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## Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features three pages of news.

### AHPRA boosts sexual resources

A SUSTAINED jump in reports to authorities about sexual misconduct and harassment in healthcare has seen the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) significantly increase its resources to deal with the increase.

New data revealed on Fri showed 841 allegations of "boundary violations" were made to AHPRA in 2022/23, relating to 728 registered health practitioners.

That's an increase of almost 50% in just two years, with complaints ranging from inappropriate or sexualised remarks to intimate touching of a patient without consent, personal relationships where there is a power imbalance and aggressive sexual criminal offending.

AHPRA CEO Martin Fletcher said while it was distressing to hear about any case of sexual misconduct in the health system, "it's even more devastating if these incidents go unreported".

He said the agency had added 10 team members dealing with these matters, with the aim of leading to reduced investigation times and faster outcomes.

Doctors remain the most complained about profession, with 359 notifications, followed by 215 complaints about nurses and 120 about psychologists.

## Pharmacy salaries continue to surge

PHARMACY employers need to recognise the importance of overall remuneration packages including perks and benefits such as flexible working hours in order to continue to attract the best candidates, according to the newly released *Pharmacy Salary & Market Report* from Raven's Recruitment.

Launched during last Fri's inaugural Pharmacy Careers Summit by Ravens GM Heidi Dariz, it's the sixth iteration of the report which tracks trends across the industry in Australia and New Zealand, focusing on pharmacist and intern roles both in capital cities and regional & rural areas.

"Salaries are continuing to trend up, with many employers reviewing and increasing their current offerings in order to remain competitive and retain their staff," Dariz said.

"The number of vacant roles, as well as the time taken to fill these, has increased across both metropolitan and regional pharmacies," she added, noting an ongoing marked shortage in the pharmacy workforce talent pool.

While skilled migration routes have started to open, potentially helping fill some of the gaps,

the time taken to process visa applications has meant this has done little to ease the current shortages, the report added.

Prominent issues in recruitment have included flexibility and work-life balance, and "more pharmacists than ever are seeking part-time work rather than the traditional 40-hour plus work week".

"Employers who prioritise and accommodate this preference will find it easier to attract talented individuals," Dariz suggested.

Ravens also highlighted key opportunities in locum work, with the current shortages of pharmacists for permanent roles rendering locums more in demand than ever - leading to a "skyrocketing" in the wages paid to locum pharmacists in the last year.

Average locum hourly rates range between \$70 and \$80 per hour in metropolitan areas, and higher in regional areas - an increase of up to 60% over the last five years.

Ravens is currently seeking to fill more than 250 permanent pharmacist roles across the country, according to Ravens' senior consultant Debbie Capuano.

Salaries for pharmacist managers have reached an all-time high, she

confirmed, with an average salary package of \$120,000 per annum in cities and \$165,000 in rural and regional areas.

Pharmacist-in-charge roles attract an average pay of \$105,000 in metropolitan areas, rising to \$130,000 in rural Australia.

Interestingly, while intern pharmacists have traditionally been paid according to the pharmacy industry award, this has started to change, with more than 30% of employers last year offering above-award salaries to new graduates in order to attract the top interns.

Another new trend this year has seen some employers in rural areas offering sign-on bonuses to attract potential staff, along with a host of other benefits such as extra holidays, staff discounts, professional development opportunities, travel allowances, housing assistance and in one case even pet vacation care!

"The shortage of pharmacists in rural areas is a pressing issue that has definitely reached a critical level," Capuano said.

To download the complete Raven's 2023 *Pharmacy Salary and Market Report* available at no charge, [CLICK HERE](#).

### Insulin shortage

THE Federal Department of Health and Aged Care has amended regulations to allow pharmacists to supply different PBS-subsidised forms of injection insulin degludec and insulin aspart, due to a Serious Scarcity and Substitutable Medicine Instrument relating to a shortage of Ryzeodeg Flextouch.

See full details on the Medicines Shortages site, [HERE](#).



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### Summit still live

LAST Fri's highly successful Pharmacy Careers Summit will now stay open in a special "on-demand" version for several months, allowing anyone who missed one of the sessions or content to view and listen.

The virtual Exhibitor Booths will also remain active, with key information and contacts available for follow-up as well as regular updates with relevant career information.

More than a thousand participants joined the event live online, taking part in the full day of educational presentations, updates and advice sessions as well as exploring options for career development.

Thanks to all the sponsors including the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia, Pharmacy Guild, Symbion and Ravens.

To explore the virtual venue and view sessions, transcripts and other info [CLICK HERE](#).

## Govt's 'wake-up call' as Tas 'loses sleep'

A NEW independent report has found up to 187 jobs and eight pharmacies will be lost in Tasmania due to the Federal Government's 60-day dispensing medicine policy.

The report was conducted by economist Henry Ergas AO with Tulipwood Advisory and the Relational Insights Data Lab at Griffith University, and comes as Tasmania's pharmacies launch the *Save Your Local Pharmacy* campaign, with in-store banners, radio, digital and TV advertising to explain the consequences of the 60-DD policy.

The Pharmacy Guild of Australia's Tasmanian Branch President Helen O'Byrne shared that the policy "will impact tens of thousands of Tasmanian patients".

"Tasmania has a high proportion of rural and regional centres which will be hit hard by any closures.

"In the town of Scamander for example, there is no GP, no bank and now the Government is cutting funding for the only pharmacy.



