

4 ways to help build strong bones



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## Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features two pages of news.

### Good idea Blooms

**BLOOMS** The Chemist stores in WA are now offering a service that organises medications into tailor-packed weekly containers that visually display how and when to take the medicines, for free.

The service takes a significant amount of pressure off customers and carers.

Blooms The Chemist Bull Creek pharmacist and owner Anthony Masi told *PerthNow*, "missing a dose of medication can be stressful and doubling up can be dangerous, so this service makes it easy for our customers to stay on top of their health".

"Most people don't take their medication as they should and it can be difficult to remember when to take what."



## Guild takes aim at cost of medicines

**MEDICINE** costs should be dropping rather than going up - that's the call of the Pharmacy Guild of Australia which on Sun urged the Commonwealth Government to drop the prices of medicines in the current cost-of-living crisis.

As of yesterday, the maximum co-payment for PBS listed medicines rose by \$1.60 to \$31.60 for general patients, and went up by \$0.40 to \$7.70 for concessional card holders.

The Guild highlighted that this was in contrast to 12 months prior, when prices dropped \$12.50 following on from the 'Affordable Medicines Now Campaign'.

It stated that it would like to see the maximum co-payment from PBS medicines drop to just \$19.

"Instead of the Commonwealth Government putting the price of medicines up on the 1st of Jan, they should be doing in fact the complete opposite and easing the cost-of-living burden on Australians," Pharmacy Guild's National President, Professor Trent Twomey (pictured), said.

He pointed out that "Australia has the third highest out-of-pocket expenses for essential medicines in the developed world", and added



that "we have been calling on this government to reduce the out-of-pocket expenses when it comes to essential healthcare".

Professor Twomey urged the government to act in light of recent research that suggested many Australians were deferring the purchase of medication due to

financial constraints brought about by current economic circumstances affecting Australians.

"The Australian Bureau of Statistics shows that 1.1 million Australians are delaying, deferring or going without their essential medicines on a weekly and monthly basis," he said. *DF*

### Vaping slammed

**VAPING** has landed 178 people in hospital since 2000, including seven children, Private Healthcare Australia has revealed.

Another 19 young people aged 15 - 24 required hospital treatment related to vaping.

CEO of Private Healthcare Australia Dr Rachel David said, "this is more evidence of the dangerous, addictive threat vaping poses to Australians of all ages".

"E-cigarettes or vapes might smell sweet... but research shows they contain up to 200 chemicals including weed killer and paint stripper."

The hospital admissions cost health funds \$1.23 million, with the median cost \$1,960.

### AstraZeneca strikes deal to buy Chinese cancer therapy business

**ASTRAZENECA** has agreed to purchase Gracell Biotechnologies, a Chinese cancer therapy company that is focused on a type of cancer therapy called CAR-T which aims to modify a patient's cells in order to fight the debilitating disease.

Gracell Biotechnologies will be bought for US\$1.2 billion and marks another significant investment in cancer treatment for AstraZeneca, which, according to *The Guardian*, accounts for around a third of its business.

Gracell's CAR-T cell therapy works by extracting disease-fighting white blood cells which are known as T-cells from the cancer patient.

They are then re-engineered to fight cancer and are infused back



into the body of the patient.

China is becoming an increasingly important market for the business, which reportedly had previously drafted plans to spin off its business in the region and list it locally.

Susan Galbraith, Executive Vice President, Oncology R&D, AstraZeneca, said, "the

proposed acquisition of Gracell will complement AstraZeneca's existing capabilities and previous investments in cell therapy, where we have established our presence in CAR-T and T-cell receptor therapies (TCR-Ts) in solid tumours".

She added that "GC012F will accelerate our cell therapy strategy in haematology, with the opportunity to bring a potential best-in-class treatment to patients living with blood cancers using a differentiated manufacturing process, as well as exploring the potential for cell therapy to reset the immune response in autoimmune diseases".

Gracell will operate as a wholly owned subsidiary of AstraZeneca in China and the US. *DF*



## Dispensary Corner

**IF YOU** happened to get some Sol de Janeiro Delícia Drench Body Butter from Sephora in your Christmas haul and you don't like large wolf spiders, you may wish to refrain from using it.

That is if allegations against the product from purchasers in the US turn out to be true, as a number of people have come forward in online forums suggesting that an ingredient in the body butter is rather attractive to the eight-legged creatures which can grow to around 35mm.

*Newsweek* reported one customer writing, "if you're scared of wolf spiders - watch out for these lotions lol".

"I wanted to love them sooo bad, but...when I put it on instantly one will come out.

"Normally I'll see one every like three years, used this and it was every day.

"I stopped using it and haven't seen one since."

The claim went viral and has led to a number of people experimenting with whether the cream actually does attract the venomous spider.

One wrote that if the cream contained farnesyl acetate, diisobutyl phthalate and hexadecyl, there is a high chance the male wolf spider would be attracted to it, as it is used as a form of sexual communication for the spiders.

A Sol de Janeiro representative rubbished the claims and clarified that it doesn't contain farnesyl acetate, diisobutyl phthalate or hexadecyl.

## ChatGPT fails drug test



**CHATGPT** should not be used to get accurate information about drugs according to two studies that were presented at the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists 2023 Midyear Clinical Meeting and Exhibition held in early Dec last year.

In a study by Long Island University assessing the ability of ChatGPT to provide accurate and complete responses to questions about drug information, it found that only 10 out of 39 questions were answered satisfactorily.

In the eight instances it listed references, investigators discovered the references did not exist.

"In this study, ChatGPT was unable to provide an accurate and complete response to most

questions presented to a drug information service," the authors of the study reported.

"Healthcare professionals and consumers should be cautious of using ChatGPT to obtain medication-related information."

Medical University in Japan conducted a cross-sectional, observational study to compare drug information on side effects from ChatGPT with Lexicomp.

The results showed that 26 of the 30 responses from ChatGPT were inaccurate, two were partly accurate, and two were accurate.

"While ChatGPT produced some common side effects that matched Lexicomp's information, the majority of responses were inaccurate," the authors said. *DF*

## Guild lauds the NT

**THE** recent approval of the Scheduled Substance Treatment Protocol (SSTP) for pharmacist vaccination has been celebrated by the Pharmacy Guild of Australia Northern Territory Branch.

In a statement, the Guild branch said it was "a milestone that will empower pharmacists across the Northern Territory to administer vaccines without a prescription".

Peter Hatswell, President of the NT branch of the Pharmacy Guild of Australia said, "This is a significant step forward for healthcare in the NT".

"We are pleased to see the fruition of our collaborative efforts with the Northern Territory Government over the past six months."

Under the new protocol, pharmacists in the NT are now authorised to administer vaccines according to both the NT Immunisation Schedule as well as the National Immunisation Schedule.

The Pharmacy Guild encouraged pharmacists and the public to familiarise themselves with the protocol.

## Pharma career boost

**THE** University of Bath and the University of Plymouth in the UK have joined forces to tackle the urgent need for more pharmacists.

Like Australia, the UK is currently facing a serious pharmacist shortage, so The University of Bath is working with the University of Plymouth to deliver its MPharm course at the latter to help students in the region.

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