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Finkel term extended

THE Australian Government has extended Dr Alan Finkel's term as Australia's chief scientist for a further two years to the end of 2020.

Minister for Industry, Science and Technology, Karen Andrews announced the extension and congratulated Finkel saying, "He has played a critical role and helped lead a number of major reviews into key policy areas."

\$6m for T1D kids

HEALTH Minister Greg Hunt has announced a new \$6 million schools program to support children living with diabetes.

The *Type 1 Diabetes Management in Schools* scheme will provide training and education for teachers on the condition, supporting about 6,000 afflicted children.

Secarna-Firebrand tie

BIOPHARMACEUTICAL company Secarna Pharmaceuticals has entered into a co-development agreement with Firebrand Therapeutics using their combined resources and specific expertise in pursuing "novel targets playing a key role in cancer metastasis".

Sigma profit slides 40.8%

SIGMA Healthcare this morning reported its results for the six months to 31 Jul, with statutory earnings before interest and tax of \$25.3m, down 40.8%.

CEO Mark Hooper cited "the twin impacts of ongoing PBS pricing reform and the continuation of manufacture exclusive direct distribution" which continued to weigh on the industry.

"Whilst we are encouraged by engagement with government, resolution and certainty is needed more than ever," he said.

Hooper also reiterated previous commentary about the termination of the company's agreement with the My Chemist/Chemist Warehouse (MC/CW) group, which will cease on 30 Jun 2019.

"We stand by our decision not to renew the MC/CW contract on the terms sought, as it was not in the best long-term interests of the company or its shareholders.

"This decision will free up over \$300 million in working capital and provides us with an important pivot point to re-shape and grow the Sigma business," he said.

Sigma continues to invest in programs and support structures to

enhance the capability of its more than 600 pharmacy brand members across the country, Hooper added.

"Our own brands are performing well in what is a challenging retail environment," he said, with Amcal growing sales by almost 2%, Guardian over 5% and DDS almost 3% - in contrast to an overall contraction in the pharmacy market.

"While the exit of MC/CW will of course impact the business, we are confident that we have the pipeline to grow organically across retail, pharmacy, hospital pharmacy, 3PL and through services such as MPS," the Sigma ceo concluded.

Women's Health Week

THIS week is Women's Health Week with the theme centred around "turning up the volume on women's health by giving a voice to the 'silent' topics and bringing them out into the open", said Jean Hailes for Women's Health.

The two biggest barriers to women not maintaining a healthy lifestyle were identified as a 'lack of time' and 'health not being a priority', with the campaign aiming to encourage women to start putting their own health first.

There are over 2,000 women's health events being held across Australia this week - more info at womenshealthweek.com.au.

Top Tassie pharmacy assistants

PHARMACY assistant Amy Peatling (pictured top) from Geeveston Pharmacy has been chosen to represent Tasmania at the National Finals of the 2018 Pharmacy Guild of Australia/ Maxigesic Pharmacy Assistant of the Year Award (PATY).

Pharmacy Guild of Australia training manager and national PATY judge Deborah Scholz said judges picked Amy from 13 other state finalists at the Tasmania workshop yesterday where each participant demonstrated their pharmacy knowledge and showcased their skills in customer



service and leadership. Peatling will represent Tasmania at the National Finals to be held at the 2018 Pharmacy Assistant National Conference on 26 Oct at the Gold Coast.

The national winner will take home over \$10,000 in cash, prizes and

rewards. Rebekah Fleming (pictured below) from Riverside Capital Chemist was also named as the Tasmanian winner of the Glucojel Super Star Award.

Fleming will be in the running for the Glucojel Super Star National title, also awarded at the 2018 Pharmacy Assistant National Conference.

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Chemists Own launch



CHEMISTS' Own this week announced the launch of its own brand of the NSAID ibuprofen. Chemists' Own Ibuprofen Sodium Dihydrate 256 is a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medicine that offers effective temporary relief from the pain and inflammation associated with a wide range of conditions including colds and flu. Ibuprofen sodium dihydrate is a salt form of ibuprofen that dissolves faster than standard ibuprofen, Chemists' Own says. The pack as pictured, contains 24 tablets and retails at \$5.99; more info via 1300 9 ARROW (27769).

Paid pain MedsCheck trial

THE Health Department is calling for expressions of interest from pharmacies wishing to take part in the \$20 million Chronic Pain MedsCheck Trial, announced earlier this year by Health Minister Greg Hunt (*PD* 29 Jan 2018).

The program is being funded under the Sixth Community Pharmacy Agreement Pharmacy Trial Program, with the objective of evaluating the efficiency of the Chronic Pain MedsCheck service.

Interventions from community pharmacy will include supported self-management through pharmacist advice of patients taking medication who are dealing with chronic pain for more than three months; pharmacy-based evaluation of patients' medicine; provision of an action plan incorporating education, self-management and referral to other health professionals where additional support is required; and

a three month follow-up after the initial service.

If a pharmacy agrees to take part, all pharmacists participating in the trial are obliged to complete free CPD accredited online training modules.

Around 40 patients meeting the trial criteria will be recruited by each pharmacy through until 01 Jun 2019, including patients living with ongoing chronic pain for three or more months who may be experiencing self-management problems or pain medication dependency.

Participating pharmacies will receive \$100 for a 45-minute consultation with patients who have chronic pain, and a further \$33 for a three month follow-up telephone consultation.

Pharmacies will also be funded to invest time submitting evaluation data to HealthConsult, a private firm contracted to review results.

Expressions of interest are open until 17 Sep at 6cpa.com.au.