"Losing that pharmacy will devastate the town," she said.

"While some Tasmanians will benefit from the changes, there will be a cost to everyone else.

"This should be a wake-up call to the Federal Government.

"It highlights that no consultation was undertaken and that the policy was rushed by the Department of Health with no modelling or understanding of the impact

on community pharmacies and Tasmania patients.

"Unfortunately, as the new report shows, this policy will force Tasmania pharmacies to cut opening hours, including on weekends and end free services for patients such as blood pressure monitoring, home delivery of medicines and diabetes and asthma programs," said O'Byrne.

The report also found community pharmacies will be forced to cut opening hours by 2.5 hours each day, on average.

Kelli Houlahan who runs Westbury Pharmacy in Tasmania's north said the report's findings reflected the situation on the ground in their community.

"I have been losing sleep trying to work out how I can minimise the impact on our community and continue to keep all staff in full employment," she said.

"Our town has poor access to GPs, and we have a lot of elderly people who rely on us."

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## Weekly Comment

Welcome to **Pharmacy Daily's** weekly comment feature. This week's contributor is **Catherine Koetz, Director - Healthcare, GS1 Australia**



### Patient safety through traceability

**THE** issue of patient safety has been a growing concern worldwide, particularly regarding counterfeit medicines. In recent decades, the prevalence of counterfeit medicines has escalated, posing a significant threat to global health, we even see these in Australia despite our very heavily controlled supply chains. Implementing global data standards and traceability systems has helped to mitigate this risk, while at the same time supporting other improvements to how medicines are managed across global supply chains.

These measures safeguard the integrity of the supply chain while also giving visibility to the product available in the market and helping to manage the overall supply chain better.

By using a foundation of standards and establishing a robust framework for tracking and tracing medications throughout the supply chain there can be benefits for patients/consumers, pharmacists, wholesalers, manufacturers and government.

Learn more **HERE**.

## Phage bottleneck eases

**PATIENTS** suffering from hard-to-treat bacterial infections across NSW will soon have better access to phage therapy.

Minister for Medical Research David Harris announced last week that the NSW Government will invest \$3.5 million over the next two years to urgently address an ongoing global manufacturing bottleneck in delivering phage therapy.

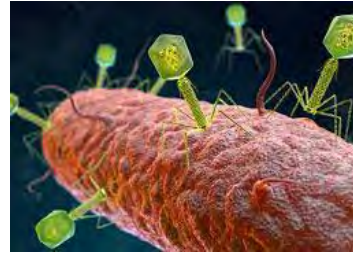
Bacteriophages or 'phages' are viruses that selectively infect bacteria and can kill them.

With increasing concern for antibiotic-resistant bacteria worldwide, phage therapy research is taking place as an alternative or addition to traditional antibiotics.

Harris said, "NSW is a world leader in the development of phage therapy, however, we know there is a global manufacturing bottleneck [that is]...severely limiting supply which impacts the delivery of this treatment".

"This significant investment will allow NSW experts to increase manufacturing capabilities right here in NSW via the Westmead Institute for Medical Research (WIMR) and bypass the international issues that are slowing down access."

NSW Health Minister Ryan Park



said, "phage therapies are an exciting field of medicine and could be the answer to the rapidly growing problem of antibiotic-resistant infectious diseases".

Director of the Centre for Infectious Disease and Microbiology at WIMR and Founder of Phage Australia Prof Jon Iredell said, "Phage Australia opened a new clinical trial last year to treat patients around Australia which has treated 30 patients so far".

"However, we have had to restrict the size of the trial due to limited access to high-quality phage preparations," Iredell said.

"These funds will increase local manufacturing capability at WIMR, which until now has only been able to treat one patient per month.

"This means we can double current capacity and begin to address the growing demand from around Australia and from overseas, for NSW-manufactured phage therapies."

## Moderna uncovers knowledge gaps

**BIOTECH** company Moderna's recent consumer survey of 1,000 Australians, exploring their understanding of COVID-19 impacts this winter and current booster recommendations, revealed knowledge gaps around risks of severe illness and common medical conditions.

Research highlights include 69% of Australians could not

identify which common medical conditions carry a higher risk of severe COVID-19 illness and death; 59% did not know that obesity increases the risk of severe outcomes from COVID-19; and 30% of those surveyed said getting influenza was a bigger concern than getting COVID-19, but 2,100 people have died from COVID-19 in 2023 alone.

## Dispensary Corner

**THE** profile of scent compounds from a person's hand can be used to predict their sex, according to a new study led by Kenneth Furton of Florida International University, published recently in open-access journal *PLOS ONE*.

In the new study, researchers used an analysis technique called mass spectrometry to analyse the volatile scent compounds present on the palms of 60 individuals, half male and half female.

The analysis successfully predicted a person's sex with a 96.67% accuracy rate.

Robberies, assaults and rape are all crimes that are often executed with a perpetrator's hands, and thus have the potential to leave behind valuable trace evidence at a crime scene.

The new study shows that it is possible to predict a person's sex based on hand scents, and existing human odour research indicates scent compounds can also reveal a person's age and racial or ethnic group.

With further validation, the chemical and statistical analyses presented in this paper could be used to uncover many details about a potential perpetrator solely through their hand scent profiles, said the researchers.

The authors also added, "this approach to analysing hand odour volatiles can be applied when other discriminatory evidence such as DNA is lacking and allow for differentiation or class characterisation such as sex, race and age".