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Guild renewals

THE Pharmacy Guild is inviting proprietors to “get behind us so we can get behind you” as the time comes for 2023/24 membership sign-ups.

As well as ongoing advocacy, the membership also provides industry insights and support for pharmacy businesses - more details on the [last page](#).

Grow with TWC

TERRYWHITE Chemmart is today highlighting its banner as the ideal way to differentiate pharmacies from other brands - see [page four](#) for info.

Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features three pages of news, plus full pages from:

- TerryWhite Chemmart
- Pharmacy Guild

CWH takes stake in Sigma

CHEMIST Warehouse (CWH) will own over 10% of Sigma Healthcare under a share placement which is part of this morning's new deal for the supply of PBS and FMCG product ([PD breaking news](#)).

The wholesaler was already providing FMCG items to Chemist Warehouse, with today's announcement confirming just that part of the contract already comprises almost 30% of Sigma's overall revenue.

Sigma estimated that the total sales of products to Chemist Warehouse will generate at least \$3 billion in revenue in the first year of the contract.

“The decision by Chemist Warehouse to award Sigma this supply contract is wonderful news for our company and our shareholders,” said Sigma CEO Vikesh Ramsunder.

“The contract allows us to leverage our highly automated distribution centres and latent spare capacity after multiple years

of investment,” he said.

Sigma will issue 126 million shares worth \$81 million to Chemist Warehouse, which will also have a right to acquire “certain non-core assets” from Sigma, which are valued at \$24.5 million.

If Chemist Warehouse chooses not to acquire those assets then Sigma will make a net cash payment of \$24.5 million.

Ramsunder thanked Chemist Warehouse for its confidence, saying “Sigma has worked tirelessly the past 12 months to build a stronger company and significantly improve our operational performance for the benefit of all customers”.

“Securing this Chemist Warehouse contract means we will now have real scale and momentum moving into the future,” he enthused.

Shares in EBOS, the incumbent PBS supplier to Chemist Warehouse, were placed into a trading halt this morning just prior to the Sigma announcement.

PAG strategy

THE Platform Alliance Group has released a new 2024 Budgeting Essentials tool to “help pharmacy owners navigate the bumpy road ahead” in light of the 01 Sep rollout of 60-day dispensing.

PAG Head of Customer, Natalie Carroll, said financial skills are now critical for pharmacists, with the program helping upskill members in business operations by setting a base roster to sales trends and operational budgeting.

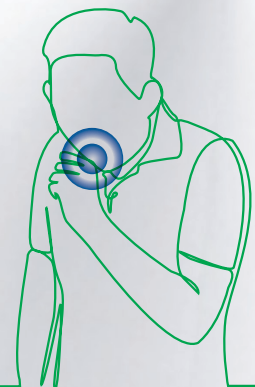
“This allows business owners to understand their starting position and where their business sits in relation to pharmacy industry benchmarks,” she said.

“This sets very clear action points to drive the business forward and limit the impact of 60-day dispensing.”

Open to the entire industry, interest can be registered in the program by [CLICKING HERE](#).

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Paramedic practitioners

MONASH University will offer a new Paramedic Practitioner Master's Degree under a \$20 million program announced yesterday by Vic Premier Daniel Andrews.

Monash is the preferred education provider for the degree, co-developed with Ambulance Victoria, Safer Care Victoria, paramedics, clinicians, hospitals and unions.

The first students will start early next year, with the aim of having the first 25 Paramedic Practitioners on the road by 2026, with skills that will ease the pressure on ambulances, emergency departments and other healthcare services.

Participants will train in advanced assessment techniques, diagnostics, clinical decision-making, treatment planning and legal and ethical considerations.

Warning for oral NOACs

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration has imposed a new warning on all oral anticoagulants prescribed in Australia, advising of the risk of serious kidney damage from taking the medications.

The advisory applies to a range of items including Xarelto from Bayer, Boehringer Ingelheim's Pradaxa and Eliquis from Bristol-Myers Squibb - as well as generic versions of warfarin under the Marevan and Coumadin brands.

Warning of the risk of anti-coagulant-related nephropathy (ARN) (bleeding in the kidneys), the TGA's advice notes that "although this side-effect is rare, it is serious and can be life-threatening".

All oral forms of the medications have had the warning applied, but not injectable versions because they are generally used for shorter periods and in a hospital setting.

The TGA cited a recent investigation into reports of ARN in patients taking oral anticoagulants, mainly from overseas, undertaken



by the Advisory Committee on Medicines (ACM).

The Committee noted that this adverse event is now well documented in the medical literature with warfarin, and there is growing evidence for other oral anticoagulants.

"The ACM supported a class-wide warning being added to the PI for all oral anticoagulants...this is because these medicines are widely used and this adverse event is serious," the TGA noted.

Health professionals are advised to be aware of the side effect, as early detection and treatment is critical to reducing permanent kidney damage and death.

Cannabidiol IBS trial recruiting


PATIENTS suffering Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) are being invited to join a Phase II double-blind, randomised, placebo controlled clinical trial, to investigate the efficacy and safety of an oral cannabidiol formulation for the condition.

The project is being led by SVG Pharmaceuticals, and involves CBD100 (Australian Natural Elan) delivered orally for a period of four weeks.

Prospective participants must be above 18 years of age at time of consent, and have suffered abdominal pain for at least one day per week for the prior three months with symptoms originating at least six months earlier.

The trial aims to achieve an S3 registration on Elan CBD Oil from Australian Natural Therapeutics Group (ANTG) - info@svgpharma.com.au.

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PBS Information: This product is not listed on the National Immunisation Program (NIP) or the PBS.

