

Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features three pages of news as well as a full page from PharmXchange.

Lower drugs cost

WITH the Federal Government reducing the co-payment on 01 Jan, more than 3.2m scripts are cheaper, with four out of five of those cheaper scripts receiving the full \$12.50 discount, a Government statement said.

The Federal Health Minister Mark Butler stressed that "over 3.2m prescriptions were cheaper in the first two months of this year and thanks to our policy, patients have saved more than \$36m".

Pharmacist Jane Mitchell said: "We know that cost is a major factor in people delaying or deciding not to buy prescribed medicines.

"Since the general co-payment was reduced in Jan, we've seen many customers surprised at the lower cost of their PBS medicines and it makes a big difference.

"It's important that more people know about the potential savings and that the PBS Safety Net can mean further discounted prices if a person or a family needs to buy a lot of medicines."

A person on one medication a month may save up to \$150 per year, or a family taking two or three medications may save \$300-\$450 a year.

TWC awards its suppliers

TERRYWHITE Chemmart has recognised the commitment and adaptability of its supplier partners at its 2023 Supplier of the Year Awards recently.

Thanking suppliers, Executive General Manager Nick Munroe said, "without a doubt, our continued success would not be possible without the support of our supplier partners, and we are pleased to be able to recognise their excellence as part of this year's awards".

Announced at the gala awards night, Sandoz was awarded Ethical Supplier of the Year and Metagenics Retail Supplier of the Year.

Clint Holland, Country Manager for Sandoz, commented that working together with the group through the largest changeover in generic suppliers was a career highlight and an experience that delivered exceptional outcomes for the network of pharmacies.

"It's truly an honour to be recognised by the pharmacists and support centre team at TerryWhite Chemmart.

"The entire team at Sandoz has worked hard to achieve the best possible outcomes for the pharmacy network and we are excited to be partners with such an innovative and forward-thinking pharmacy brand," said Holland.

Speaking about being awarded Retail Supplier of the Year, Regional Vice President at Metagenics, Paula Hann commented that the long-term partnership has resulted in one of the most successful years for the two companies saying "we are excited to be part of an integrative



prescribing solution with TerryWhite Chemmart, our work together has not only been easy but rewarding, and we appreciate the network's commitment to support world-class education and patient experiences, always with health outcomes at the heart".

More than 80 supplier partners and over 200 supplier delegates attended the group's Ignite Conference this year, with key takeouts being the launch of a new customer promise 'Dedicated to Care', new developments to the myTWC app, CareClinics, and supporting pharmacists with the current and expected changes to scope of practice.

The HEART Awards - Supplier Winners also included:

- Best Supplier Support - L'Oréal Active;
- Best Promotional Support - P&G; and
- Ethical Innovation Awards - Sanofi

Picture: Sandoz Country Manager Clint Holland and Sandoz team with TerryWhite Chemmart Executive General Manager Nick Munroe, Chief Commercial Officer Ben Elder, and Head of Ethicals Matt McLoughlin.

Beauty brands

PHARMXCHANGE has three beauty brands, Natuva Skincare, Maxiblock and MIMI Haircare for Kids, live on its network.

Learn more about these additions on the **back page**.

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AUSTRALIAN MEDICINES HANDBOOK

Racing minds' aid

OVERUSE of mobile devices gets a bad rap but an upside may be their ability to create a distraction and positively affect teenagers' ability to get to sleep, new research by Flinders University has revealed.

Feedback from more than 600 teenagers from age 12 to 18 at South Australian schools between Jun and Sep 2019 has led the international research group to point to a more nuanced view on using the wide range of mobile content - led by YouTube, music apps, Instagram and Snapchat - before young people's bedtime.

