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Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features three pages of news, plus full pages from:

- Platform Alliance Group
- TePe
- Direct Chemist Outlet

Plan to succeed

THE Platform Alliance Group is hoping to attract new members to its banner by offering a strong revenue stream, and better support and technology.

Learn more on **page four**.

Call out to switch

DIRECT Chemist Outlet is looking to expand and is calling on all interested pharmacy owners to "switch brands" and "compete against market leaders for increased success".

See more on the **back page**.

Balloon lifts off

THE Enlighten Canberra Balloon Spectacular took place over the weekend, with Capital Chemist flying a hot air balloon from the lawns of the capital's Parliament House.

Pharmacist Amanda Galbraith's family, who own the balloon and are pilots, have partnered with the Capital group for nearly 20 years on this promotion.

CEO Andrew Topp said the popular balloon does several "cheeky" antics over the area.

Attrition high for pharmacy internships

THE number of students entering internships is significantly lower despite the total number enrolled in all pharmacy degree programs steadily increasing since 2018, revealed the Guild's Workforce Capability Project's recent *Training and Qualifications Report*.

There is also a substantial difference between the student numbers enrolled in a pharmacy vocational education and training (VET) course and the completion rate, showed the report.

The highest completion rate was in 2021 at 39%, which was lower than the national average VET course completion rate of 46.1%.

According to the Australian Census 2021, the approximate size of the employed pharmacy workforce, including pharmacists and non-professional pharmacy employees, is 70,360.

This total comprises 28,297 pharmacists, 35,174 pharmacy sales assistants (working in the community setting) and 6,889

pharmacy technicians (working in the hospital setting).

However, students training to receive non-professional community and hospital pharmacy qualifications are not eligible to receive Commonwealth financial assistance to cover the cost of tuition fees and instead must seek financial assistance from their state and territory governments.

The report explained that for professional pharmacy qualifications, there are currently 20 universities in Australia offering 47 academic courses in total, which include both Bachelor's and Master's degrees.

The Guild stated that through future editions of both this report and the *Career Paths* report, it will seek to understand why students are not following a pharmaceutical career trajectory.

The body added this will allow it to better understand how to attract students to internships, and support them in completing and

pursuing a career in pharmacy to further improve the capacity and capability of the workforce.

Factors that influence attrition and retention will be also be analysed to further understand how to better meet the needs of students during their studies. JG

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WA pharmacist suspended and fined

A WESTERN Australian pharmacist has been reprimanded, suspended for two months, and fined \$10,000 last week for professional misconduct after inappropriate dispensing of steroid medication.

Chetan Anant Hegde, a registered pharmacist, dispensed anabolic androgenic steroids during the period 01 Jan 2008 to 30 Apr 2009, and was referred by Ahpra in May 2017 to the

State Administrative Tribunal of Western Australia.

The tribunal cancelled Hegde's registration and disqualified him for three years.

However, on appealing the decision, the penalty was set aside, as the incident happened 15 years ago.

The Tribunal said that since then Hedge has practised without any incident, is remorseful and has undergone counselling and further training.

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Shifting of gears

THE Public Health Association of Australia's inaugural Preventive Mental Health Symposium today, will be the first-of-its-kind event with an "urgent focus" on preventing mental disorders.

The National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing found that of Australians aged 16-85 from 2020-2022, an estimated 8.5 million people, or 43% of the population, had experienced a mental illness at some time in their life.

Of these, 39% of young adults (16-24) report a disorder.

Hosted in partnership with Beyond Blue, the event will see experts share their latest research about all of the potential causes of deteriorating mental health, from child maltreatment and changes in parenting through to physical activity, diet, social media, bullying, COVID-19, and even climate change.

500 tariffs to be abolished to lower costs

THE Australian Government announced yesterday that it will abolish almost 500 "nuisance" import tariffs from 01 Jul this year which may see the price of some pharmaceutical products reduced.

Four tariffs related to pharmaceutical products are slated for removal.

Two of them relate to "unmodified immunological products being polyethers in the primary forms", such as liquids, pastes, dispersions, solutions, and solids which include blocks of irregular shape and, lumps and powders, granules and flakes.