▼ This vaccine is subject to additional monitoring in Australia. This will allow quick identification of new safety information. Healthcare professionals are asked to report any suspected adverse events at www.tga.gov.au/reporting-problems.

BEFORE PRESCRIBING, PLEASE REVIEW PRODUCT INFORMATION AVAILABLE FROM [HTTPS://MODERNACOV19GLOBAL.COM/EN-AU](https://modernacovid19global.com/en-au) OR FROM MODERNA AUSTRALIA ON 1800 344 018.

References: **1.** Spikevax Bivalent Original/Omicron BA.4-5 Product Information, February 2023. **2.** Chalkias S *et al.* A bivalent Omicron-containing booster vaccine against COVID-19. Available at: <https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2022.06.24.22276703v1>. Accessed April 2023. **3.** Andersson NW, *et al.* Comparative effectiveness of the bivalent BA.4-5 and BA.1 mRNA-booster vaccines in the Nordic countries. *medRxiv*. Published online 2023:2023-01. **4.** Link-Gelles R *et al.* *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 2022;71:1526-30.

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Dispensary Corner

THE long list of things that we can blame on COVID-19 has now been extended even further, after new research found the pandemic has caused more risk-taking on Australian roads by senior citizens.

The Flinders University study was published in the *Journal of the Transportation Research Board* **HERE** and concluded that "older Australians have taken more risks when driving since the introduction of COVID-19 lockdowns, as a result of decreasing travel volumes and congestion around the country".

The report found that has in turn affected the number and severity of traffic crashes, based on police-reported incident data for the over-65 population in metropolitan Adelaide.

During the lockdown period in 2020 there was a 20% reduction in the frequency of crashes involving older adults compared with the same period prior to the pandemic.

That seemed to be good news - however although the reduced traffic volume resulted in fewer crashes overall, the accidents which actually occurred were more severe, because the crash hotspots shifted to higher speed zones across the city.

The authors suggested digital connectivity could help prevent some unnecessary commuting, but "this would necessitate empowering the 65+ age population by increasing their digital literacy and facilitating online shopping, recreation, medical and health services and employment options".

Guild blasts data claims

THE Pharmacy Guild has slammed as "categorically incorrect" allegations made in a Parliamentary committee last week that it used patient phone numbers collected via its COVID-19 vaccination booking to later send text messages as part of its campaign against 60-day dispensing.

Labor Senator Anne Urquhart made the claims at a Senate hearing on Fri, saying constituents received emails and text messages as part of the campaign, and that it was "put to her" that the Guild had collected the patient data via the Find a Pharmacy website.

Penny Shakespeare, Deputy Secretary for Health Resourcing, agreed that it was "likely" the data had come from the Guild's job booking site, adding that a number of consumers had contacted the Department of Health saying

they were unaware of how their details were obtained, apart from "when they obtained COVID-19 vaccinations from a pharmacy".

Even if that was the case, Shakespeare said it is unlikely that there were to be any legal problems as long as "there have been authorisations to use the information put in place - even if that is just a tick box".

The Guild denied the allegation, saying the assertion that it had access to patient vaccination information from pharmacies was completely wrong.

"The Guild adheres to all relevant privacy laws and regulations," a spokesperson insisted.

The Find a Pharmacy website has been expanded beyond COVID-19 vaccination to also offer availability of UTI diagnosis, medical certificates and cholesterol testing.

Guild Update

EAP program for Guild members

THE Pharmacy Guild is offering a dedicated service to support the health and wellbeing of its members and their workforce.

The services will offer professional counselling and therapy services as well as offering access to ongoing proactive health advice, via a range of interactive digital tools such as a mobile app and website resources.

To ensure it is offering the best possible employee assistance program, the Guild has partnered with TELUS Health (formerly LifeWorks) which is a renowned provider of remote counselling support with more than 50 years' experience.

After examining a wide range of providers, the Guild decided on TELUS Health because it offers a comprehensive modern program which has been designed to destigmatise mental health issues as well as offering a more holistic approach.

The Guild has tailored the offering, which will be available from next month, to complement existing programs and has worked with its branches, banner groups, stakeholders and the Pharmacists' Support Service to ensure the offer meets the needs of its members and their staff.

Union hails bump

LAST week's Fair Work Commission decision to increase minimum wages by up to 8.6% has been hailed by union group Professional Pharmacists Australia.

The organisation noted that pharmacists and pharmacy technicians who are paid under a modern award will receive a 5.75% pay increase under the ruling.

"All union members should be proud of this pay rise... it's the largest increase in minimum and Award wages in Australia's history," PPA said in a statement, urging those who are not members of the union to "join your colleagues and millions of Australian workers fighting for a fair go".

PA2023 program

THE official program for the 2023 Pharmacy Assistant National Conference (PA2023) has been released, with the event scheduled for 31 Aug-02 Sep at Sydney's Hyatt Regency.

The theme of the conference is "Embrace, Envision, Evolve" with the aim of encouraging pharmacy assistants to embrace change and take an in-depth look at the future of community pharmacy.

For the first time ever PA2023 will be held in conjunction with the Guild's Pharmacy Connect conference, with the gatherings jointly sharing a 50-plus stand trade exhibition and combined social functions.

Earlybird registration is now open - pharmacyassistants.com.

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The infrastructure at TWC is better than any other group that I've been with, but it's more than that, it's the follow-up, implementation, and dedication of the support team to follow everything through. The health programs are great, enabling us to access new clinical services. The vaccination support couldn't be better.

I'm feeling very confident about what the future holds. ”

Chris Theodore

TWC North Brighton, VIC, joined in 2019



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