

Pharmacist's AusDoc appeal

THE “venom” which has flooded the pages of medical professional website *AusDoc* in the wake of the Government’s 60-day dispensing initiative has prompted one pharmacist to reach out directly to the publication’s readers.

AusDoc this week published an opinion piece by pharmacist Luke Kelly from pharmacy sales experts S3 Pharmacy Brokers, who said that during his professional life he’s had nothing but positive collaboration with GPs, as two parts of the health system that must work together.

“So I ask myself why the knee-jerk reaction to pharmacists defending their livelihood includes comments about ‘greedy pharmacists’?”

“Why does the RACGP seem to think its role is to disrupt the Pharmacy Guild of Australia?” Kelly asked, before proceeding to provide clarification around the “myths abounding in RACGP land” about how pharmacy is remunerated in Australia.

The detailed explanation notes that the combined \$7.82 dispensing fee and \$4.32 Administrative, Handling and Infrastructure Fee together provide “adequate remuneration for dispensing and the attached services, including packing of a dose administration aid, deliveries and advice”.

“What will happen now is pharmacies will begin charging for these services...they will no longer be able to cross-subsidise them from a withered dispensing fee.”

Kelly said this will affect the people the Government claims to be trying to help via the measure. He’s also predicting losses to

pharmacy of \$4 billion, compared to Government forecasts of \$2.8 billion which are conservatively based on a 63% uptake of 60-day dispensing.

“Individual pharmacies relying on dispensary revenue will lose 20% of their income...on average...this will translate to a loss of around 50% on the bottom line; in too many cases it will be more than pharmacies are making,” Kelly noted.

He also highlighted the recent revelations of the document developed by the Department of Health to assess the impact of the policy, which makes it clear that while the AMA and RACGP were consulted along with patient groups, there was no consultation with the pharmacy sector - and no consideration given to potential job losses, service cuts or price rises.

“I choose to believe the Government has been given inadequate advice...60-day dispensing seems to be set in stone, but the unintended consequences cannot be allowed to happen.”

Kelly says that he is not a Guild member or pharmacy owner, but can see from dealing with pharmacy finances every day the policy is “potentially catastrophic”.

He urged *AusDoc* readers to speak to their local community pharmacy and “find out for yourselves”.

Today's issue of PD

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Vale John Daffey

FORMER Pharmaceutical Society of Australia National President John Daffey FPS has passed away.

Daffey served as National President between 2000 and 2001, on top of his 15 years of service on PSA's Victorian Branch from 1987 to 2002.

He was known for his leadership and collegiality throughout negotiations for the 3CPA, said the PSA.

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Fake semaglutide

THE TGA has detected fake semaglutide (Ozempic), being illegally imported into Australia.

The TGA recently tested two imported products labelled as semaglutide and found that they were counterfeit.

Laboratory testing confirmed that the following two products did not contain semaglutide as labelled - Global Health Pharmaceuticals and Therapeutics branded Semaglutide 5mg vial, and Peptides Lab branded Semaglutide 10mg vial.

The TGA is warning people to avoid buying semaglutide products from unverified online sellers, as they may not contain the active ingredient.

Counterfeit products may also contain other undeclared and hazardous ingredients and currently there aren't any generic versions of this medicine being lawfully manufactured, TGA said.

NSW flu shot concerns

THE latest NSW respiratory surveillance report, published yesterday, shows community transmission of COVID-19 remains at high levels and influenza activity is increasing rapidly.

The state's Health Minister Ryan Park said as we enter the winter months staying up to date with recommended vaccinations is the best way to protect pharmacy customers from serious illness.

"Influenza is a serious disease in young children, and both COVID-19 and influenza viruses can have serious consequences for older adults, people who have chronic health conditions and those who are immunocompromised," Minister Park said.

"Vaccination remains the best protection against severe illness and now is the time to make sure you are up to date with the shots recommended for you."

NSW Chief Health Officer Dr Kerry Chant said, "we are anticipating high levels of influenza activity over the coming weeks and months, so



it is important people across NSW continue to do the little things that keep us all safe.

"There is plenty of stock of COVID-19 and influenza vaccines available at pharmacies and GPs, so please book in today," Chant said.

"We know there are high levels of COVID-19 circulating in the community and with a rapid increase of influenza cases this week, it is also important people continue to take simple precautions to protect themselves and each other.

"This includes wearing a mask indoors when you can't physically distance especially in healthcare and aged care settings, staying at home when you're unwell and remembering to practise good hand hygiene."

Those considered to be at higher risk of severe illness from influenza are eligible for a free influenza vaccine and include children aged six months to under five years, people aged 65 and over, Aboriginal people from six months of age, pregnant women at any stage of pregnancy, and those with serious health conditions such as diabetes, cancer, immune disorders, obesity, severe asthma, kidney, heart, lung or liver disease.

Illegal vapes fine

THE TGA has issued six infringement notices totalling \$15,984 to an individual in Queensland for the alleged unlawful importation of nicotine vaping products.

