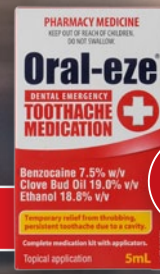


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Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features three pages of news.

ATAGI vax advice

THE Federal Govt has accepted the latest advice from the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation on the use of the new COVID-19 XBB.1.5 vaccine as part of the National COVID-19 Vaccine Program.

The new XBB.1.5 vaccines have been found to provide modest improved protection against the COVID-19 strains circulating in the community.

The XBB.1.5 vaccines will be available along with the existing bivalent vaccines.

Pfizer's monovalent XBB.1.5 vaccine will be available for use in eligible people aged five years and older, while the Moderna monovalent XBB.1.5 vaccine can be used for those aged 12 years and older.

Guild pushing for a \$19 co-payment

THE Pharmacy Guild of Australia says that new figures released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) show Australians are going without prescription medication due to rising costs, reinforcing the need to reduce the maximum general co-payment for PBS-listed medicines to \$19.

The ABS data shows nearly 1.1 million Australians either delayed or didn't get their required medicines due to the price in the 2022-23 financial year.

Inflation will cause the maximum co-payment to increase on 01 Jan 2024 by \$1.60, so medicines currently costing \$30 will go up to \$31.60 for general patients, while the concessional co-payment cost will rise from \$7.30 to \$7.70.

Pharmacy Guild of Australia's National President Trent Twomey said the aim of the Guild's 'Affordable Medicines Now' campaign has always been to reduce the maximum co-payment to \$19 for Australian patients.



"Community pharmacy won't rest until the general patient co-payment is \$19.

"This is one lever the govt has at its disposal to help with the cost of living, and the time to act is now."

Twomey said with inflation running at 5.4%, there has never been a more important time to bring down the cost of medicines.

"A reduction in the general patient co-payment to \$19 will have an immediate, direct, and permanent reduction in the Consumer Price Index, structurally lowering inflation.

"With little to no second-round effect, the reduction will affect the health component of the CPI, and most importantly, deliver much needed and lasting cost of living relief to up to 19 million Australians and their families needing it most."

The Guild stated Australia's medication cost compared poorly to other countries such as New Zealand, France and Germany.

"In New Zealand there is no general co-payment for medicines, in Germany, it's under \$17, while in France it's just 50 Euro cents," added Twomey. JG

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Tas vax scope ups

APPROVED pharmacist immunisers working in community pharmacies across Tasmania can initiate and administer a wider range of vaccines from 01 Jan 2024 under changes to the Tasmanian Vaccination Program Guidelines released yesterday.

The changes align with a recent Commonwealth decision to provide funding for community pharmacies to initiate and administer vaccinations under Australia's National Immunisation Program from 01 Jan 2024.

Pharmacy Guild of Australia Tasmanian President, Helen O'Byrne said, "these changes mean eligible people can readily access vaccinations within their own community, especially when it may be difficult to see a GP, without having to worry about out-of-pocket costs".

"Our elderly population are very susceptible to pneumonia, so we encourage pharmacists to check vaccination records and remind older Tasmanians to protect against pneumonia, along with ensuring that their COVID-19 boosters are up to date," O'Byrne remarked.

"Harmonising vaccination scope across all States and Territories is key to ensuring the health and wellbeing of our communities, as would be all our pharmacists undertaking the approved requisite training," she added.

Optus outage tests staff

PHARMACIES that don't rely on the Optus network may have weathered the recent outage, however, as one pharmacy has shown when its customers were affected by the outage, it still caused a major disruption to it.

Rosedale Pharmacy found out that a business may be on Telstra and Vodafone, but if their customers use Optus, it can still cause significant upheaval.

Pharmacy assistant at Rosedale Pharmacy, Vic, Deana McQuillen (pictured) told the *Gippsland Times* last Fri that they were catching up from the day's absolute chaos.

"So we weren't affected business-wise because our internet is with Telstra, but unfortunately our customers who were with Optus couldn't pay for their prescriptions," McQuillen said.

"They couldn't load up a script because doctors send an e-script to their mobile phone...and you have to download it over the internet, and they couldn't even do that because of no service.

"So people were going without their medications and couldn't ring their doctors."

Rosedale Pharmacy staff spent the day of the outage trying to assist by attempting to 'hotspot' Optus-affected customers to the staff members' non-Optus-connected smartphones to use the internet to receive their scripts.

"It was quite bad; we are trying to slowly catch up," she remarked.

