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Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features three pages of news.

Public holiday

WITH a public holiday on Mon 27 Jan, the next issue of Pharmacy Daily will appear on 28 Jan.

Have a safe long weekend, and see you next Tue.

One week left for APP2025 discount

WITH earlybird registration closing 31 Jan, there is just one week left to save up to \$120 on full registration.

APP2025 will take place on the Gold Coast from 20-22 Mar, with more than 7,000 attendees, 250 exhibitors and 120 speakers coming together for three days of education, information and networking.

To register, click [HERE](#).

Biosimilar substitution warnings notice

IN A notice from the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS), pharmacists are being reminded about biosimilar substitution requirements in relation to reason codes 162/163.

Pharmacies have been receiving a warning reason code 162/163 when substituting a biosimilar for the reference brand, where 162 indicates the item provided does not match to the authority approval and 163 that the repeat item provided does not match the authority approval.

“Pharmacists (and approved PBS suppliers) are reminded that they can substitute biosimilar brands that are ‘a’-flagged in consultation with the patient, and provided that the prescriber has not marked ‘brand substitution not permitted’ on the prescription,” the PBS stated.

“When dispensing however, attention must be paid to selection of the correct PBS item code to ensure the correct product is claimed,” the PBS cautioned.

“Claiming incorrect item codes may result in a warning or rejection message from Services Australia.”

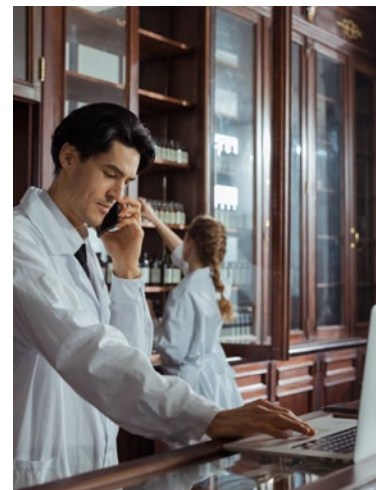
The PBS explained that warning codes may be triggered when a biological medicine has been approved for PBS subsidy under an Authority Required listing and the PBS item code for the biosimilar is different to the PBS item code for the reference brand.

Substituting biosimilar brands of adalimumab for the reference brand Humira appears to be a particular issue.

The PBS assured pharmacists they can still substitute biosimilar brands for the reference brand when they get a warning code, but they should first “review and action these as appropriate”.

“Upon review when substituting, if the selected item code can be supplied in line with substitution arrangements, then the pharmacist can disregard the warning.”

If pharmacists are still unsure about it, they can contact Services



Australia to confirm if they can continue to supply the item.

Services Australia can then advise whether the item can be supplied as a PBS benefit or if a different PBS item code will need to be used.

There is more information about reason and rejection codes for online claiming on the Services Australia website [HERE](#). KB

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Meningococcal B vax free for NT kids

THE NT Government is providing free meningococcal B vaccination for infants, aged six weeks to two years, and teens aged 14 to 19 years.

The program, which took effect on 01 Jan, marks a major milestone in safeguarding Territory families from this rare but potentially devastating disease, which has caused three deaths in the past five years.

About 4,200 babies and 18,500 adolescents across the Territory can now access the free vaccine.

It was previously only available for free to Aboriginal children or those with specific medical conditions.

"This initiative delivers on our promise to ensure Territory families have access to vital protection against meningococcal B," said Chief Minister Lia Finocchiaro.

For adolescents, the vaccine is given as two doses at least eight weeks apart and will be provided through the NT School Immunisation Program but is also available from GPs, pharmacies and health clinics.

For infants, the vaccine can be safely administered with other scheduled childhood vaccines as part of the standard National Immunisation Program, from six weeks of age.

NT Health has launched an awareness-raising campaign to promote the vaccine roll-out.

PSA's Fei Sim on resilience

EXCLUSIVE

WHILE 2024 was a year of growth and opportunity, there were many challenges for pharmacists, challenges that have been met with "incredible resilience", Associate Professor Fei Sim (pictured), President of the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia, told *Pharmacy Daily* in an exclusive interview.

"The pharmacy profession - regardless of areas of practice, regardless of what you do, where you practice - has really gone through a very tumultuous time since the start of COVID," A/Prof Sim said.

"We all know what happened during COVID, and even after COVID, and I don't think our profession has had the opportunity to breathe."

Sim pointed to uncertainty around 60-day dispensing for community pharmacists; uncertainty facing hospital pharmacists and the ongoing changes around funding for hospital services; and pharmacists who are in a niche practice area without commitment that it is going to continue.

"Our profession has gone through this emotional journey, yet we are telling them that, despite all this, they are expected to continue to upskill in order provide their services, and to expand their scope of practice that we, as the professional peak body, are asking and advocating for."

Demands on and opportunities for pharmacists will only increase, as an ageing population will come with increased healthcare needs,



A/Prof Sim pointed out.