The importer owns a tobacco store in Queensland which has been the subject of a Queensland Health operation, where the TGA assisted.

It is alleged that the individual attempted to import six different types of nicotine vaping products (prescription medicines) that were not approved by the regulator nor were they registered in the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods.

In addition, the products were tested by the TGA laboratories and found to be non-compliant with TGO 110 - the Standard for Nicotine Vaping Products.

The unapproved nicotine vaping products were intercepted by the Australian Border Force and have been seized and will be destroyed under advice from the TGA.

The TGA will strengthen enforcement action in relation to non-compliance with the *Therapeutic Goods Act 1989* and is working with the Australian Border Force and the states and territories to increase enforcement, including at the border.

The Federal Govt also recently announced that it is taking strong action to combat unlawful vaping products.



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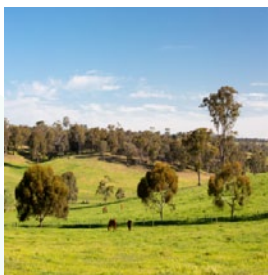
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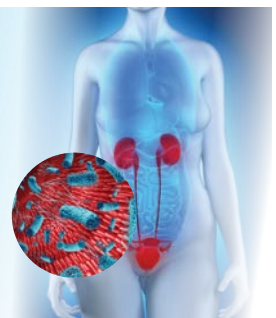
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Swiss to ban tobacco adverts for youth

SWITZERLAND will ban advertising of tobacco products and e-cigarettes aimed at young people, the government said this week, implementing a decision passed in a referendum last year.

The cabinet said it would strengthen its already planned restrictions to bar advertising in places and media where young people can see it, reported *Reuters*.

The new laws will come into force from mid-2026, and strengthen restrictions on packaging and advertising on tobacco and e-cigarettes due to take effect from next year.

The move, which will affect print media, online advertising and festivals, is designed to reduce tobacco consumption and related deaths.

Smoking remains relatively widespread in Switzerland with 9,500 people dying prematurely every year as a result of tobacco consumption, the government



said, describing it as one of the country's biggest public health problems.

"Tobacco use causes numerous non-communicable diseases, and the cost of their medical treatment amounts to 3 billion Swiss francs (A\$5.07b) per year," the government said.

"Tobacco advertising plays a significant role in the decision to start smoking," it added.

In 2022, 6.9% of Swiss 11 to 15-year-olds had smoked cigarettes in the past 30 days, while 5.7% of youths aged 15 to 24 had used electronic cigarettes at least once a month, the government said.

ALP silent on 60-day backflip

THE Government isn't commenting on a newly revealed letter to the Guild opposing moving to 60-day dispensing without consultation, written in 2019 when Labor was in opposition.

Guild Vic President, Anthony Tassone, highlighted the letter from then Labor leader Bill Shorten and Shadow Minister for Health, Catherine King, who criticised the Coalition Government for moves towards implementation of 60-day dispensing without consultation.

"Regardless of the competing views on this proposal, seeking to implement it during the term of the 6th Community Pharmacy Agreement without discussion with the Guild is demonstrably against the letter and spirit of that Agreement," Shorten and King said.

Ironically, the pair also said Labor had been "surprised and disappointed" at the lack of consultation, adding "this has not been Labor's approach to policy development or the way we have

developed relationships with valued stakeholders like the Guild.

"We can assure you that this collaborative approach, focused on consensus, would be the same one applied by a Labor Government."

Fast-forwarding to 2023, Tassone noted that the lack of consultation is exactly what has happened, and that while neither is the responsible minister, Shorten and King are in the current Federal Cabinet.

"What's changed? Doesn't Labor want to honour agreements when in Government?" Tassone asks, noting there was still the opportunity to make 60-day dispensing part of an agreement to deliver cheaper medicines while not leaving patients or pharmacies worse off.

Tassone noted that a report in yesterday's *The Australian* claiming Labor MPs are being gagged over 60-day dispensing, with some MPs believed to have held meetings with Health Minister Mark Butler to discuss impacts on local pharmacies.

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Industrial action

NSW Paramedics are taking state-wide industrial action this week to push for a real pay rise and improvement to their working conditions, arguing that the Minns Government has failed to deliver on critical election commitments.

They will place a ban on staff movements by refusing to move from their home communities.

The Australian Paramedics Association NSW (APA) has taken action to push for a fair pay rise after “years of real wage decline”.

APA (NSW) President Chris Kastelan said, “this action is an unfortunate but necessary response to a lack of commitment from the NSW Government to address woefully low paramedic wages.

“Taking industrial action isn’t done lightly, but we need real action from the Govt to deliver a real wage increase.”

Phages fight superbugs

A MONASH University-led project is successfully ‘bioprospecting’ for viruses known as phages that can kill deadly superbugs.