The other two tariffs relate to medical consumables and the appliances identified for ostomy use such as colostomy pouches.

Treasurer Jim Chalmers (pictured) said, "this is the biggest unilateral tariff reform in at least two decades".

"It will cut compliance costs, reduce red tape, make it easier to do business, and boost productivity."

A full list of tariffs to be abolished



will be finalised and provided in the upcoming Budget.

In this one package of reforms, the Treasury stated it would abolish 14% of Australia's total tariffs.

Consultation on the proposed initial reforms is underway, with submissions open on the Treasury website and closing 01 Apr 2024.

The Treasury indicated that removing these tariffs will streamline approximately \$8.5 billion worth of annual trade and save businesses over \$30 million in compliance costs each year.

Chalmers mentioned, "Australian workers and businesses are not protected by these tariffs, but they still have to navigate the red tape involved and bear the costs of

complying with the tariff regime". "These reforms are an important step towards simplifying Australia's trading system and removing compliance costs for Australian businesses, particularly small to medium enterprises."

He commented that after successive trade agreements, most goods are now imported duty-free.

This now means that businesses spend time and money proving their imports are eligible for existing tariff preferences and concessions, a compliance cost often passed on to consumers, Chalmers explained. *JG*

New packaging

ORAL brand TePe has new environmentally-friendly cardboard packaging for its interdental brush, minimising the use of plastics.

With 75% of customers seeking sustainable options, learn more on **page five**.

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Dispensary Corner

A WOMAN in the US who bought a mobility scooter online for US\$600 (A\$907) was ripped off by an online retailer after only receiving a walking cane. "That wasn't what I ordered," said Linda Lindell.

"You can't get in touch with them, I tried."

It seems the company, Upright Cane, has ghosted Lindell, who has not heard from them since following up her order.

"They were advertised all over the internet, not just on Facebook, but also on Google," Lindell told a US news outlet.

It's not the first time Upright Cane has come under fire, as a US journalist investigated the same issue with another consumer last year.

Five weeks later, another news reporter contacted Upright Cane, who said they were reviewing the problem.

But five weeks later, he visited Upright Cane's website and found that it no longer exists.

Meanwhile, Lindell, who is on a fixed income, said the US\$600 she lost to Upright Cane is crucial to her living expenses.

"I can't afford to buy another scooter," added Lindell.

"I'm pretty much housebound unless my kids take me wherever." Upright Cane even gave customers the option to donate to Friends of Disabled Adults and Children.

However, the charity stated, "we have not heard of this company, nor had any conversations or agreements about their raising money on our behalf".

MDR's pilot for chat AI

AI ASSISTANTS are on their way to certain pharmacies around the world, thanks to a new pilot partnership between pharmacy tech provider MedAdvisor Solutions (MDR) and AI specialist Brand Engagement Network (BEN).

The partnership aims to address today's challenge where traditional chatbots have limited conversational skills, base knowledge of pharmaceutical products, and capacity.

MedAdvisor's Chief Executive Officer, Rick Ratliff, said the company seeks to enable the "pharmacy of the future, and we are seeking partnerships that accelerate our path to making that vision a reality".

"BEN's technology is built on many years of research and AI best practices, and is complementary to our patient engagement solutions.

"We believe their technology will help our pharmacy partners to enhance the experience for their patients," added Ratliff.

Both parties believe BEN's AI assistants paired with MedAdvisor Solution's deep insight into pharmacy-driven patient engagement, will offer a personalised, conversational experience for patients.

The partnership hopes to also serve as an opportunity to demonstrate that conversational AI



can provide an enhanced patient experience, and provide them with accurate and personalised education about their medication, ultimately resulting in better patient outcomes.

"By partnering with MedAdvisor Solutions, we are opening the door to a wealth of opportunities across the healthcare space," said BEN CEO Michael Zacharski.

"Customers trust BEN to deploy a highly advanced, mature AI assistant as a next-generation conversational tool that can replace chatbots for any organisation."

