

## Today's issue of PD

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

- Dispense Assist
- Maxofen

## Dispensary help

**DISPENSE** Assist is a low-cost staffing solution with dispensary technicians available 24/7, at rates from as low as \$7.42 per hour, for services that include compounding, DAAs and any other required tasks.

Learn more on **page four**.

## Maximise your day

**NEW** Maxofen from Nova Pharmaceuticals combines paracetamol and ibuprofen for double-action relief from acute pain and fever.

Available in packs of 12 or 30 tablets - details on **page five**.

## Free Sydney train travel for PSA25

**PEOPLE** attending the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia national conference PSA25 from 01-03 Aug can benefit from free travel on the Sydney train and metro network - including the Airport link - on 31 Jul and 01 Aug.

The free rail travel is recognition of the disruption caused by recent union action.

## Vapes more effective quit-smoking aid

**VAPES** containing nicotine are more effective for quitting smoking than nicotine lozenges and gum among adults experiencing social disadvantage, according to researchers from the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC) at UNSW Sydney.

Adults from less privileged backgrounds are more likely than other social groups to smoke and typically have a harder time quitting, the study team noted, and hence suffer the most from the health and social impacts caused by tobacco.

The team recruited more than 1,000 adults who smoked daily, were willing to attempt quitting, and were receiving a government pension or allowance (which acted as an indicator for social disadvantage).

Participants were randomly allocated to receive an eight-week supply of either vaping devices and flavoured e-liquids, or NRT in the form of lozenges or gum.

All received text message support.

After six months, 28.4% of the vaping group had quit compared to 9.6% in the NRT group.

"Even after accounting for individual differences within a socially disadvantaged sample, our analysis found quit rates were superior for the vaping group compared to NRT irrespective of age, gender, nicotine dependence and recent diagnosis or treatment for mental health disorder," said study lead Associate Professor Ryan Courtney, Head of the Tobacco Research Group at NDARC.

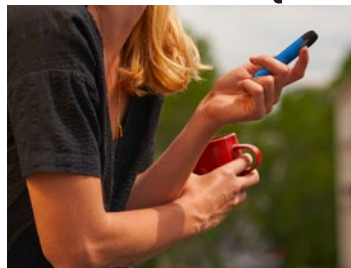
The study was designed to mimic

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the real world by giving participants a choice of vaping device and flavour, which was considered a key component to its success.

"We believe treatment choice in the vaping group, with the option of two different device types and three e-liquid flavours, paired with an encouraging and non-judgemental text messaging program, supported people to quit smoking and contributed to high abstinence rates," A/Prof Courtney said.

The study is also important as it used nicotine pod devices, which are the most widely prescribed in Australia due to their low risk of

accidental or intentional poisoning, noted study co-author Professor Nicholas Zwar, Chair of the Expert Advisory Group for the Royal Australian College of GPs Smoking Cessation Guidelines.

More than half of those who successfully quit were still using the provided vape product at the time of follow-up, with researchers noting that they may need support to stay vape-free in the longer term.

"People who switch from smoking to vaping should ultimately aim to stop vaping too once they feel confident that they won't relapse back to smoking, as the long-term health effects of vaping itself are unknown," A/Prof Courtney said.

"It's never too late to quit and vaping products are a further tool in the tobacco treatment toolbox, but more work is needed to support general practitioners, pharmacists and Quitlines when providing patient care regarding vapes," he concluded.

Read the study **HERE**. KB

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## Multimorbidity rises with risk factors



**MULTIMORBIDITY**, or living with two or more chronic conditions, is more likely among those with risk factors, such as poor diet and smoking, according to a new Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) report.

The report estimated that almost four in 10 Australians, or 9.7 million people, were living with multimorbidity in 2022.

"Multimorbidity is more common among people with more risk factors, which include smoking, high blood pressure, insufficient physical activity, not eating a healthy diet and living with overweight or obesity," said AIHW spokesperson Amy Young.

"Among adults with four or more risk factors, 59% were living with multimorbidity compared with 29% of people with no risk factors," she continued.

"Some of the risk factors are preventable and modifying them can reduce an individual's risk of developing a chronic disease and lead to improved health outcomes,"

she pointed out.

The most common pair of co-occurring conditions among people of all ages were anxiety and depression, affecting around 9.3% of the population, followed by anxiety and back problems (5.3%), then back problems and depression (4%).

Among those aged under 15 years, an estimated 11% were living with multimorbidity, with ADHD and autism featuring in younger age groups.

Meanwhile, an estimated 79% of those aged 85-plus lived with multimorbidity, with conditions like back problems, osteoarthritis and hearing loss featuring more with increasing age.

"Those living with multimorbidity often have more complex health needs and report poorer overall quality of life," Young said.

"This makes preventing and managing multimorbidity an important focus for individuals, the health system and society as a whole," she concluded. *KB*

## Western Sydney gets menstrual health grant

**WESTERN** Sydney University has secured a prestigious Gates Foundation grant to advance menstrual health innovation, with a particular emphasis on heavy menstrual bleeding.

