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Butler: 8CPA reaffirms commitment

AUSTRALIA'S Health Minister, Mark Butler (pictured) addressed hundreds of delegates at APP2024 last Fri to highlight what had been achieved by signing the Heads of Agreement for the eighth Community Pharmacy Agreement (8CPA) (PD 14 Mar).



Butler said the landmark announcement, which underscores a commitment by the Albanese Government to make a further investment of \$3 billion into community pharmacy and cheaper medicine, marked "exciting times" for the pharmacy sector.

"I'm pleased to say that we have worked through our differences and are now on the cusp of delivering an eighth Community Pharmacy Agreement - one that will deliver the government to perform objectives for the pharmacy sector," he told attendees.

Those objectives, Butler explained, are "cheaper medicines for Australians, taking pressure off stretched family and household

budgets...[and] a strong and viable community pharmacists sector supported not just in our big cities but in the bush".

The Health Minister went on to acknowledge that while the introduction of 60-day dispensing "caused great concern in parts of the sector", he pointed out that "none of the doomsday scenarios presented in some parts of the media" came to pass.

Since the 60DD policy was announced, the Government has received 87 applications to open new pharmacies - up 50% compared to the same period the year before, Butler highlighted.

"We support pharmacy viability

and a viable pharmacy sector right across Australia; we've not deviated from that commitment even while implementing these difficult reforms.

"It's why we ensure every dollar the Government saves from 60-day scripts is being reinvested into the pharmacy sector," he concluded.

MEANWHILE, The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) has welcomed progress made toward the 8CPA.

SHPA Chief Executive Officer Kristin Michaels praised the continuing engagement with government on the future of CPAs, medicines supply and pharmacy services and programs.

"On behalf of our members we congratulate the government and all contributing parties on progress toward the 8CPA, and look forward to continuing our involvement in 8CPA negotiations toward an outcome in which the pharmacy profession is fully supported to optimise patient care," she said. JM

Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features three pages of news, a cover wrap from **Independent Pharmacies of Australia Group**, plus full pages from:

- Nova Pharmaceuticals
- Direct Chemist Outlet

Have your say on the CWH merger

THE ACCC is currently seeking industry feedback on the proposed mega-merger between Chemist Warehouse and Sigma Pharmaceuticals (PD 11 Dec 2023) as part of an "informal merger review" launched earlier this month.

The merger will see Sigma acquire all the shares in Chemist Warehouse in exchange for Sigma shares and a \$700 million cash consideration, with Chemist Warehouse shareholders to hold 85.75% of the ASX-listed merged entity while Sigma shareholders will hold 14.25%.

Interested parties can make a submission to the ACCC to SigmaCWG@acc.gov.au with the title 'Submission re: Sigma/ Chemist Warehouse - attention Isobel Graham' by 4pm, 28 Mar.

Alternatively, retail pharmacies can have their say on the merger via a short survey [HERE](#).

Guild goes print

THE Pharmacy Guilds of Australia and New Zealand have teamed up to launch a new communication channel, *Australasian Pharmacy*.

Officially announced at APP2024, the publication will provide content from all major Guild events and conferences in both countries.

Australasian Pharmacy is available digitally and in print, and is live now [HERE](#).



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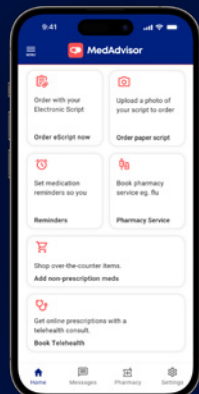
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Defusing a bomb

AUSTRALIAN Medical Association President, Professor Steve Robson, is urging federal MPs to support the government's vaping restrictions on the back of strong support from the AMA and health groups.

Prof. Robson described vaping as "a ticking time bomb that is threatening future generations of Australians", and a public health crisis that needs to be quickly addressed.

"Let's make this clear - children and young adults use vapes as their first nicotine-based product.

"They are not trying to quit, as they've never smoked before," Professor Robson said.

He added "dirty tricks" by the tobacco industry such as using bright packaging and fruity flavours were only designed to get kids hooked on nicotine, saying Australians need to "wake up to the truth".

PSA welcomes Pill move

THE Pharmaceutical Society of Australia has praised a move by the Queensland Government to allow trained pharmacists to dispense hormonal contraception to women 16 years and older across the state from Jul 2024.

Under the new pilot program, local pharmacists can prescribe low-estrogen oral contraceptive pills and the progesterone-only pill.

In addition, an injected version - depot medroxyprogesterone acetate - and the combined hormonal contraceptive vaginal ring can also now be obtained without first needing to see a GP.

Speaking ahead of the Women's Health Summit in Canberra this week, PSA National President Associate Professor Fei Sim called on state and territory governments around Australia to follow Queensland's lead and make access to contraceptive care easier.

She highlighted that, while 83% of Australian women have used contraception at some point

in their lives, "there are still significant barriers to access that need to be addressed".

A/Prof Sim said collaboratively, the health system's capacity can be improved, especially with all health professionals practicing to their full scope and capability.

