

## Intern survey open

**THE** Pharmacy Board of Australia has confirmed the launch of a pilot survey of a select group of recent pharmacy interns and preceptors. The Board is investigating "issues relevant to the quality of the intern training experience," with the trial study to inform the development of a larger scale survey which may be undertaken in the future.

"Gaining insights into the intern pharmacist training experience is expected to inform the Board's future supervised practice policy review, and the development of additional information for interns and preceptors," the Board said. Selected participants will be invited to take part by email, with the survey taking about 15 minutes.

## Vic Guild charity gala

**THE** Victorian Branch of the Pharmacy Guild of Australia is holding its annual Charity Gala Dinner to raise much-needed funds for the Mirabel Foundation.

The dinner creates an opportunity for those who wish to support to donate with funds or product donations, as well as benefiting from the networking opportunity and broad exposure - for more info email [events@vic.guild.org.au](mailto:events@vic.guild.org.au).

## MedsASSIST closes today

**THE** Pharmacy Guild of Australia has announced the shutdown of its MedsASSIST real-time recording system, with the system to be discontinued effective tonight.

The "clinical decision support system" was rapidly developed and rolled out just over a year ago (PD 18 Mar 2016) as a response to the proposed TGA rescheduling of codeine products.

At the time, Guild president George Tambassis said, "We're doing this because it's the right thing to do," with the system available to all pharmacies, whether Guild members or not, to help pharmacists identify patients at risk of codeine dependence.

However in Dec the TGA confirmed it would proceed with the up-scheduling of codeine combination medications from 01 Feb 2018, and the Guild now says this "regrettably will render MedsASSIST obsolete".

The system aimed to address patient misuse so medicines containing codeine would not need to be made prescription only.

It has recorded over six million transactions, with about 120,000 instances of non-supply - but "could never be fully effective while it



remained voluntary," the Guild said.

"It was always crucial to have every pharmacy across Australia required by law to use a real time system for the recording of codeine supply...unfortunately this could not be achieved despite advocacy by the Guild at all levels of government."

After tonight's MedsASSIST shutdown the supply of S3 analgesics containing codeine through community pharmacies will continue, with protocols under the existing scheduling system.

Tambassis said the Guild remained concerned that the "blunt instrument of up-scheduling" will disadvantage responsible users of codeine medicines, and will not be effective in addressing issues of addiction.

## Board ORT alert

**PHARMACISTS** supplying opioid replacement therapy (ORT) are being urged to carefully manage all aspects of dispensing, with the Pharmacy Board of Australia's latest newsletter highlighting a case where a higher dose than prescribed was supplied after a pharmacist interpreted mg as mL.

## Union targets CW

**PROFESSIONAL** Pharmacists Australia has written to Chemist Warehouse, saying the company has been "awfully quiet" following the Fair Work Commission decision to cut penalty rates (PD 24 Feb).

The letter to Chemist Warehouse director Damien Gance asks whether the pharmacy discount giant "plans to cut take home pay of pharmacy employees".

The union group says its salary reports "consistently find that Chemist Warehouse wages are on or just slightly above the minimum Pharmacy Industry Award (2010) rates," adding that even when a pharmacist is paid above the Award rate via an individual agreement "a cut in the underpinning Award will still impact their future earning capacity".

Professional Pharmacists national director Matt Harris said pharmacy staff who worked on weekends and public holidays provided vital services during a time when other options were often closed.

"As Chemist Warehouse considers its response to this issue, we take this opportunity to remind you that the Australian community are strongly opposed to penalty rate cuts, and this will most definitely include your customers," he added.

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## Dispensary Corner

**WATCH** out Hugh "Wolverine" Jackman - a real-life X-Man can stick bottles, plastic cups and cans to his head.

Jamie Keeton, 47, from Illinois in the USA has a rare condition that makes his skin pores act like suction cups, apparently because of his elevated average body temperature which is 37.7°C.

The positives of Jamie's unique disease are faster wound healing, he ages slower, and "gets sick less than the average cabbage".

Even better, he's the Guinness World Record Holder for carrying the most cans on his head.

Check out his appearance on *The Ellen Show* where he poured her a drink with his head [HERE](#).



### ONLY in Japan?

A new campaign launched in Aichi, Japan, encourages elderly people to stay off the road, by offering them a discount funeral.

Japanese authorities have been trying to get older drivers to give up their licences, after a spate of accidents in which they confused the accelerator and brake pedals.

A local company which runs 89 funeral homes is offering 15% off for those who stop driving, reports the *Mainichi* newspaper.

Drivers aged 75 or older accounted for 13.2% of fatal traffic accidents in the region last year, up from 7.7% in 2007.

## PSA nominations explosion

**THE** Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) has received an "unprecedented number of nominations" for positions on its State and Territory Branch Committees, including from a record number of female and Early Career Pharmacists (ECPs).

Under PSA's constitution, ballots are only required if the number of nominations exceeds the number of positions on the Branch Committee, so the organisation has said it will now hold Branch Committee votes for pharmacists.

PSA ceo Dr Lance Emerson said the record number and diversity of nominations was a fantastic result for shaping the future of the profession.

"The high number of nominations and diversity of candidates means PSA members will be able to vote for a strong cross-section of pharmacists to represent them on Branch Committees," he said.

These committees then nominate directors to the PSA Board.

Emerson said he was encouraged to see a record number of ECPs and female pharmacists nominating for Branch Committee positions.

"This shows that PSA's diversity platform and focus on supporting ECPs is working," he said.

"I'm delighted to see highly motivated early career and female pharmacists – including from a range of cultural backgrounds – raising their hands to help lead the way forward for pharmacists in Australia," Emerson added.

Pharmacy Guild president George Tambassis has also been emphasising a diversity agenda, as well as urging candidates from all backgrounds to nominate for its upcoming branch elections.

## Keytruda indication

**MSD** has welcomed confirmation that its Keytruda (pembrolizumab) has become the first and only anti-PD-1 immunotherapy approved to treat head and neck cancer in Australia.

The TGA has approved the 200mg dose of Keytruda for patients with recurrent or metastatic head and neck squamous cell carcinoma where disease progression has occurred on or after platinum-containing chemotherapy.

## Win with SkinB5

This week **Pharmacy Daily** & **SkinB5** are giving away each day the Acne Control Extra Strength Tablets.

SkinB5 is an all-natural acne supplement that works from within to treat acne on the face and all over the body. The SkinB5 Extra Strength Tablets is based on a potent dosage of vitamin B5, proven to increase skin health and reduce acne by regulating the skin's production of sebum, or skin oil. See [www.skinb5.com](http://www.skinb5.com) for more.

To win, be the first person from SA or NT to send the correct answer to [comp@pharmacydaily.com.au](mailto:comp@pharmacydaily.com.au)

What is the key vitamin that all SkinB5 Acne Control System products contain?

Congratulations to yesterday's winner, Anna Michael from Epic Pharmacy Greenslopes.



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