Doctor groups are describing the concept as a "slap in the face for general practitioners".

Statins in the elderly?

A NEW European study has challenged the widespread use of statins in healthy older people.

Researchers said that any protective effect was limited to those with type 2 diabetes aged between 75 and 84 years.

The work, led by the University Institute for Primary Care Research Jordi Gol (IDIAPJGol) and Girona Biomedical Research Institute (IDIBGI), was published in the *BMJ*.

The conclusions were based on observation and association, "so no firm conclusions can be drawn about cause and effect," the authors said - **CLICK HERE** to access.

Pharmacy flu vax success this year

THE latest national influenza data reflects the major impact arising from the committed effort the community pharmacy sector has put into raising vaccination rates across Australia.

Health Minister Greg Hunt noted that to this point in 2017 there were 143,000 reportable cases of flu while as of 28 Aug this year, the figure was just 25,000.

At the same point in 2017, 610 people were reported as having lost their lives to flu, while the comparable figure this year was 38.

"That is an extraordinary achievement which is in part due to the nature of this year's virus, in part due to the strength and the targeted nature of the vaccines that are available, but also due to the dramatically higher level of vaccination across the community," the minister said.

"I want to acknowledge the role of community pharmacists across Australia who in collaboration with the broader primary healthcare team have provided record levels of flu vaccinations in 2018 which to date has resulted in significantly lower influenza notifications and deaths compared to 2017," Minister Hunt concluded.

Drug & alcohol meet

THE Fifth National Indigenous Drug and Alcohol Conference will take place at the Adelaide Convention Centre on 06-07 Nov.

The theme, 'Responding to Complexity', acknowledges the range of issues confronting indigenous populations that accompany harmful alcohol and other drug use, seeking to explore interventions and supports required to address the problem.

See nidaconference.com.au.

Tone down turf-war words

PHARMACY Guild of Australia executive director David Quilty has called for a moderation of language around pharmacists "expanding" their services, or "enhancing" their scope of practice.

Writing in his regular *Forefront* editorial yesterday, Quilty argued that terminology that suggests intrusion into another health practitioner's area of expertise is inflammatory.

"Maybe this inter-professional friction could be avoided by some more accurate messaging: pharmacists want to perform to their "full" scope of practice – maximising the benefits for patients by using their expertise in medicines which is already acknowledged by regulatory authorities, albeit with some variations across States and Territories," Quilty said.

"This notion is supported by a recent article in the *Canadian Pharmacists Journal* which called on the profession to realign the use of terms such as 'expanded scope of practice' in advocating for a greater

role for pharmacists in health care."

The article supports the use of the term "full scope of practice" to ensure pharmacists can fully utilise their skills and knowledge, without trespassing on other practitioners' hallowed ground.

Quilty concluded that "the greater utilisation of pharmacists will greatly benefit patients; will be within existing limits of pharmacists' expertise; regulated by a national practice board; is already in place in many comparable countries; will always be conducted collaboratively with doctors and other health professionals; will save money in the health system; and relieve some of the stress on GP surgeries and emergency departments."



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Dispensary Corner

WHEN dentists tell you that you should look after your teeth, perhaps the advice should be broadened to include you keep track of them too?

Workers excavating an underground train station in Melbourne have recently uncovered a gruesome stockpile of human teeth - most of them riddled with enormous cavities.

Historians have linked the curious choppers to a dentist who worked in the area during the early 20th century, however despite curiosity about why he was storing so many discarded teeth, it remains a mystery.

Perhaps we will just have to grin and bear never finding the truth?



STAYING with the theme of bizarre dental practices, and it's hard to go past a woman who pretended to be a qualified dentist for seven years before finally being arrested.

Krista Szewczyk from Atlanta in the United States donned a white coat and scraped, drilled, and pulled teeth for years, in addition to applying braces and prescribing dangerous drugs before finally being exposed as a fake.

One of her patients was forced to have emergency surgery on a large and painful ulcer that had developed on his neck following a visit to her practice - as if seeing the dentist wasn't scary enough!

FIP harm reduction call

GOVERNMENTS need to work more with pharmacists in providing harm reduction services, fully involving them in the development of any policies regarding medical or recreational cannabis, the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) has said in a new Statement of Policy released at its Glasgow conference this week.

"This statement is extremely timely, given the escalating number of unnecessary deaths caused by the non-medical use of opioids and other drugs, and given the increasing discussions on cannabis policies around the world," said Andy Gray, vice president, FIP.

"The profession - pharmacists and their national organisations - needs to actively engage with governments and policymakers as these very fluid situations evolve.

"This is the key message of the statement," Gray added.

This new FIP Statement of Policy follows the publication of a report in Nov 2017 which described pharmacy services around the

world that served to reduce harm from drugs of abuse.

The specifications made in the FIP report for what a comprehensive harm reduction service should include (for example, the supply of naloxone) have been affirmed by the FIP Council through their inclusion in the policy statement.

This FIP Council comprised representatives of 140 national pharmacy organisations across the globe.

"There is good evidence for involving pharmacists, and community pharmacies in particular, in a wide range of harm reduction activities.

"And, with regards to the supply of cannabis for medical purposes, the expertise of pharmacists must be utilised," Gray said.

The question of pharmacies supplying recreational cannabis was also discussed along with accompanying concerns around ethical obligations of pharmacists in the community.

CLICK HERE for the statement.

Travel Specials

WELCOME to *Pharmacy Daily's* travel feature. Each week we highlight a couple of great travel deals for the pharmacy industry, brought to you by *Cruise Weekly*.

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