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Service to stay

A **PERMANENT** Head to Health adult mental health service has just opened in Parramatta in Sydney offering free, walk-in mental health support for people with moderate-to-severe mental health needs.

Services are provided by a multidisciplinary team, clinical coordinators and peer workers.

An appointment or GP referral is not needed.

Call to 'get on' with vaping reforms

AN AUSTRALIAN Standard nicotine vaping products (NVPs) manufacturer wants the Federal Government and respective State Health administrations to "get on with the job" of implementing major health reforms to tackle the nation's vaping black market.

From the Fields Pharmaceutical CEO Wilhelm David said it had been months since the Federal Government's "bold announcements" around regulatory and legislative approaches to reform an out-of-control vaping black market of illicit products also fuelling rampant youth vaping levels.

David said legitimate industry players were ready for the market overhaul of vaping.

"It is time for all governments and health regulators across Australia to get on with the job of tackling the estimated 160,000 illegal vapes now consumed daily and start addressing the levels of black market fuelled, illicit product

undermining better public health outcomes," David said.

"That public policy intent now needs to be backed up with actions.

"We're ready!

"Our health authorities should also have no fear that a legitimate industry and supply chain is in place to adapt to the future, wide-ranging changes in the vaping market and the shift towards GP-prescribed, pharmacy-distributed vaping products.

"The Albanese Government's holistic approach to future overhaul vaping has struck a balance for the role medically prescribed vaping can play in addressing excessive smoking rates and drive adult smoking rates to only 5% by the year 2030," he added.

"This is not an easy debate and many across-government measures will take time to implement."

David said the prescription model for vapes can play a greater, legitimised role in addressing Australia's major health challenge of excessive smoking rates, which are still too high.

"The industry feels we are at a halfway house and the current information vacuum and lack of forward progress are both

confusing and frustrating many groups," David explained.

"Many consumers of NVPs are stressed and anxious about access to their future product where illicit consumption gets in the way of legitimate, quality alternatives.

"Financially under pressure pharmacies can also play a greater role in prescribed product distribution, whilst there still remains too few doctors presently authorised to prescribe NVPs."

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Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features four pages of news, plus a full page from TerryWhite Chemmart.

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Precision meds

A NATIONAL centre launched today will bring the benefits of genomics medicine to Indigenous Australians, who still have a life expectancy 10 years less than that of the general population.

"Eighty per cent of this life expectancy gap is due to chronic disease," explained Alex Brown, lead of The Australian Alliance for Indigenous Genomics (ALIGN) and Prof of Indigenous Genomics at the Telethon Kids Institute and the Australian National University.

Brown is a member of the Yuin Nation and grew up on the NSW South Coast.

"Australia is on the cusp of a new era in personalised medicine that will bring deeper insights into common diseases like heart disease, diabetes, and cancer," he said.

"ALIGN is a commitment designed by Indigenous people, for Indigenous people, to offer the benefit of genomic medicine to all," he shared.

"Its basic premise is 'nothing about us, without us'.

"This is critical to ensure equity is achieved in health outcomes," he added.

ALIGN will be governed by an Indigenous Council to ensure every 'gift' of DNA provided by Indigenous Australians is "treated with respect".

The alliance will see researchers from all the states address different health issues affecting Indigenous health.

UTS delves into impacts

THE University of Technology (UTS) *Community Pharmacy Barometer Interim Report* from May draws further on the adverse impact of 60DD where 216 decision makers showed the lowest optimism scores since the Barometer Report started, in the value of their pharmacy business (PD 14 Jul).

A drop in confidence scores, which have plunged to a dismal 60.8 from a healthy 146.8 in Nov 2022, is seeing decision makers, including owners and managers, needing to pull any levers they can.

When asked what strategies they would consider as a result of 60DD, well over two-thirds said they would need to start charging for professional services currently offered to the public for free, such as home delivery and webster-packing, and 50% would also decrease the number of professional services offered by their pharmacy.

Furthermore, 62% of decision makers would consider reducing the number of pharmacy assistants, and worryingly, nearly half would reduce the number of pharmacists employed, the report uncovered.

The findings that would further impact on the public is that nearly half of the decision makers could cut opening hours on both weekends and public holidays.

The 60DD policy is adding more grief to workforce retention with just over one-third expressing that they are considering leaving community pharmacy.