Even now, she pointed out, there are challenges around patients currently unable to get into their GPs in a timely manner; inequity in access to care, depending on where people live; and rising use of medication, and with it the risk for medication misadventure - a risk that pharmacists are well-placed to head off.

"We should not underestimate the amount of pressure that has been placed on pharmacists over the last year in order for us to do all that we do," A/Prof Sim said.

"The resilience of pharmacists is incredible - we just keep going."

"From the PSA's perspective, the challenge here is that as a peak body, representing pharmacists, yes, doing advocacy is important.

"But I would like to think that supporting members in our profession is equally, if not more, important, because that is our number one remit."

Check out the full interview in *Pharmacy Daily's 2024 Year in Review* special report [HERE](#). KB

Eisai top pharma for sustainability

JAPANESE pharmaceutical company Eisai has topped the rankings of pharmaceutical companies listed in the 2025 Global 100 Most Sustainable Corporations in the World (Global 100).

Ranked at 35, Eisai is the highest among global pharmaceutical companies, with Novonosis (49), Novo Nordisk (62) and Sanofi (91) also making the top 100.

Eisai Australia supplies medications in neurology and oncology therapy areas.

The Global 100 global ranking is determined by Canada-based media and investment advisory company, Corporate Knights, and started in 2005.

It evaluates the sustainability of more than 8,300 of the world's major corporations based on various corporate initiatives in areas related to environment, society and governance (ESG).

Eisai rated well on indicators reflecting sustainability targets in executive compensation, enhancing measures to maintain employee health, employee retention rate and environmental conservation initiatives, the company said.

Eisai's stated aim is to "give first thought to patients... and increase the benefits that health care provides to them as well as meet their diversified healthcare needs worldwide".

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Dispensary Corner

IN WHAT is possibly the only job where you're required to show up drunk, hangover supplement company alc-eze is searching for Australia's first Chief Hangover Officer (CHO).

The job is described as "part adventure, part discovery and all about solving a relatable problem: hangovers".

The company assures us it is a real job, and it comes with a salary of \$100K per year pro-rata, a C-Suite title and all-expenses-paid international travel to trial the latest hangover cures.

"The CHO will travel to destinations like Sicily, Puerto Rico, Germany, Estonia, Thailand and Japan, testing out remedies such as vodka-soaked socks, dried bull penis snacks, and lemon under the armpits," the company said.

They accurately noted that the role "isn't for the faint hearted", with some of the potential remedies "a little less conventional than others".

Research reveals that among Aussies who endure hangovers, the average is 39 per year.

Meanwhile, 36% admitted to going to extreme lengths to cure their hangovers.

Applicants must be over 18 and be experienced drinkers.

In addition to the generous salary, if the new CHO uncovers a new secret ingredient that is added to the alc-eze hangover product, which is based on Nashi pear, they'll also receive a healthy \$20K bonus.

Your bank account may thank you - your liver, not so much.

Mature age path to pharmacy

AFTER five years of online study, a global pandemic and juggling life as a working mum, Tiff Findlay (pictured) is now a step closer to fulfilling her dream of becoming a fully qualified pharmacist.

The mother of two has commenced her 12-month pharmacy internship at Orana Mall Pharmacy (OMP) in Dubbo, after completing a Bachelor of Pharmacy with the University of New England.

The mature age student said that with her children at school, now was her time.

"Pharmacy is what I wanted to do when I finished school, but I had to work, and to be honest I don't know if I would have been as committed at 18," said Findlay, who is now 35.

"In 2021, during COVID lockdown I was working, home schooling and studying.

"It has been an effort, and when I finally submitted that last assignment and got the results, I cried happy tears.

"I felt like I'd actually made it - I had finished."

Industry figures show more than 2,700 full-time equivalent (FTE) pharmacists are needed across Australia in 2025, with rural and regional areas more likely to experience staff shortages.

"My husband has a business here, so we're settled," Findlay said.

"I was already working at OMP, and love the team, so we're staying."

Findlay is no stranger to the healthcare industry, with numerous members of her family working with the NSW Ambulance service.

"It is hard to get into a doctor or specialist in areas like Dubbo.

"Community pharmacies are easy to access and we offer many services," Findlay said.

It also been a great example for



Findlay's children.

"Their takeaway [after my graduation] was that even if people say you can't do something, you can do hard things - and you should.

"It doesn't matter when - if you want to do something, and have your heart set on it, you can do it." KB

Americans unaware of pharmacists' scope

A SURVEY conducted by drugstore chain Rite Aid found that many US consumers were unaware of pharmacists' full range of services, which limited their utilisation beyond traditional roles like medication dispensing and over-the-counter guidance.

There were generational differences in pharmacist interactions, with younger people engaging more and older generations focusing on medication dispensing.

Of the 2,000 respondents, 62% viewed their pharmacists as a crucial part of their health and wellness care team.

However, few were aware of the non-traditional pharmacy services that are offered, including prescribing certain medications (30%), medication therapy management (27%), point-of-care testing (23%) and smoking cessation help (24%).

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