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## Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features three pages of news.

### Live vax safety

HEALTHCARE professionals are reminded that live vaccines should not be given to people who are significantly immunocompromised or pregnant, the TGA has said.

This is particularly the case for the herpes zoster vaccine Zostavax, and the Japanese encephalitis vaccine Imojev, as incorrect use continues to be reported.

While not all reports of inadvertent use are associated with an adverse event, this TGA safety alert provides a timely reminder to healthcare professionals considering live vaccinations for patients.

If uncertain about the degree of immunocompromise in a patient, do not give them a live vaccine and seek specialist advice, stressed the TGA.

Detailed information to manage these patients, including tools to assess the severity of immunocompromise, are available from the Australian Immunisation Handbook.

### Funding till 2025

THE Medicare Heart Health Check with items 699 and 177 will be funded for another two years with at least 250k Aussies to take up a check in this time.

## Premium increase likely

THE recent decision by the Federal Health Minister Mark Butler to allow consumers to collect two months' worth of selected medicines at their pharmacy has raised concerns from various parties.

One such concern comes from the insurance industry, and in particular, from the Honan Insurance Group (HIG), a globally-networked insurance broker, with a team of business risk advisors that manage half a billion in annual premiums for national and multinational businesses from offices in Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia and Singapore.

Their five key considerations are firstly major medicine shortages, as already raised by the Pharmacy Guild of Australia.

"Supplier stock levels have still not returned to pre-pandemic highs and the decision to allow a customer to receive two months' worth of their medication at once will most likely further impact these shortages," noted Giuseppe Carollo, Head of Carollo Horton, part of HIG.

"If a pharmacy business makes an insurance claim for damaged stock, the time it takes to replace the stock could impact the business' income more than the initial impact of the claim," stressed Carollo.

Another concern is the safety risks associated with consumers stockpiling medications and potentially overdosing.

"While the independent Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee carefully considered the safety aspects of which drugs would be on the list, insurers may

need to prepare for potential claims related to overdose or adverse reactions.

"This could lead to increased premiums and a greater need for risk management strategies," warns Carollo.

With the potential loss of foot traffic, he added that "local pharmacists may start charging for services that are now free, such as making up blister packs or offering home delivery.

"Insurers may need to consider the impact this could have on their clients and whether they will cover the cost of providing these services. "This too could lead to increased premiums or changes in policy terms," explained Carollo.

While sudden closures of pharmacies are unlikely, insurers should be prepared for the potential impact on rural or remote clients as pharmacies consider covering the cost of travel or delivery, he said.

Further, the decision to allow two months' worth of medicine collection highlights the need for a more patient-centric healthcare system, stated Carollo.

"Insurers should consider the potential for changes in healthcare delivery and how this may impact pharmacy retailers.

"For example, if pharmacies offer more home delivery services, insurers may need to adjust their policies to cover these services.

"Additionally, insurers may need to consider the potential for telehealth services and how this may impact the delivery of healthcare," Carollo concluded.

## Raven's podcast

THE Raven's Recruitment podcast - season 07 Ep 01 with pharmacist & UNSW academic Dr Ramesh Walpole, on patient and medication safety, and social determinants of safe practices, is available **HERE** and on your favourite podcast app.

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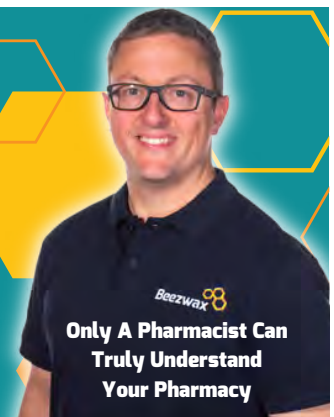
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Only A Pharmacist Can Truly Understand Your Pharmacy

## \$273m venture

UNIVERSITY of Sydney spinout, Kinosis Therapeutics, today announced a partnership with global pharmaceutical company Boehringer Ingelheim to develop oxytocin-targeting precision treatments aimed at improving the quality of life for people living with psychiatric disorders.

The partnership, worth up to \$US181m (\$A273m) in payments, plus royalties on any future sales, establishes Kinosis as a global player in the development of precision drugs for the treatment of conditions including schizophrenia, depression and dementia.

The partnership with Boehringer Ingelheim will use chemical compounds developed by Kinosis that target the oxytocin receptor as its starting point to develop treatments for these conditions.

## Western Aust's \$580m RAT problem

AN EYE-WATERING \$580m has been spent on RATs by the West Australian government, according to the state's Auditor General, Caroline Spencer, who was flabbergasted and reported, she has "never before witnessed such escalation in the cost of a program over such a short timeframe".

Spencer released the Auditor General's report, *Financial Audit Results - State Government 2021-22 - Part 2: COVID-19 Impacts*, which was tabled in Parliament yesterday.