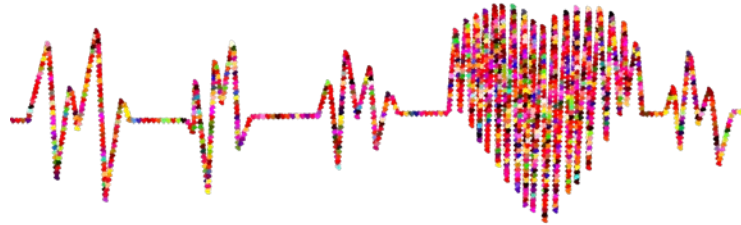
"Many teenagers struggle with a racing mind when sleep doesn't come easy," said lead corresponding author Dr Serena Bauducco, a visiting postdoctoral researcher from Örebro University, Sweden.

"This study shows that many adolescents use technology to distract themselves from negative thoughts, which may help them manage the sleep-onset process.

"Thus, distraction may be one mechanism explaining how sleep affects technology use, rather than vice-versa," the study concluded.

The majority of 631 adolescents surveyed used technology as a distraction from negative or distressing thoughts, with 23.6% answering "yes" and 38.4% "sometimes", according to the study which can be read [HERE](#).

Cholesterol pill coming



HUNDREDS of thousands of Australians with life-threatening high cholesterol could benefit from a new pill in the pipeline, following the successful research and trial by Prof Stephen Nicholls, Director of the Victorian Heart Hospital and Victorian Heart Institute, based at the Monash University Clayton campus.

More than 300 Australian patients with high cholesterol took part in the four-year clinical trial involving 14,000 people in 32 countries.

Through the trial, published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, the new cholesterol-lowering drug, bempedoic acid, demonstrated the following benefits:

- Lowered low-density lipoprotein cholesterol, commonly referred to as 'bad cholesterol', by 20-25%;
- Reduced cardiovascular complications by 13%;
- Reduced heart attacks by 23%; and
- Reduced coronary revascularisations (a procedure to open blocked arteries) by 19%.

Nicholls, a well-known cardiologist and Director of the new

Victorian Heart Hospital at Monash Health and Monash University's Victorian Heart Institute, co-led the worldwide trial.

Currently, 2.5m Australians take statins to lower their cholesterol.

Nicholls said about 20% of patients on statins had tolerance issues and about 50% of high-risk patients didn't get their cholesterol down to target levels so they need other options.

"This new drug provides another option for lowering cholesterol and is particularly important for patients that cannot tolerate statins.

"That's a real problem in clinical practice which limits our ability to effectively lower cholesterol in many patients," Nicholls said.

"It has the potential to help between 100,000 and 500,000 people in Australia."

The new bempedoic acid drug - currently called Nexletol - is being developed by US-based Esperion Therapeutics and will go to the TGA for approval for use in Australia.

Nicholls said he expected the drug to be available for Australian patients in the next two years.

Learn more [HERE](#).

Living pressures

LIFELINE has revealed that they are seeing record activity through their website for help and support.

Data from the organisation showed that there were over 26k searches for assistance and support in Jan across Australia, the highest on record.

In addition, referral searches by Lifeline's helpline counsellors relating to financial issues and homelessness went up 49% between Aug 2022 and Jan this year.

Lifeline Australia CEO Colin Seery said it was important for anyone struggling to know that the organisation is available 24/7 to provide support.

"As well as telephone and digital support, Lifeline has 41 centres across Australia.

"Some of these centres offer face-to-face crisis support and counselling, including financial counselling," Seery explained.

"Many of these centres are reporting a significant increase in demand for financial support, including food distribution.

"We are seeing this happen right now, across the country.

"Our centres are reporting an increase in seekers for help who have never experienced financial stress before.

"And we know the cost of living pressures also disproportionately impact the most vulnerable, including people who are unemployed, renters and young families," Seery concluded.

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Bianco L et al., *J Am Geriatr Soc* 2012; 60:1180-1.





Dispensary Corner

THE junta in Mali has begun a crackdown on hookah smoking after giving a grace period to shisha bars to adjust to a ban, reported *yahoo! news*.

The country's anti-drug agency, Central Narcotics Office (OCS), says it has carried out dozens of arrests in the capital Bamako and seized water pipes after the six-month moratorium expired in Feb.

Bars where small groups of smokers - primarily young men - hang out to chat and puff on hookahs have flourished in Bamako in recent years.