BEN's AI Assistant technology will be a part of MedAdvisor Solutions Medication Advisor product, allowing the company's pharmacy network to access the configurable, AI technology. *JG*

Investment to care for LGBTQ+ community

EXPLORING ways to create an inclusive and safe mental healthcare environment for the LGBTQ+ community is the focus of a new research project from Flinders University.

The research project has received more than \$700,000 in funding from the Medical Research Future Fund, and is part of a larger funding package by the Australian Government of \$26 million to improve treatment and care for LGBTQ+ people.

It is estimated that 5-16% of Aussies are LGBTQ+, so potentially there are over 200,000 people in SA in need of care.

Guild Update

APP2024 starts Thursday

APP2024 kicks off in two days' time and it's not too late to register for the Pharmacy Guild's annual national conference and Australia's largest pharmacy industry event and the largest of its kind in the Southern Hemisphere.

Registration options include:

- Trade Only Registration - for \$15 receive three days of unlimited trade access (Fri - Sun), exclusive APP supplier deals, product samples and access to competitions, giveaways and prizes.
- Day Registration - includes the above plus access to sessions for the day for \$405, and just \$110 for Sun's registration.
- Full Registration - allows you to access all sessions from Thu - Sun, the trade exhibition and Welcome Reception for \$1,009. This also includes full access to session recordings.

Tickets to pharmacy's night of nights, the APP Street Party, are also still available.

Entertainment will reflect the 'Glowchella' theme and include a headlining performance by DJ sensation, Hot Dub Time Machine, who has played at festivals all over the globe including Coachella and Reading Festival.

The ticket price includes a buffet dinner, cocktail on arrival and a five-hour drinks package with basic spirits.

CLICK HERE to register.



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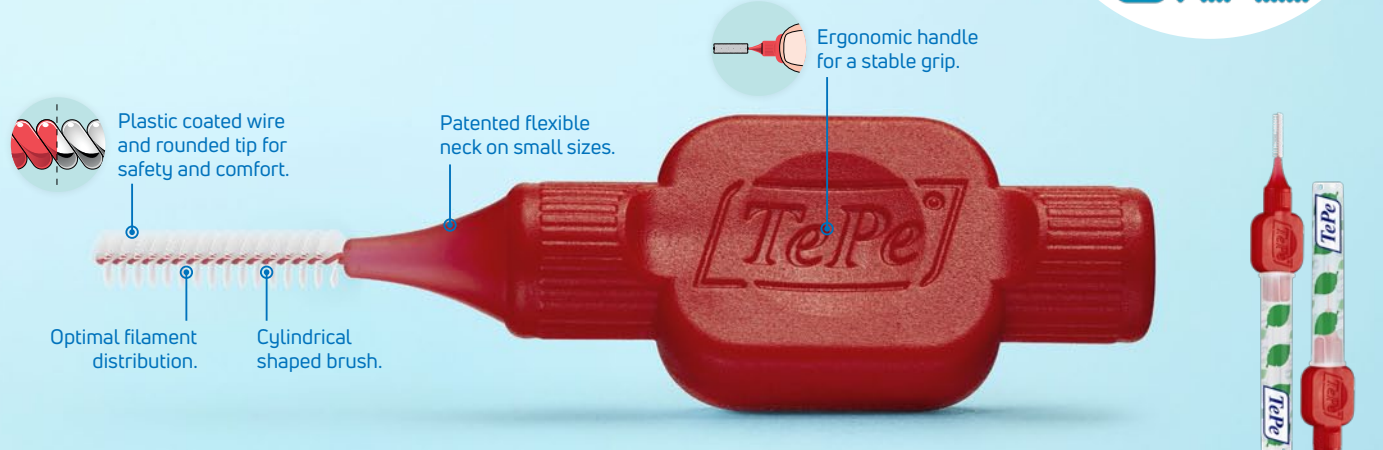


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New!



1. Australia Post 2023 Inside Australia On-Line Shopping Industry Report.
 2. Consumer Feedback from launch in retail in UK, after having tried the new carton pack.

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