HERE](#).



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PSA on 24/7 care

THE Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) South Australia President Dr Manya Angley said the gov't's support for around-the-clock access to pharmacist expertise will reduce pressure on emergency departments (*PD* 05 Dec).

Three pharmacies have been selected to participate in the program covering Central, North and South Adelaide.

"Healthcare needs can change unpredictably at all hours of the day or night.

"Twenty-four hour access to pharmacists gives Adelaide residents peace of mind that if they are sick or need after hours health advice, they will be able to access expert care from a trusted health professional," Angley said.

Around 250,000 Australians are hospitalised each year, with another 400,000 presenting to emergency departments as a result of medication misadventure.

"Giving South Australians another option for after-hours care will improve health outcomes, and reduce pressure on emergency departments.

"People who require medicines for pain management or other palliative care medicines can be assured they can access them around-the-clock, along with the advice and expertise of pharmacists ready to help".

She added PSA will continue to work on this initiative with the South Australian gov't.

Roche weighs up Carmot

ROCHE has agreed to take over unlisted obesity drug developer Carmot Therapeutics for US\$2.7b (A\$4.1b) upfront, joining a list of contestants seeking to challenge the dominant makers of weight-loss drugs Novo Nordisk and Eli Lilly, *Reuters* has reported.

The US takeover target's most promising drug candidate, a once-a-week injection called CT-388, is a dual GLP-1/GIP receptor agonist like Lilly's Mounjaro or Zepbound.

After encouraging Phase I trial results, the Carmot drug is ready to be tested on humans in the second of three trial stages, with a possible market launch in the 2030s, the head of Roche's pharmaceuticals division Teresa Graham said.

Weight-loss drug market leader Novo is ahead with its injection Wegovy, a single agonist of the GLP-1 gut hormone receptor.

Overwhelming demand has left the weight loss manufacturers scrambling to boost production.

Roche shares rose 2.4% to a six-week high this week on optimism that the weight-loss market, estimated by some analysts to reach US\$100b (A\$152b), will accommodate many rivals.



"The markets are large enough for 'me too' products, particularly when offered at the right price," Zuercher Kantonalbank analysts said in a note.

Roche's Graham said the company was more ambitious than just having a low-price alternative to the leaders in the market, adding that CT-388 could become the best obesity drug in the GLP-1 class, either on its own or in combination with other compounds.

"There is opportunity for deeper weight loss, there is opportunity for that weight loss to happen more quickly and tolerability is maybe one of the bigger issues," she said.

Under the Carmot deal, which is expected to close in the first quarter of 2024, its owners will receive up to US\$400m (A\$610m) in addition to the upfront payment if certain milestones are achieved, Roche explained. *JG*

Amex expands services to HICAPS users

AMERICAN Express has expanded its partnership with HICAPS, allowing all pharmacists that utilise the service to accept the credit card and allow card members to earn rewards points.

The expanded partnership, which affects 90k professionals, coincides with the roll-out of

HICAPS' new Trinity Payment Terminals, designed to streamline the patient payment experience with fast claim processing among 100% of private health insurers in Australia, reducing the need to manually input claims, transactions and quoting, cutting down on admin work.

Climate plan

THE Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care, Ged Kearney has launched Australia's first National Health and Climate Strategy at the 28th United Nations Climate Conference (COP28) in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

It sets out an ambitious plan aimed at addressing the health and wellbeing impacts of climate change and outlining priorities for reducing greenhouse gas emissions from the health system.

The National Strategy brings together actions from across the Australian Govt and partners around the world to set out an ambitious vision for healthy, climate-resilient communities, and a sustainable, resilient, high-quality, net zero health system.

The plan incorporates feedback provided from over 270 submissions made by various stakeholders in the health and aged care sectors as well as consultation from workshops and roundtables attended by more than 300 different parties.

Australia has endorsed the COP28 Declaration on Climate and Health to be released at the Climate-Health Ministerial, and has joined the Alliance for Transformative Action on Health, which will provide opportunities to exchange knowledge, coordinate access to climate finance and enhance cooperation among all on climate and health.

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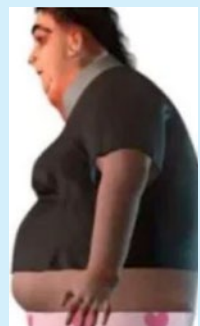
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Dispensary Corner

OVERWEIGHT, hunched back, objectively terrible hair, and ill-fitting clothing are apparently your future if you're a remote worker, reported *news.com.au*. Job discovery platform *DirectApply* has created a visual image (pictured) of the remote worker in 25 years, with your co-worker looking more like the hunchback of Notre Dame than the person you know otherwise. The platform claimed that constantly working from home will have severe physical side effects in the future, and none of them are good. According to *DirectApply*, WFH workers will suffer from hunched shoulders, digital eye strain and hair loss from a lack of vitamin D. Dark circles from staring at multiple screens and obesity from being stuck inside for long periods were also in their future. Not to mention the increased stress from not getting enough social interaction in the day. Interestingly, the image being shared has yet to spark the reaction of people throwing on their best non-elastic pants and swiping public transport tickets to get back to offices ASAP. Instead, workers commented when not commuting, they can plan their day more flexibly and have time to care for themselves.



Cannabis clinic boom causes concern

TO CATER for the booming billion-dollar medicinal cannabis market, various clinics that offer both prescription and dispensing services under the one roof have been popping up, often resembling sleek day spas, positioned in tourist hotspots such as the Gold Coast. Pharmacist Kishan Patel, who co-owns clinics in Coolangatta and Robina with another opening in Logan in Jan, told *ABC News* the contrast to the once hippy vibe of cannabis was a deliberate choice. "The idea is to create a welcoming environment as we're not trying to be in a dark alley or a corner somewhere," Patel said, adding, "we want to be proud front and centre". He explained that his clinics allowed patients to visit an onsite GP to see whether they qualified for medicinal cannabis treatment.

The business model has attracted the attention of The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, which has concerns about the recent explosion in the number of online and shop-front clinics that focus solely on providing medicinal cannabis to patients, as opposed to holistic care. Patel admitted that while there were problems within the rapidly expanding industry, his company was determined to reduce the stigma around the drug. "It's like any industry, there's good and bad and we feel we're carving out a whole different way of doing things," he remarked. He added that many of his customers were black-market cannabis users who were switching over to a legal supply. Patel said his company was

looking to grow its "cannabis naive" patient base, those who have never tried the product or weren't aware it could treat symptoms they might be experiencing. "Our whole premise of being here is to help patients, they're the centre of everything we're doing." The TGA has issued more than 100 infringement notices totalling nearly \$1.3m for alleged unlawful advertising of medicinal cannabis. Patel said his company hadn't received complaints from regulators and that he obtained legal advice to ensure any pamphlets or videos made by his business were compliant. "We've learned a lot from day one, a lot of that is making sure we know where the rules are. "The TGA is there to protect the public, and we advocate for that." JG

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