"I call on all governments across the country to consider measures to improve women's access to reproductive healthcare.

"We congratulate and commend the Queensland Government for their leadership and commitment to improve women's access to contraception," she added.

PSA Queensland President, Shane MacDonald, said the body looked forward to working more closely with Queensland Minister for Health Shannon Fentiman.

"Appropriately trained pharmacists can do more to support the healthcare needs of Queenslanders, including improving access to safe and effective hormonal contraceptives." *ML*

Medsaware pitch

CONVERSATIONS around discontinuing medicines that are no longer needed, including psychotropics in aged and disability care will be the main theme of MedsAware's 2024 campaign, starting today.

Following strong success in 2023, the MedsAware campaign's 2024 theme is 'Ask because you care'.

The campaign seeks to empower older Australians, those living with a disability, and their carers, to ask health professionals "are these medications doing more harm than good?"

Society of Hospital Pharmacists Australia (SHPA) President, Tom Simpson, said several studies have shown that challenging behaviours, including those seen in patients with dementia, are too often addressed with psychotropics without first attempting non-pharmacological means.

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Dispensary Corner

IMPROVISATIONAL theatre sports exercises have just been revealed to help people with a stutter, from mock "ninja knife throwing", "gibberish" or a game of "zap", according to a new study from the University of South Australia (UniSA).

Improv is a form of theatre sport where performers make up scenes, characters and dialogues on the spot.

"In Australia, one in 100 people have a stutter; and while it's a relatively common speech difference, it can significantly affect a person's confidence, social connections and anxiety levels," said UniSA Bachelor of Speech Pathology research honours student Damien Aston.

"Improv provides an opportunity for a person with a stutter to have fun speaking with others, to learn to focus on the communicative aspects of speaking - such as eye contact and body language - rather than how they are speaking, and helps them learn to be ok with failure."

Researchers from the university are now trialling group improvisation to build the confidence of people who stutter via a nine-week program called Unscripted Confidence, developed in partnership with Swift Speech Clinic.

A free 'Come and Try' session is open to the public on Wed 20 Mar so people can see how it works, before a new round of sessions kick off in Apr.

Research participants attend the sessions for free while non-researchers will need to pay \$50 per session - details [HERE](#).

Sigma loads up Foodbank



SIGMA Healthcare made a significant donation to Foodbank last week from its Melbourne distribution centre in Truganina.

Thanks to the generosity of its supplier, Sigma was able to provide more than 15 pallets of healthcare products as well as bottles of shampoo and conditioner, and personal care items such as toothbrushes and toothpaste.

Scott Munn, Foodbank's Food Sourcing Co-ordinator in Victoria, said the supplies will help the thousands of families currently in need and serviced by charities across the state, particularly during the cost-of-living crisis.

"We know that shampoos, conditioners and even toothpaste can be an expensive burden on the family budget and if a family doesn't have to pay for these items, then they can better afford to put food on their table or help pay for their rent or electricity bill," he said.

"Foodbank is deeply grateful to Sigma and their suppliers for this very generous donation.

"Anything which can help offset the impact of rising family budgets

is so valued at this time," he said.

The donation will be processed and distributed this week to other charities, before being dispersed to families within days.

Sigma's Head of Corporate Affairs, Gary Woodford, said the donation was possible when Sigma collaborated with its valued and generous suppliers.

"Sigma is proud to support Foodbank, which does an incredible job across Australia helping feed and support families in need," he explained.

"Supporting communities is in Sigma's DNA as well, given our support to community pharmacies for more than a century.

"So it's a natural extension to also work with an organisation like Foodbank to directly help those who are doing it tough right now.

"We are hoping to make more donations like this to Foodbank in the future," he added.

Foodbank is the largest hunger relief charity in Australia, and looks after 57,000 families a day in Victoria alone. *JM*

To donate directly, [CLICK HERE](#).

Spray for sleep

A **NEW** bedtime nasal spray could reduce the severity of obstructive sleep apnoea (OSA) in people and lower their blood pressure, according to new Australian research published in *The Journal of Heart and Circulatory Physiology*.

The potassium channel blocker nasal spray works by increasing the activity of the muscles that keep the upper airway open, and reducing the likelihood of the throat collapsing during sleep.

In a blind trial, seven out of 10 people who were given the nasal spray showed a reduction in the frequency of episodic upper airway collapse during sleep and lower blood pressure the next morning.

"These insights provide a potential pathway for development of new therapeutic solutions for those people with OSA who are unable to tolerate CPAP machines and/or upper airway surgery," Professor Danny Eckert, College of Medicine and Public Health, said.

Med assurance

A **NEW** global study led by UNSW Sydney shows the use of antipsychotics during pregnancy bears little to no increased risk of a child developing neurodevelopmental disorders or learning difficulties, including ADHD and autism.

The findings offer assurance to expecting mothers who are concerned about continuing their medications, which are used to treat a variety of mental health conditions.

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The full PI is available from Nova Pharmaceuticals Australasia on request.

Please review the full PI before recommending.

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