

Today's issue of PD

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

Open to support

BIOCEUTICALS is offering online and phone support over the holiday period for community pharmacists.

Head to the **back page** for the hours of operation.

Workforce data

THE Pharmacy Board's latest registration data report covers the period to 30 Sep.

At this date there were 36,670 registered pharmacists, including 32,678 with general registration; 2,486 with provisional registration; 21 with limited registration; and 1,485 with non-practising registration, said the Board.

Vape imports cut-off date

FROM 01 Mar 2024, the TGA has announced that the importation of all non-therapeutic vape products will be prohibited.

This is in addition to the 01 Jan 2024 reforms (PD 29 Nov), and will mean it is unlawful to import non-therapeutic vapes on or after the Mar date even if those vapes were ordered before the cut-off date and have not arrived in Australia.

In addition, the importation of all vapes under the personal importation scheme will end.

From 01 Mar, people will no longer be able to order vapes directly from overseas, even if they have a prescription.

A limited exception will allow international travellers arriving in Australia to carry a small quantity of vapes for their treatment or the treatment of someone travelling with them under their care.

Subject to state or territory law, non-therapeutic vapes imported before 01 Mar may still be lawfully sold by retailers generally, including



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vape stores, provided the vape does not contain nicotine or any other medicine, and does not make therapeutic claims.

This will allow legitimate retailers of non-therapeutic vapes not containing nicotine to run down their stocks prior to the Govt introducing legislation later in 2024 to prevent the domestic manufacture, advertisement, supply and commercial possession of non-therapeutic vapes to ensure comprehensive controls on vapes across all levels of the supply chain.

Also, from 01 Mar, new pre-market requirements will apply to the importation and manufacture of all therapeutic vapes.

Importers must obtain a customs licence and permit to import therapeutic vapes, and must notify the TGA that their products comply with new product standards. JG

Helpful checklist

A NEW checklist for practitioners has been developed by the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care to help resolve feedback or complaints made directly to practitioners or the health service where they are working.

Pharmacists might find this checklist, **HERE**, helpful when a complaint is first raised with them by a patient or client, and it may also be relevant to those who have a role in establishing and maintaining complaints systems and processes at a health service.

The Pharmacy Board explained that when feedback or complaints are managed well, they can result in improvements that increase patient, client and community confidence in practitioners, and also help prevent a concern escalating to an external complaint body or regulator.

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Dispensary Corner

IN HUMANS, nodding off for a few seconds is a clear sign of insufficient sleep - and can be dangerous in some situations, such as when driving a car.

But a new study published last week found chinstrap penguins snooze thousands of times per day, accumulating their daily sleep requirement of more than 11 hours in short bursts averaging just four seconds.

The flightless birds might have evolved this trait because of their need to remain constantly vigilant, according to the authors of the paper in *Science*.

The researchers argued that the findings show, contrary to assumptions, the benefits of sleep can accrue incrementally, at least in some species.

The penguins' sleep occurred while standing or lying to incubate their eggs, with the average bout just 3.91 seconds. In total they slept a whopping 10,000 times or more per day.

Penguins on the periphery got longer and deeper bouts of sleep than those in the centre, which can be explained by the excess noise and bumping that occurs in the middle of a colony, or the heightened risk of nest material theft.

In humans, however, conditions that fragment sleep such as sleep apnoea have impacts on cognitive function and might even precipitate diseases, such as Alzheimer's.

"Thus, what is abnormal in humans could be perfectly normal in birds or other animals, at least under certain conditions," wrote the scientists.

Compounding weight loss

WIDESPREAD demand for diabetes drugs such as Ozempic and Mounjaro has allegedly tested the exemption, given by the TGA for medicines approvals, to compounding pharmacies who are now producing replica weight loss medications on a large scale, *ABC* has reported.

It identified at least seven compounding pharmacies and telehealth companies that have been quietly selling off-brand versions of the popular weight loss medications and shipping them to consumers across Australia for months.

The TGA said in a statement that Novo Nordisk was the pharmaceutical company authorised to supply approved products containing semaglutide.

"Compounded therapeutic goods have not been evaluated by the TGA for safety, quality and efficacy," the TGA explained.

"The compounding exemptions in the Therapeutic Goods Regulations 1990 [legislation] do not apply if a pharmacist...is compounding products for bulk supply in anticipation of patients' needs," a spokesperson said in a statement.

The TGA warned bulk supply could

land pharmacists in "hot water".

"Compounding medicines on a commercial-like scale has the potential to adversely affect many patients, as they are not subject to rigorous testing for safety and quality," the spokesperson added.

The TGA also warned practitioners prescribing and dispensing compounded medication "should consider their individual legal and professional responsibility in prescribing and dispensing an 'unapproved' product, including compounded semaglutide-like products".

"Prescribing a compounded product may expose pharmacists to liability if a patient has a negative outcome, particularly if a TGA approved product is available to treat the patient's medical condition," the TGA stated.

The Pharmacy Board of Australia said, "we are aware of individual concerns about the compounding of semaglutide".

"To date, however, the concerns have not related to the health, conduct or performance of an individual pharmacist which would bring the concern within the jurisdiction of the Board." *JG*

Qld's new Premier

THE Pharmacy Guild of Australia, Qld Branch President Chris Owen, acknowledged the official appointment of the 40th Premier of Queensland, Dr Steven Miles.

"I'd like to congratulate Queensland's 40th Premier, the Hon Dr Steven Miles stepping into the leadership role for the people of this state," he said.

Owen added as a former Minister for Health, Miles was the driving force during the initial health response to the pandemic, and firmly supported community pharmacists while pharmacies remained open and accessible to dispense millions of medicines and vaccinate millions of Queenslanders.

"Premier Miles has always shown his passion and enthusiasm for the health of Queenslanders and is a strong supporter of community pharmacists training towards their full scope of practise."

Owen said the Guild looks forward to working with the Miles Govt to continue to deliver initiatives like the free influenza vaccination program and the Australian-first, Queensland Community Pharmacy Scope of Practice Pilot, which will be implemented first in North Queensland in early 2024, easing the burden on GPs and overstretched hospital emergency departments.

"On behalf of Guild members across Queensland, we are committed to working with the Queensland Govt to modernise the public health system in the best interests of patients," Owen concluded.

Syringe shortage

PFIZER Australia has notified the TGA last week of a shortage of both strengths of Bicillin L-A (benzathine benzylpenicillin tetrahydrate) prefilled syringes for injection (600,000 units per syringe and 1.2 million units per syringe).

Pfizer Australia has advised the TGA that these shortages will continue into 2024.

More information for pharmacists and the community is available [HERE](#).

FIP's vax report

PRACTICE and legislation changes related to pharmacy-based vaccination in 17 countries were presented in a new report published by the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) last week.

Taking a mixed methodology approach, the FIP report aims to advocate pharmacists' vital contribution to vaccination coverage and the reduction of vaccine-preventable diseases worldwide [HERE](#).

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