Two-thirds of managers and owners shared they are having difficulties in filling pharmacist



positions with 47% taking more than three months to fill positions, 26% up to a month and 27% in total from one to three months - meaning a highly skilled and clinically trained workforce is experiencing a contraction as confidence is demolished in the future viability of the profession with 60DD adding fuel to the fire on this issue, the report found.

The main reasons provided were no applicants or no suitable applicants found, too high wage expectations and community pharmacists switching to hospital pharmacy.

UTS Pharmacy developed the Community Pharmacy Barometer in response to industry challenges and perceived gaps in knowledge about the impact of policy and practice changes on community pharmacy businesses and professional practice.

Barometer questions were designed to assess the confidence of pharmacists in their business in the short-term (one year) and the medium-term (three years).

Created by UTS Pharmacy in conjunction with IQVIA and the UTS Pharmacy Expert Panel, the Barometer report is sponsored by the Commonwealth Bank.

Applications open

TERRYWHITE Chemmart has opened applications for its intake for interns, and will provide a first-hand view of how community pharmacy operates with above award rates and paid study leave.

See more on the [back page](#).

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Shut down fears

NEEDING at least one nurse working at all times in aged care facilities from 01 Jul, a number of the operators have said due to staff shortages they have put in exemption applications but have not heard back from the government, fearing they may need to shut down or not operate.

Pharmacist and Assistant Minister Emma McBride spoke recently, "I understand that there have been no delays, that there have been 51 applications for exemptions".

"The department is working with the applicants in a meticulous and thorough way to make sure that where applicants can't meet the requirements at the moment, that appropriate alternative arrangements are in place to ensure that residents are safe.

"I lost my own father to younger-onset Alzheimer's and my family had their own experience of the aged care system," McBride added.

"We want to make sure that every older Australian is treated with the dignity and care that they deserve."

New standards approved



THE Australian Pharmacy Council (APC) confirmed last week that its Accreditation Standards for the credentialing of Aged Care On-site Pharmacists and Medication Management Review (MMR) pharmacists have been approved by the Department of Health and Aged Care (**PD** Breaking News Fri).

APC CEO Bronwyn Clark has thanked the stakeholders who contributed to the consultation process, with the next step being for education providers to begin developing and reviewing their programs aligned to the new

standards, with applications accepted from 01 Sep.

APC will also shortly begin consultation on the Performance Outcomes for aged care and MMR pharmacist programs, with the organisation having had its contract with the Department of Health and Aged Care extended.

The Outcomes are anticipated to be released next month.

Interested parties can obtain a copy of the newly approved Accreditation Standards prior to their official publication by contacting APC, **HERE**.

Low-security visas

A SURVEY of more than 1,000 refugees has shown that only permanent protection visas are linked to mental health and social benefits.

UNSW psychologists have compared the long-term psychological and social consequences of changing visa status, showing that any form of temporary visa is associated with worse mental health in refugees compared to permanent secure visas.

The findings, published in the *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, have important policy implications.

"Our results suggest that remaining in a state of prolonged insecurity may be associated with poorer long-term mental health outcomes.

This highlights the critical importance of safety and security in the resettlement environment to facilitate good adaptation amongst refugees," said lead author, UNSW Prof Angela Nickerson.

Pharmacists such as Veronica Nou are helping refugees with her site *Mums 4 Refugees* having 40,000 followers.

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Self-managed hospital-to-home study

FRAILITY leaves older adults especially vulnerable - and increases their stays in hospital - which underlines the importance of a self-managed exercise and nutrition program that Flinders University is developing to help reduce frailty.

The Flinders University research team has led a study that examines the effect of an individualised hospital-to-home, self-managed exercise and

nutrition intervention for pre-frail and frail older adults who are hospitalised and has found encouraging results in helping to reduce frailty.

The novelty of this program seen **HERE**, was the adaptation of a chronic condition self-management model developed by Prof Malcolm Battersby, initially for self-management of conditions such as diabetes, for pre-frailty and frailty.



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* Compared to non-liposomal forms of supplements 1 M. Łukawski et al. (2019). Journal of Liposome Research, ISSN:0898-2104. 2 Dalek P. et al., Nanomedicine: NBM 2022;43:102552. 3 Malhoira J. et al. World J Anemia 2017;1(4):1-6. AFT Pharmaceuticals Pty Ltd, Sydney.

