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Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features two pages of news.

Drug trial for MS

THE first-ever adaptive clinical trial for Australians living with multiple sclerosis (MS) will seek to reverse neurological damage caused by the progressive condition.

With an initial \$4m in funding, the trial, commencing in Jan 2024, will enable researchers to investigate the potential benefits of several pharmacy medications simultaneously, giving hope to those with one of the most debilitating forms of MS who currently have extremely limited treatment options.

Working with a national and international group of clinicians and researchers, the trial will test two repurposed drugs alongside each other, providing more timely results about whether the treatments are working.

President of MS Australia A/Prof Des Graham said, "with a \$3m grant from MSWA and a \$1m grant from MS Australia, this revolutionary adaptive trial provides tremendous promise for those living with progressive MS in Australia".

The PLATYPUS trial will be rolled out across Australia through a collaboration of 20 academic and healthcare institutions and aims to recruit more than 250 participants from around the country.

Full scope gets support



THE Pharmacy Guild of Australia has backed calls this week by physiotherapists and other allied healthcare professionals to work to their full scope of practice and training to help more patients.

It follows public comments made by the Australian Physiotherapy Association that all allied health professionals working to their full scope of practice benefits patients, the health system and the economy.

Pharmacy Guild National President Trent Twomey commented that physiotherapists, like pharmacists, can do a lot more for their patients.

"Physiotherapists working to their full scope of practice to treat patients with musculoskeletal conditions is just one example of how we can improve and streamline the healthcare system," Twomey explained.

He also congratulated the Federal Govt for launching the Cormack Review to investigate ways of unleashing the health workforce to streamline the system so that patient access and treatment can be improved.

"As Health Minister Mark Butler acknowledged only recently,

pharmacists have long been calling for a shake-up of the health system to improve waiting times and hospital access.

"Like nurses and physiotherapists, pharmacists stand ready to deliver more services for patients."

He added there are already pharmacists in training in Qld to treat and diagnose 23 everyday health conditions to "unclog" the state's health system.

"New South Wales is committed to following Queensland's lead across the 23 conditions and only this month, South Australia gave the green light for pharmacists to treat and diagnose women with uncomplicated Urinary Tract Infections," said Twomey.

He also said this would not be a burden on taxpayers because health professionals working to their full skill set only needs a legislative change, not billions of dollars in extra public funds.

"We've done the homework on this," he asserted.

"Pharmacists, physiotherapists, and other health professionals working to their full scope will not only save patients' time and convenience, but it will also save billions of taxpayers' dollars too." JG

Zactin shortage

THE TGA has notified pharmacists of a shortage of Zactin Tabs (fluoxetine 20mg dispersible tablet) due to manufacturing issues, which is expected to continue at least until 29 Feb 2024.

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Dispensary Corner

THERE'S a new way in which going to space could mess with the human body.

A study on 86 rats in simulated space environments suggests that being weightless and exposed to space radiation unprotected by Earth's atmosphere could have a deleterious effect on the vascular tissues associated with erectile dysfunction - a condition treatable with a very popular medicine dispensed by pharmacists the world over.

Even more than a year after the experiment, the rats showed signs of erectile dysfunction - and the culprit seems mostly to be the galactic cosmic radiation streaming through space.

"While erectile dysfunction affects more than half of men over the age of 40, the consequences of space travel on erectile function are still obscure," physiologist Manuella Andrade of Florida State University told *ScienceAlert*.

"These findings indicate that simulated spaceflight exerts a long-term impairment of neurovascular erectile function, which exposes a new health risk for deep space exploration."

Scientists have even been investigating how pregnancy and birth might play out in a space environment, but sexual health has been neglected, according to the research team.

"To our knowledge, this study is the first investigation into the effects of real or stimulated [sic] spaceflight on tissues relevant to erectile function," the researchers commented.

Ban on single-use vapes starts in Jan

THE first stage of Australia's new vaping reforms is set to commence on 01 Jan 2024 with further protections implemented over the course of next year.

The Govt will implement a ban on the importation of disposable single-use vapes which is subject to legislative and administrative arrangements being approved, including by the Governor-General in the Federal Executive Council.

In parallel with this ban, a new Special Access Scheme pathway to prescribe vapes will commence on 01 Jan, which will facilitate improved access to therapeutic vapes, whereby nurse practitioners and all medical practitioners will be able to prescribe their use where clinically appropriate.

From 01 Mar 2024 further



changes are expected to commence, including the cessation of the personal importation of vapes and a ban on the importation of non-therapeutic vapes, the Govt has confirmed.

Therapeutic vape importers and manufacturers will be required to notify the TGA of their product's compliance with the relevant product standards, and importers will need to obtain a licence and permit from the Office of Drug

Control for their products.

During 2024, product standards for therapeutic vapes will also be strengthened, including limiting flavours, reducing permissible nicotine concentrations and the need for pharmaceutical packaging.

A transition period will be allowed for businesses to comply with the new requirements.

The Govt stated it will introduce legislation in 2024 to prevent domestic manufacture, advertisement, supply and commercial possession of non-therapeutic and disposable single-use vapes to ensure comprehensive controls across the supply chain.

To introduce and enforce these reforms, the Govt will provide an additional \$25m to the Australian Border Force and \$56.9m to the TGA over two years. JG

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