

Qld Labor backs scope



THE Pharmacy Guild of Australia's Queensland Branch President, Chris Owen, has welcomed a new commitment by the Miles Labor government to allow community pharmacists to treat 17 common health conditions as part of their permanent practice.

These include ear infections, hormonal contraception, nausea, and mild skin conditions, as well as offering timely healthcare access, especially in rural and regional areas where pharmacists are often the only option.

Owen (pictured top right) praised the move, saying it demonstrates trust in the profession and will help alleviate pressure on emergency departments.

"One in three patients in Queensland's EDs could be treated by a pharmacist," he noted, adding that with most Queenslanders living near a pharmacy, this initiative offers a valuable alternative to long GP waits or hospital visits.

Owen also pointed out that pharmacies are the most frequently accessed healthcare destinations, with Australians visiting 18 times per year on average.

"Queensland continues to lead the way in expanding pharmacists' scope of practice," Owen said,



comparing the initiative to similar programs in countries like England and New Zealand.

The announcement was made this week by Health Minister Shannon Fentiman, who emphasised the importance of improving healthcare accessibility, particularly for women and those in remote areas.

"We're committed to bringing world-class healthcare closer to home," Fentiman said, highlighting the expertise of pharmacists and their ability to provide more affordable and accessible care.

This decision follows the success of the Queensland Community Pharmacy Scope of Practice Pilot, launched in Apr 2024, which allowed trained community pharmacists to treat 17 everyday and five chronic conditions. *JG*

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Today's issue of *PD*

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

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References: 1. Grieve KA, Barnes TM. Increased bioavailability of hydrocortisone dissolved in a cream base. *Australas J Dermatol*. 2015; 56(2):e30–4. 2. Van Zuuren EJ, Fedorowicz Z, Christensen R, Lavrijsen APM, Arents BWM (2017) Emollients and moisturisers for eczema. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* 2017, Issue 2. Art. No.: CD012119. DOI: 10.1002/14651858. CD012119.pub2.

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Poor bone health rising



HEALTHY Bones Australia has released a new report, *Osteoporosis and Fractures in Australia: A Burden of Disease Analysis 2023-2033*, revealing that 6.2 million Australians aged 50 and over are living with poor bone health.

Launched yesterday at Parliament House, and ahead of World Osteoporosis Day (20 Oct), the report highlights a 34% increase in bone health issues since 2012, projecting this number to rise to 7.7 million by 2033.

Key findings show that in 2023, a fracture occurred every 2.7 minutes, totalling over 193,000 fractures, with associated costs reaching \$4.8 billion.

By 2033, fractures are expected to rise by 34%, costing an estimated \$8.3 billion annually.

Healthy Bones Australia Chair, Prof Peter Ebeling, called for urgent action, and said, "if current strategies remain unchanged, the total cost of osteopenia and osteoporosis will reach \$67.9 billion over the next decade".

Sally Pearson, Olympic gold medallist and Healthy Bones Australia's Ambassador, has urged

people to complete the Know Your Bones self-assessment survey, noting that over 115,000 individuals have already participated.

Healthy Bones Australia CEO, Greg Lyubomirsky (pictured), emphasised the need for stronger governmental support to reach at-risk populations, adding, "we must break down the walls of apathy and ensure doctors prioritise bone health".

The organisation calls for increased screening and early intervention to reduce fractures and improve quality of life for those at risk.

"A cumulative effort will result in substantially less broken bones, enabling Australians to lead longer, healthier, and better quality lives," Lyubomirsky said.

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, in partnership with Healthy Bones Australia, released guidelines for the management of osteoporosis, to provide clear, evidence-based recommendations to support healthcare professionals managing patients aged 50+ living with poor bone health - for more information, [CLICK HERE](#). JG

Tas pharmacist wins John Coppock award

THE Pharmacists' Support Service (PSS) and Pharmaceutical Defence Limited (PDL) have announced the first winner of the John Coppock Pharmacist Wellbeing Award.

Tasmanian pharmacist Marika Castrisios received the honour for her work on The Dignity Project, established at the Royal Hobart Hospital Pharmacy Dept.

The project was created after Castrisios (pictured) experienced a traumatic miscarriage, highlighting a lack of resources for staff dealing with sensitive personal health issues at work.

