



Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features two pages of news.

Vale David Coates

ILLAWARRA pharmacist David Coates has died after a long and distinguished career in community pharmacy and the scouting movement.

Coates became a pharmacist after first training at a seminary to become a Catholic priest, training which those who knew him say formed the basis of his strong principles throughout life.

He was made a life member of the Illawarra Pharmacists' Association in recognition of his work, which included maintaining a detailed register for the association of all pharmacists and dispensary technicians in the region, a voluntary position but one which was invaluable to any pharmacists when looking for new staff.

National President of the Pharmacy Guild of Australia Trent Twomey said: "David ran his pharmacy at Fairy Meadow as a very personal and independent operation and took pains to speak to his patients and learn about them, and to be their reliable source of help and advice.

"He epitomised the community in community pharmacy, and this was highlighted by his scouting work for which he got an OAM."

Better access for concession patients

IN SENATE estimates yesterday, officials confirmed that only 23% of PBS medicines are dispensed on the Safety Net Card for Concessional Patients.

That means the majority of concessional patients are paying 50 cents more per script without any hope of relief as Australia's inflationary pressures mount day upon day.

With another 50-cent increase looming on 01 Jan 2024, the organisation that seeks to make healthcare more affordable and equitable for all, Better Access Australia, is calling on the Government to act on this Budget to freeze indexation on patient co-payments until the economy is in better shape.

Better Access Australia is also calling for automating the PBS safety net consistent with the Medicare Benefits Scheme safety net, which would ensure all patients get the benefit of the PBS safety net.

Costs for this automation could be offset by the removal of the current manual safety processing fee paid



to pharmacy, Better Access said.

In its Budget submission, it asks that there be recognition of the capacity and cost-effectiveness of greater use of pharmacists and nurses in the delivery of primary care, to improve both timeliness and affordability of care for patients and the health system.

Better Access Australia Chair, Felicity McNeill said: "Better Access Australia has been asking for the Government to freeze the annual CPI indexation of PBS co-pays for concessional patients for the past two years.

"The Government has instead argued that the PBS safety net is enough to protect concession card holders, but as the department has confirmed, only 23% of scripts are dispensed under this card.

"This means over 144m scripts

are attracting the full 50-cent price hike every time a concession card holder fills their script.

"144m scripts for diabetes, heart disease, asthma, depression, arthritis, infection, and pain are all 50 cents more expensive every month for those least able to pay," McNeill noted.

"Concession card holders use an average of 17 PBS scripts a year - and with the safety net not kicking in until 36 scripts, there's no relief in sight as these stats disclosed yesterday confirm.

"General patients have had their co-pay reduced by \$15.50 since 01 Jan, concessional patients have had a price hike of 50 cents since the same date.

"Worst still with inflation still at 7.8% another 50-cent increase on 01 Jan 2024 is inevitable unless the Government acts in this budget.

"Better Access Australia applauds the Government's changes to the general co-pay but the same equality of affordable access must be given to those least able to pay for healthcare - concessional patients," McNeill concluded.

AstraZeneca at the Kosi Challenge

ASTRAZENECA Australia is taking on the Kosi Challenge, hosted by Rare Cancers Australia (RCA).

Joining several other Pharma cup teams is the 2023 AstraZeneca AZcends team, the company's largest team yet, with 41 members and their families heading to Kosciusko National Park on 18 Mar to take on the

challenge and raise funds for RCA.

The AstraZeneca Kosi Challenge team leader Luke Mannix said they hope to raise 50k this year adding, "the Kosi Challenge will provide support to the important work of Rare Cancers Australia's Patient Support Team in making a meaningful impact on the lives of patients and their loved ones".

Ecstasy alert

NSW Health is alerting the public to the risks of MDMA (ecstasy) use, after a number of patients were admitted to hospital following attendance at a music festival in Sydney on Sat 11 Feb.

A panel of toxicology experts has determined MDMA as the cause of toxicity.



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Dispensary Corner



PROSTATE cancer is no laughing matter, but it did somewhat provide a diversion for the friends and family of a US man who developed an “uncontrollable Irish accent” after being diagnosed with the condition.

The *BMJ Case Reports* journal detailed the case, reported by doctors in North Carolina, who said the unnamed man in his 50s noticed the tone and pattern of his speech change, about 18 months after his initial cancer diagnosis, which saw him treated for adenocarcinoma with radiotherapy and hormone therapy.

The report says he spoke consistently with an “Irish brogue” despite having never visited Ireland - although he did have Irish relatives and friends.

The doctors also noted no neurological abnormalities, psychiatric history or brain MRI abnormalities when the symptoms commenced.

It’s believed to be the first reported case of so-called foreign-accent syndrome associated with a prostate cancer diagnosis - with the appearance of the Irish accent appearing to be possibly linked with a worsening of the cancer, which the doctors subsequently found had terminally spread to other parts of his body - despite undetectable prostate-specific antigen levels.

The authors of the report said it was important to recognise these types of syndromes and their progression as an indicator of other changes in the body.

PA2023 moves to Sydney

THE Pharmacy Guild of Australia has announced changes to this year’s Pharmacy Assistant National Conference with a new look, a new date, and a new location.

The event is to be held from 31 Aug-02 Sep at the Hyatt Regency, Sydney (*PD* breaking news yesterday).

Held in conjunction will be the Pharmacy Assistant National Conference (PA2023) and Pharmacy Connect, an annual Pharmacy Guild event for pharmacists and pharmacy owners.

This year’s new look trade exhibition is open to both events, with the 50-plus stand trade exhibition providing the latest industry products and services to pharmacy assistants.

There will be access to even more demonstrations from industry suppliers at the trade exhibition.

The Pharmacy Guild of Australia/Maxigesic Pharmacy Assistant of the Year Award national winner award will also be announced at this conference.

The Pharmacy Guild of Australia National President, Trent Twomey, spoke about the change of location for the annual event.

“Sydney is the largest pharmacy



market in Australia,” Twomey said.

“This strong community pharmacy base, coupled with the nearby location of some of the country’s major pharmacy schools, will bring a greater number of attendees to the conference.

“With more than 800 attendees expected to attend Pharmacy Connect and 300-plus attendees expected to attend PA2023, the combined event offers the pharmacy sector more opportunities for networking and professional growth outside of the pharmacy walls,” Twomey concluded.

For further details about PA2023 **CLICK HERE.**

Homebound art

MORE than 600k Australians prevented from leaving home by their disability, can now access a wellbeing initiative to reveal their personal journey and challenges navigating the healthcare system.

“More than 37k Australians have reported not leaving home at all because of their disability or a health condition, so we’re looking at a significant proportion of the population,” said Dr Pinero de Plaza, a researcher at Flinders University that has led the development of an online arts and storytelling exhibition with the network of Frail, Homebound and Bedridden People, and other clinicians.

“Our online exhibition expresses their personal struggles through imagery and messages, created directly with homebound people to provide knowledge and understanding about these traumatic experiences, and highlights the solutions that scientists and clinicians can develop by working with these groups,” De Plaza concluded.


Learn more **HERE.**

\$50m raised for cancer research

COLES Group has reached its most significant community fundraising milestone - raising \$50m in a decade for leading children’s cancer support organisation, Redkite.

The \$50m fundraising milestone coincides with Coles’ tenth anniversary of its partnership with Redkite.

Learn about Redkite **HERE.**



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