Dispensary Corner

SMART girls don't marry?
A third-year student at one of Japan's top engineering universities, Yuna Kato wants a career in research but fears it might be short-lived if she has children, *Reuters* reported.
"My grandmother and mother often tell me that there are non-STEM jobs out there if I want to raise children," she said.
The social stigma is creating a massive headache for Japan.
In the IT field alone, the country faces a shortfall of 790,000 workers by 2030, largely due to a severe under-representation of women.
Japan ranks last among wealthy nations with only 16% of female university students majoring in STEM.
This is despite Japanese women scoring second-highest in the world in maths and third in science.
The country is on a mission to close the gap with about a dozen universities introducing a quota for female STEM students.
Aiming to change attitudes, the government has also created a 9 1/2-minute video to show educators and other adults how "unconscious bias" deters girls from pursuing STEM studies.
In one scenario, an actor playing a school teacher compliments a student for "being good at math, even though you're a girl", making her feel it was abnormal to be a female math whiz.
In another, a mother discourages her daughter from pursuing engineering since "the field is male-dominated".

Covid infects placenta

RESEARCH has revealed how the COVID-19 virus infects the placenta, and how this can be prevented.

Scientists have shown that COVID-19 infections during pregnancy may lead to adverse outcomes, but little is known about the mechanisms behind the effects of SARS-CoV-2 infection in pregnancy.

Researchers found that ACE2, a protein that acts as the doorway for SARS-CoV-2 to enter organs such as the lung, is present in specific placental cells, including syncytiotrophoblasts (ST cells).

Importantly, ST cells were susceptible to the virus, an important finding as these placental cells produce the key hormone for maintaining pregnancy (hCG).

The study published last week in *Nature Cell Biology* by Australian researchers, was led by Prof Jose Polo from Monash University and the University of Adelaide and University of Melbourne's Prof Kanta Subbarao from the Peter Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity (Doherty Institute).

The Australian research team grew placenta tissue in the lab, using a state-of-the-art method developed by Prof Polo and colleagues, where human skin cells are "reprogrammed" into trophoblast stem cells (the cells that help a developing embryo attach to the wall of the uterus, forming part of the placenta).

Dr Joseph Chen, a stem cell biologist at Monash University and co-first author of the report, said this discovery explains several clinical reports indicating inflammation of the placenta due to COVID-19.

"We observed that SARS-CoV-2 infection led to a significant reduction in the survival and



differentiation of ST cells, which in turn resulted in lower production of hCG," he said.

"It suggests that this is how COVID-19 could impact pregnancy, though further investigations are needed."

Virologist at the Doherty Institute and co-first author of the study Dr Jessica Neil said, "our team also discovered that anti-ACE2 antibodies and antiviral drugs were effective in preventing SARS-CoV-2 infection and restoring normal ST differentiation and function".

Subbarao said that this study is a significant advance for the broader understanding of viral infections in pregnancy.

"Our study provides valuable insights into the link between SARS-CoV-2 infection and placenta pathology.

"This is a game changer as we are now equipped to explore how the early placenta may be affected by other viruses as well," she said.

Polo emphasised the importance of the research in establishing a platform to study early placental cell types.

"This study not only helps us to understand what happens when the placenta is infected with the COVID-19 virus during pregnancy, it also means we have established a broader, scalable and tractable platform to study early placental cell types," he said.



Weekly Comment

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



Empowering consumers and carers

MEDICATION errors have long been recognised as a significant problem, especially when managing multiple medicines.

Research has shown that medication administration becomes considerably more accurate when supported by barcode scanning of medicinal products. Often the focus of research is on hospitals, but the use of barcode scanning in the home or other care environments is a benefit as it is also well-known that errors do not occur just in hospitals.

With the increased use of consumer applications on phones to track medication, the addition of expiry date and batch to the 2D barcode on packs are empowering people managing care at home. Even something as simple as ensuring that you do not use an expired medicine has become easier.

With future technology, we may also see apps advising that their medicines have been recalled when they scan it, or provide access to the Consumer Medicines Information sheet via a single scan of the product. Something as simple as a barcode with a little more information can make a big difference. Learn more **HERE**.

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- Jen Chao, Pharmacy Intern
TerryWhite Chemmart Findon
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