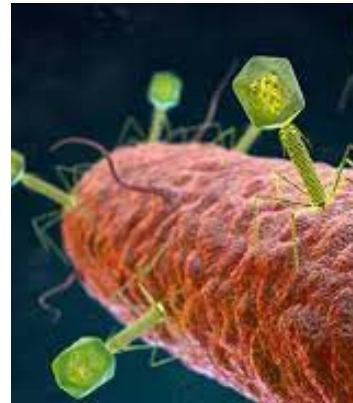
The Monash Biomedicine Discovery Institute (BDI) team, led by Dr Rhys Dunstan and Prof Trevor Lithgow of the Bacterial Cell Biology Laboratory, have had some success in tracking down the elusive killers.

Published in *Cell Reports*, their research sheds new light on how phages can select a ‘superbug’ bacterium that they will kill while ignoring other bacteria that are good for our health.

The findings could lead to an improvement in how individual phages are chosen to treat bacterial infections resistant to antibiotics.

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is a global issue, with an estimated five million deaths globally in 2019, a number which continues to climb.

Monash University’s Centre to Impact AMR runs several superbug surveillance programs that are bioprospecting for phages that kill



drug-resistant superbugs.

They aim to pinpoint phages that can kill specific superbugs and use them to develop treatments.

Bacteriophages are the most abundant biological entities on Earth, with an estimated number that is greater than every other organism, including bacteria, combined.

Selecting the right one to treat a given infection is not easy.

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NT files spread

THE Northern Territory Govt has breached the privacy of thousands of public health patients by sending identifiable medical records to a software vendor with offices in Europe, South America and China.

ABC said a preliminary incident report shows the extent of identifiable patient data transferred between NT Health, the Core Clinical Systems Renewal Program (CCSRP) and global software vendor Intersystems between 2018 and 2019.

The records of 50,616 patients were sent from NT Health to the CCSR.

Then, as part of the arrangement, 3,277 identifiable patient records were transferred from the CCSR to Intersystems.

In a statement, NT Health said the files have been permanently deleted and internal controls strengthened.

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Dispensary Corner

RESEARCH presented this week at the European Congress on Obesity has found that promoting lower-calorie options on fast food delivery apps could help users select healthier options.

While it seems obvious, a study involving randomised trials involving more than 23,000 UK adults showed that simply presenting healthier items more prominently reduced the excess calorie content of orders by up to 15%.

Lead researcher, Dr Filippo Bianchi, said about 25 million British adults use delivery apps like UberEats, JustEat and Deliveroo on a regular basis. "Our findings suggest that simple interventions could help people select lower-calorie options on delivery apps without the need to remove less healthy options," he said.

"This doesn't mean that we always have to swap pizza for a green salad - even initiatives that make it easy to make small changes to what we eat could help to slowly reduce obesity, if delivered at scale."

The trial, undertaken using a simulated delivery app, tested several interventions including highlighting smaller portion sizes and lower calorie products.

Bianchi noted that analyses of major UK restaurant chains found that just 9% of dishes contained less than 600 cals per meal, while about half of the items were at least 1,000 cals or more, equating to around 50% of an adult's daily recommended energy intake.

Dementia link to earlier onset of T2D

THERE could be an association between type 2 diabetes (T2D) and dementia development later in life, according to international researchers.

New research published in *Diabetologia* shows an association between T2D and developing dementia in later life, with the risk of dementia increasing the earlier a person develops T2D.

To understand the risks of dementia associated with prediabetes, the authors analysed data from participants of the Atherosclerosis Risk in Communities (ARIC) study.

The cognitive function assessments incorporated data from a scoring system involving three cognitive tests, administered at visits two (1990-1992) and four (1996-1998), the expanded neuropsychological 10-test collection, administered from visit five (2011-2013) onwards and informant interview (Clinical Dementia Rating scale and the Functional Activities Questionnaire).

The Mini-Mental State Examination was also administered.

Participants were followed up with until 2019.

The authors evaluated the association of prediabetes with dementia risk before and after, accounting for the subsequent development of T2D among ARIC participants with prediabetes at baseline.

This was done to understand how much of the association of prediabetes with dementia was explained by progression to diabetes.

They also evaluated whether age at diabetes diagnosis modified the risk of dementia.

Among the 11,656 participants without diabetes at baseline, 2,330



or 20% had prediabetes.

When accounting for diabetes that developed after the baseline period, the authors found no statistically significant association between prediabetes and dementia.

However, they found that the earlier age of progression to T2D

had the strongest association with dementia.

There was a three times increased risk of dementia for those developing T2D before age 60 years, falling to a 73% increased risk for those developing T2D aged 60-69 years, and a 23% increased risk for those developing T2D aged 70-79 years.

At ages 80 years or older, developing T2D was not associated with an increased risk of dementia.

The authors said, "prediabetes is associated with dementia risk, but this risk is explained by the development of diabetes.

"Diabetes onset at early age is most strongly related to dementia.

"Thus, preventing or delaying the progression of prediabetes to diabetes will substantially reduce the future burden of dementia."



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