"Customers couldn't get their specific or special medicines and



had to wait an extra day for it."

McQuillen said the delays and potential losses go further than serving in-store customers.

"I feel for all the businesses in places like Rosedale, Heyfield and the surrounding areas.

"A lot of our customers live in Traralgon, and we do webster packing for patients and delivery.

"We couldn't even contact hospitals to get new prescriptions.

"We couldn't get a hold of our delivery patients and they couldn't get a hold of us, it was a mess."

McQuillen praised Rosedale Pharmacy customers for their cooperation as "they didn't take it out on any of us and were very appreciative of our help".

"It just goes to show, what are we going to do if we end up with a cashless society?" JG

PDL practice alerts

THE prescribing and supply of medicinal cannabis is a rapidly expanding area of practice in Australia, stated pharmacy industry insurer Pharmaceutical Defence Limited (PDL) yesterday.

With this emerging field comes the need for comprehensive risk management considerations and strategies in pharmacy to ensure patient safety and regulatory compliance.

PDL has put out the following key points that explore some essential risk management considerations for pharmacists who are involved in this area of practice **HERE**.

The insurer has also put out a practice alert to make pharmacists aware that off-label prescribing is not uncommon, and the profession plays a vital role to ensure patient safety and promote the appropriate use of medicines.

Learn more about the obligations, responsibilities and risk mitigation strategies for pharmacists in relation to the supply of medicines when prescribed off-label **HERE**.

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Dispensary Corner



A REALTOR says that a recent Facebook Marketplace listing for someone to share the other side of a bed is yet another sign of how "unhinged" Toronto's rental market has become, not to mention the health risk as a recent huge outbreak of bed bugs in Europe and France in particular showed, where pharmacies were providing sprays to kill the vermin and salves to soothe the bites.

Clearly there are no such issues in Toronto if people are willing to share beds with strangers.

The absurd rental listing which has been subsequently removed from the social media platform read, "looking for an easygoing FEMALE to share the master bedroom and the ONE QUEEN SIZE BED".

"I have been previously sharing the bedroom which ONLY HAS ONE QUEEN SIZE BED with a roommate I found on Facebook and it worked out perfectly well!"

The listing also required A\$2,105 upfront for a rental deposit, which included the first and last month's rent plus an additional A\$110 for the key fob.

Toronto realtor Anya Ettinger brought attention to the listing through a TikTok video, which amassed 605,000 views.

Ettinger told *CTV News Toronto* that she has never encountered a listing like this in all her years in the industry, "I think it shows really how sad it is here, I mean people are - rightfully so - committed to staying in the city, creating a market for stuff like this."

Aussies Fess up to having "sneez-iety"

RESEARCH commissioned by pharmacy brand Fess reveals Aussies experience 'sneez-iety' in public and behind closed doors.

More than half of the 1,000 Aussies surveyed said that peeing in their pants while sneezing would be the most embarrassing scenario, while one-third admitted to this happening to them in real life.

Nasal etiquette seems lacking as one in four Australians confess to using their sleeve to wipe their runny nose if they are without a tissue, while 18% admit to using their hand.

It gets even worse with 11% of Aussies admitting to freely blowing out "snot rockets" to alleviate their nasal congestion.

The phenomenon of 'sneez-iety' can also lead to challenges in the bedroom, with Aussie men feeling

embarrassed to sneeze during sex three times higher than women.

Medical practitioner with a special interest in preventive healthcare and wellness Dr Brad McKay said, "these findings shed light on the millions of Aussies struggling to manage their nasal health".

"However, regularly using something as simple as a saline nasal spray can effectively prevent allergens from building up in your nose and can help to reduce hay fever symptoms."

Australians have a variety of ways to deal with their blocked nose caused by excess mucus with 39% using a nasal saline spray, 39% taking hot showers and 37% drinking lots of fluids to ease their troubling symptoms.

With extreme weather conditions expected in the months

ahead, Adele Taylor, National Asthma Council's Sensitive Choice Program Manager explained 'Nosevember' is a good reminder for people with asthma and allergies to be proactive about their respiratory health.

"Reducing your exposure to allergens can reduce the risk of allergic reactions or allergy-related asthma flare-ups," said Taylor.

Interestingly, 41% of Aussies would consider stocking up on a nasal saline spray throughout the bushfire season to help clear out pollutants from the nasal passages.

"If anyone is concerned about their respiratory health, now is the time to speak to your healthcare professional such as a pharmacist and consider adopting a range of healthy living habits that support clear breathing," said Taylor. *JG*

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