The initiative provides cabinets in male and female toilets, stocked with sanitary products for situations like pregnancy loss, menstruation, and incontinence.

The program also includes educational resources and guidelines to support staff.

It aims to reduce embarrassment, normalise such events, and improve workplace comfort.

PSS President Curtis Ruhbau



praised the project for its alignment with the service's mission to help people through difficult times.

He noted the overwhelmingly positive feedback from staff, and the project's expansion into other departments within the Tasmanian Health Service.

Gary West, PDL Professional Officer and member of the judging panel, commended all 15 nominees for their efforts to improve the wellbeing of pharmacy staff, adding, "The Dignity Project best represented the ethos of the award".



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*Peter RU and Rocjarrz-Barthauer U. Br J Dermatol 1995;132(3):441-5. Department of Dermatology, University of Munich, Germany. Janssen Research Foundation.



Dispensary Corner

AUSTRALIANS are being warned to watch out for fake medical ID bracelets that could jeopardise life-saving treatment.

These knock-offs, posing as MedicAlert products, may look real but are missing a crucial feature: a QR code that links to critical medical details.

Dr Rodney Pearce, MedicAlert's Director, explained, "what the QR code gives you is medically-validated, this information is life-saving".

Fake bracelets, however, could leave responders without essential data.

Some even feature a non-working US phone number.

With over 140,000 Australians relying on authentic MedicAlert bracelets, Pearce advised anyone with doubts about their bracelet to verify its authenticity with customer service.

Real MedicAlert jewellery includes doctor-approved medical records - fakes won't.

So, if your patient's bracelet seems more like a fashion accessory, it's time for an upgrade.

TGA, SAHPRA sign MoU

THE Australian Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) and the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to enhance collaboration between the two regulators.

The agreement, signed last week in Pretoria and Canberra, focuses on improving the assessment, approval, and monitoring of various medical products and therapeutic goods.

The MoU aims to strengthen data sharing between SAHPRA and TGA, allowing both regulators to enhance their oversight of medical products, ensuring continued efficacy, safety, and quality.

This includes closer cooperation on safety surveillance and monitoring adverse reactions.

SAHPRA's CEO, Dr Boitumelo Semete-Makokotlela, highlighted that the partnership would expand both regulators' pharmacovigilance programs and enhance their internal expertise.

"This partnership enables us to rely on each other's strengths and regulatory outputs in the evaluation of health products, both before they are registered and once they are approved for public use.



"This would improve therapeutic outcomes for the populations we exist for and increase the robustness of our post-registration surveillance," Dr Semete-Makokotlela said.

Prof Anthony Lawler, Deputy Secretary of the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care and head of the TGA, expressed satisfaction with the agreement, and said, "we look forward to working alongside our regulatory counterparts in South Africa to share important regulatory information to ensure the continued safety, quality, and efficacy of therapeutic products approved for market". JG

Medicare rebates

THE Australian General Practice Alliance (AGPA) has called for a major overhaul of Medicare, including the creation of an independent pricing authority to set rebate levels for doctors.

Dr Mukesh Haikerwal, AGPA Deputy Chair, emphasised that Medicare is under-funded, jeopardising primary healthcare services.

"Successful governments have failed to adequately fund primary healthcare," he said.

Dr Haikerwal pointed to rising business costs, declining profitability, and difficulties in retaining GPs, which he attributed to years of government rebate freezes.

He warned that over 35% of GPs are now charging patients more than \$90 per consultation, with many reducing hours or planning to leave the profession.

"Practices are generally small privately-owned businesses, and their viability is a critical part of our entire healthcare system; and under-funding of rebates has forced GPs into private billing," he said.

At-home device for spinal cord injuries

RESEARCHERS from UNSW Sydney have developed an at-home intervention for people with nerve pain caused by spinal cord injuries.

The software, called PainWaive, uses a headset and interactive game to measure brain activity, helping users manage neuropathic pain by regulating abnormal signals.

Led by Prof Sylvia Gustin and Dr Negin Hesam-Shariati, the team's

work was recently published in *Spinal Cord*.

Prof Gustin highlighted the importance of a home-based system, especially for those with limited mobility or facing barriers in accessing healthcare, or those who live in regional and rural areas.

Following years of development and a pilot study, recruitment for a randomised controlled trial will begin in 2025.

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