But their days became numbered when the junta-dominated government last year announced a surprise ban.

It warned that shisha smokers would be liable to a prison term of one to 10 days and a fine of 300-10K CFA francs (A\$0.71-\$24).

The OCS said in a Facebook post that there had been "vigorous raids" in Bamako, culminating in "about 50 individuals in prison and a large amount of seized material".

It published photos of young men and women being taken away in the back of pickup trucks and a picture of a pile of water pipes.

"The grace period given by the authorities for importers, distributors, sellers and consumers of shisha in Mali is over," the OCS said.

The World Health Organization said shisha use is up to 10 times more harmful than cigarettes but is not targeted by the same awareness campaigns as with tobacco.

Digital passport for staff

A **FREE** passport developed by education provider Ausmed to reduce staff training costs for aged care providers is rolling out across Australia, reported *Pulse IT*.

The digital certificate for the Australian aged care workforce is an onboarding tool that allows new staff to show providers the training modules they have completed, enabling them to avoid repeating training when moving between providers.

By reducing onboarding duplication, the tool may be able to reduce upfront employment costs by about \$128 for each new starter.

The training solution aims to fast-track mandatory training and enable sector-wide standardisation of eight mandatory training areas.

Workers can carry it with them from one employer to the next to

prove they have completed core training relevant to and recognised by the sector.

The tool was launched at the Aged and Community Care Providers Association conference in Oct last year with more than 50 aged-care providers from residential and home care signing up.

There are now more than 60 at various stages of rolling it out with more than 1,500 individual passport holders using the app.

According to Ausmed, the industry's high turnover can lead to a burden of onboarding costs with new employees.

The estimated spend on repeated mandatory training in the Australian aged-care sector was \$8.02m in 2018.

This avoidable cost is expected to jump nearly 300% to almost \$32m by 2030, Ausmed concluded.



Excess mortality from COVID-19 study

AUSTRALIA is estimated to have recorded nearly 20k more deaths than expected in 2022, largely because of the COVID-19 pandemic, reported the Actuaries Institute in new research released yesterday.

An analysis of excess mortality data by the Institute's COVID-19 Mortality Working Group found that total excess mortality - or the increase in the number of deaths compared to expert predictions - was 11% (+17,900 deaths) for Jan to Nov 2022.

For the full calendar year, the Working Group estimates there was 12% excess mortality - or nearly 20k more deaths than would have been predicted if the pandemic had not happened.

Actuaries Institute Chief Executive, Elayne Grace, said: "These figures are a stark reminder of the tremendous impact of COVID-19."

"Although people have largely moved on with their lives beyond the lockdowns and border closures, the fact is that COVID-19 remains a key contributor to the majority of excess mortality."

Deaths from COVID-19 peaked in the last week of Jul, then trended downwards until the end of Oct before rising throughout Nov and Dec.

While most of the excess deaths were in older age groups, it was a significant factor across all ages.



Guild Update

Deadline looms to remove products with Pholcodine

PHARMACISTS must begin removing cough medicine products containing pholcodine by tomorrow (Wed 08 Mar) following a product recall by the TGA.

The recall was issued a week ago after a link was found between pholcodine containing medicines and an increased risk to anaphylactic reactions to certain medicines used as muscle relaxants during general anaesthesia.

In response to the recall The Pharmacy Guild of Australia National President, Trent Twomey, has told patients who have taken medicines with pholcodine not to panic.

"Patients should check the labels on any over-the-counter medicines they have at home.

"If they find their medicines do contain pholcodine, they should ask their pharmacist to suggest an alternative," he said.

The recall followed a review of these products by the European Medicines Agency.

When issuing the cancellation of pholcodine, the TGA ordered its removal from shelves to begin "as soon as possible" but "no later" than 08 Mar 2023.

It also told the Pharmacy Guild that, "all pholcodine containing medicines will be removed from the ARTG on 29 Mar 2023 and, therefore, all supply of goods and advertising must cease before the cancellation takes effects".

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