Professor Robert Gorkin from the Translational Health Research Institute (THRI) will head an interdisciplinary team on the project titled 'Innovating Menstrual Health Management: Implementing Clinically Informed Absorbency Standards and Digital Diaries'.

The initiative aims to improve how menstrual bleeding is understood and when it may signal a need for medical care.

Professor Gorkin noted that by co-developing absorbency benchmarking methodologies for menstrual products and intuitive digital tracking tools designed to support earlier detection of heavy menstrual bleeding (HMB), the project aims to reduce stigma and confusion for those affected, while significantly improving

quality of life for women globally.

"Too many women suffer in silence, and the stigma and lack of accessible, clear information in hygiene products make it difficult for women to know when blood loss requires clinical attention," said Professor Gorkin.

"By creating practical tools to support women in self-monitoring their health and enabling clinicians to make more informed diagnoses, we're looking to fill a critical gap in care."

HMB is often underdiagnosed, with estimates suggesting it affects up to one in four women, particularly those in poorer countries, minority groups and other underserved people.

It is frequently associated with treatable underlying conditions and can impose serious physical, emotional, and social burdens (*PD* 20 Dec 2024).

"This project isn't only about improving health outcomes, it's about advancing equity," Professor Gorkin concluded.



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## Dispensary Corner

**PARENTS** of a 10-month-old girl in Sweden became alarmed when the bub grew what appeared to be a 'micropenis'.

The problem emerged after she had been lying on her father's chest so they could bond via skin-to-skin contact.

After some investigation, it turned out that the father had been using testosterone gel, and had unknowingly laid the baby on his bare chest without realising that he was exposing her to the hormone.

Blood tests revealed the girl had high levels of testosterone, but after ceasing exposure, her genitalia began to return to normal.

Interestingly, it's far from a one-off, and several such cases have been reported.

Medical professionals have warned parents to be extra cautious when using potent hormone treatments around children, because of the risk it poses to their hormone levels and the resulting physical changes.

## Arthritis management in the pharmacy

**ARTHRITIS** is fast becoming one of Australia's most pressing health concerns, according to a recent study published in *The Lancet Rheumatology*, thanks largely to an ageing population, sedentary lifestyles and increasing rates of obesity.

The research suggested that by 2040, more than 5.39 million Australians - around one in five adults - are expected to be living with the condition, at a cost to the health system of more than \$11.92 billion.

This points to the need to address arthritis through early diagnosis and effective management, especially as the condition becomes more prevalent among older Australians.

With experts stating that joint replacement surgery is considered a last resort after other treatments fail to provide relief, pharmacists have a role to play in providing safe, low-cost options to support the daily lives of people with arthritis.

Analgesics such as paracetamol and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) are usually the first port of call, and with COX-2 inhibitors now available without prescription (**PD 21 Mar**), pharmacists have more options to

work with.

However, they will not suit everyone, and topical treatments, such as creams and gels, are gaining recognition as first-line therapies for osteoarthritis.

Unlike oral NSAIDs, which can cause gastrointestinal and cardiovascular complications when used long term, topical solutions offer localised pain relief with minimal risk, especially during flares.

NPS MedicineWise notes that topical NSAIDs, such as Voltaren (diclofenac) gel, can help with pain relief, but with reduced risk of systemic side effects.

Meanwhile Thermoskin has launched a series of topical treatments, including Arthritis Cream, designed to complement the brand's supports and braces (**PD 10 Jul**).

Made in Australia and formulated with natural active ingredients, the cream provides targeted relief for joint pain, inflammation and stiffness.

A 2025 study reviewing non-pharmacological treatments for knee osteoarthritis found that knee braces were among the most effective therapies for reducing pain, stiffness, and improving function (**PD 20 Jun**), alongside



water therapy and exercise.

Braces outperformed other treatments in providing pain relief during activity, making them a valuable tool for those managing knee arthritis.

Products from pharmacy brands that include Thermoskin, Elastoplast, Wagner and Dick Wicks offer both mechanical stability and therapeutic warmth for joints affected by arthritis, helping users stay mobile and comfortable.

Other management tips for arthritis include:

- Staying active with low-impact exercises like walking, swimming, or tai chi to maintain joint flexibility and muscle strength; and
- Maintaining a healthy weight - reducing excess weight eases pressure on joints, particularly knees and hips. *KB*

Check out the latest in

## Beauty & Wellness

Every Thursday in *Pharmacy Daily*



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### ADVERTISING AND MARKETING

**Head of Sales & Marketing**  
 Sean Harrigan  
[advertising@pharmacydaily.com.au](mailto:advertising@pharmacydaily.com.au)

**GENERAL MANAGER & PUBLISHER**  
 Matthew Vince

### ACCOUNTS

[accounts@traveldaily.com.au](mailto:accounts@traveldaily.com.au)  
 Suite 1, Level 2, 64 Talavera Rd  
 Macquarie Park NSW 2113 Australia  
 Tel: 1300 799 220 (+61 2 8007 6760)  
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