The report shares findings and observations from the 2022 State audit cycle.

It is intended to provide a level of transparency and a public record of some of the irregular decisions, transactions and impacts that occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic response and reflects on some of the lessons that may be learned from the period.

Spencer continued her remarks on the unusually large expenditure "occurring with a lack of due

consideration of the impacts, or without a record of anyone pausing to ask what level of procurement was sufficient and whether this had been achieved".

She noted the State's expenditure of \$580m on RATs has received significant attention both in Parliament and the wider community, and is an area of focus in this report.

"An initial intention by Health entities to spend \$3m on RATs for health workers and returning travellers rapidly evolved to purchasing \$440m worth of RATs - around twice the cost of the Bunbury Hospital redevelopment.

"Along with the \$140m spent by the Department of Finance on RATs, public entities spent the equivalent of 10% of the State's 2022 operating surplus on diagnostic plastics without demonstrable evidence of clear, considered and coordinated planning or ongoing advice as to the necessity of the expenditure," said Spencer as she




also acknowledged the uncertainty that the pandemic created.

"Our audits found that to accommodate the RATs, Health Support Services increased their warehouses from two to 10 but struggled with the large increase in inventory, as the controls for receiving, recording and distribution were poor.

"There needs to be a point where we take a step back and assess if the ongoing decisions being made are sound, in the public interest and represent value for money.

"It is important that the right lessons are learned from this period," Spencer concluded.

### INTRODUCING NEW

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▼ 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](http://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



**US AUTHORITIES** have granted approval for a unique new medical device - a toilet seat which can automatically monitor users' vital signs.

The new Heart Seat (pictured), manufactured by Casana, is able to measure heart rate and oxygen saturation, with enhancements for additional clinical measurements currently in the process of validation, including systolic and diastolic blood pressure.

"When used, the system unobtrusively gathers health data and analyses it in context to provide insights into health and trends over time," the company said.

Data collated is automatically sent to an online "dashboard" accessible by a designated care team, with the aim of providing health professionals with "reliable, clear trends within real-life context".

Casana CEO Ausin McChord said the Food and Drug Administration approval was a "critical step on our journey to commercialise the Heart Seat".

"This brings us one step closer to helping patients and healthcare providers across the US manage their health at home," he added.

The Heart Seat is expected to launch by the end of 2023.



## Holding out to be local

**PHARMACARE** CEO Glenn Cochran has been watching the sale of Blackmores closely, noting a rise in international ownership of complementary medicine companies.

"Throughout the courting process, it's been overseas investors who have shown the most interest, the latest being Japanese drinks company, Kirin Holdings," Cochran noted.

"With another of the top players in complementary medicines, Swisse, already owned by China's H&H Group, the sale of Blackmores would make PharmaCare Laboratories the largest Australian-owned VMHS (vitamin, mineral & herbal supplement) company.

"The sale of Blackmores is still provisional, but once it goes through it will be interesting to see what changes impact Australian pharmacists."

Further, with the decision to allow 60 day scripts, the relationships between VMHS sales teams and independent pharmacists are more important than ever, as the front of store plays a greater role in the viability of small businesses, Cochran explained.

"When infrastructure is local, we're perfectly positioned to take on this profit challenge.

"From one Australian business to another, what you need now is a team, and we are as invested in your business as you are."

He added the sale of Australian brands overseas can impact local pricing, availability, innovation, and distribution "only time will tell if that happens in this instance".

"As next in-line to be Australia's largest locally-owned VMHS company, we'll be watching closely.

"For PharmaCare, defiance is in believing in the opportunities

we could have globally, from our Australian-owned heartland.

"Being Australian-owned does matter as it provides a deep understanding of the consumer mindset, the ability to be agile and respond quickly to consumer needs, and handle everything from marketing, sales to manufacturing of our 27 Australian-owned brands," reiterated Cochran.

With a complementary medicines industry market size of A\$5.5b in 2022 (the biggest portion being in vitamins and dietary supplements of A\$2.6b), PharmaCare has invested heavily in an 85-person pharmacy sales team.

He added that pharmacy has been a central tenant of PharmaCare's success in its 38-year history, and "will remain so as we see other companies sold overseas".

## Wear a halo

**MOTHERLESS** Daughters Australia (MDA) is encouraging everyone who will experience the joy of spending time with or speaking to their mum this Mother's Day to think of those who can't.

MDA Co-Founder Eloise Baker said a small gesture can make a big difference.

"Grief cannot be fixed, and no one needs to try to.

"Reach out and send a message or give someone an opportunity to say their mum's name and perhaps share a memory."

This year MDA has created the Mother's Halo Cyclamen label plant that "symbolises femininity, devotion, and everlasting love", featured in the paintings of Leonardo Da Vinci.



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