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## GPs united against expanding scope

**MEDICAL** groups have united to condemn moves by the Pharmacy Guild of Australia to ensure pharmacists practice their full scope, as a profit-driven raid.

United General Practice Australia (UGPA), which includes the Australian Medical Association (AMA), Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine, GP Registrars Australia, GP Supervisors Australia and the Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA), accused the Guild of "attempts to bully governments into allowing pharmacists take over the work of doctors".

Led by AMA President, Dr Tony Bartone, the UGPA said its mission was to convince governments to resist the Guild's efforts to "undermine and weaken quality primary care in Australia", following the publication of the Guild's

*Community Pharmacies: Part of the Solution* policy paper (PD 14 Aug).

"The Guild should focus on advocating for its members and for local community pharmacists, not engaging in petty turf wars to increase profits for its pharmacy owner members," Bartone said.

"This proposal by the Pharmacy Guild flies in the face of the safety standards, even as set out in their own guidelines, in relation to the separation of prescribing and dispensing."

RDAA President, Dr Adam Coltzau, accused the Guild of making "dishonest claims" about the lack of GP services in rural Australia.

"There are very few rural towns that have a pharmacy and no doctor," he said.

"We understand that running a profitable business in a rural town can be more challenging than in the



city, but expanding the pharmacist role into clinical areas in which they aren't safe to operate is no way to address it.

"It just puts patients at risk".

A Guild spokesperson dismissed the UGPA's comments as an effort to prevent pharmacists working to their full scope.

"The only thing new about this new statement from the doctor groups is the acronym – UGPA – and we have to wonder if the sector really needed a new acronym," the spokesperson said.

"As usual, the doctor groups are disrespecting the skills, training and legitimate aspirations of pharmacists, and ignoring the full use of the scope of practice of pharmacists in other comparable countries."

## PSA shows leadership on meds safety

**THE** Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) is hoping to drive improvements to medicines labelling and counselling after a series of meetings.

PSA President, Dr Chris Freeman, said the Society convened a number of meetings with key stakeholders, focused on reviewing cautionary advisory labels and the associated advice, to address concerns about antimicrobial resistance and opioid-related self-harm.

Freeman noted that the PSA



*Pharmacists in 2023* report highlighted the benefits of embedding pharmacists within healthcare teams and advancing pharmacist stewardship of medicine management to improve outcomes at transition of care.

## Today's issue of PD

*Pharmacy Daily* today has two pages of news plus a full page from **Flo**.

## Vaping death

A US man is believed to be the first to be the person to die from lung disease contracted through vaping, with more than 193 people developing illnesses linked to e-smoking.



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## Dispensary Corner

**ENERGY** drinks make a lot of claims which most people simply dismiss as advertising puffery.

However, Red Bull's well-known tag-line "Red Bull Gives You Wings" has gotten the Austrian beverage maker into trouble in Canada, where a class action lawsuit is forcing the company to recompense people who apparently actually thought chugging a tin of the drink would "give them wings".

Red Bull has agreed to pay a whopping \$850,000 in restitution to settle the case, potentially awarding \$10 each to consumers who purchased the drink between 01 Jan 2007 and 23 Jul 2019.

Red Bull said it had agreed to finalise the case to avoid the distraction of litigation, adding its marketing had always been "witty, truthful and accurate".

**SPANISH** police have confirmed the distribution of almost 200 "clothing robbery kits" to hapless nudists whose clothes were stolen while they let it all hang out on the beach.

The Barcelona initiative follows a spate of incidents where people returned from a dip in the ocean only to find their outfits have been nicked.

The special kits include a T-shirt bearing the city council logo, along with a pair of shorts, thongs and a metro ticket.

However, unfortunately no suntan lotion is included, leading to concerns some lily-white Europeans may end up being lobster-red.

## Pharmacist's comeback

**CANCELLED** registrant, Marianne Girgis, has been given the green light to return to the profession by the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal, subject to a number of conditions, which will be attached to her registration for a minimum of 12 months.

Girgis, previously known by her maiden name, Tanios (*PD* 26 Jun 2017), had her pharmacy registration cancelled in Jun 2017 after she was found to have been dispensing medicines to a relative and herself without prescriptions between Oct 2013 and Aug 2014.

The Tribunal noted that Girgis had created false entries into the pharmacy's dispensing system to conceal her inappropriate dispensing.

Girgis self-medicated with a combination of duromine, diazepam and modavigil, which the Tribunal were told could impede her ability to function in a professional and responsible manner.

Shortly before she started self-medicating, Girgis had been diagnosed as suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, relating to repeated incidents of domestic violence at the hands of her father.

She had also been hospitalised with complications stemming from Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome in Sep 2013, and had been working an average of 12-hours a day six-days a week at the time she started to abuse prescription medications.

In Aug 2014, she was dismissed over the misappropriation of medicines, after which she found work in a rural pharmacy for 10 months, before gaining employment at a pharmacy near Sydney, in 2016.

Girgis started working at a pharmacy co-owned by her husband and brother-in-law in Aug 2016, where she worked until her registration was cancelled, during which time there were no reports of unsatisfactory conduct.

In 2018 she completed a Pharmaceutical Society of Australia Ethics and Dispensing in Pharmacy Practice course.

The Tribunal granted her permission to reapply for registration, on the condition she nominate a professional mentor approved by the Pharmacy Council of NSW for at least 12 months, inform the Council of where she is working and not work as a pharmacist in charge for at least 12 months.

## Clarification

**YESTERDAY'S** Weekly Comment was from Prof Simon Bell, from Monash's Centre for Medicine Use and Safety.

## Guild Update

### Rural health a priority

**THE** Pharmacy Guild has urged the National Rural Health Commissioner to consider priority areas relating to health services in rural areas.

Responding to the discussion paper on Rural Allied Health Quality, Access and Distribution, the Guild stressed that workforce issues being experienced by all health professionals working in rural and remote Australia need to be addressed, not just the medical and nursing professions which have long been the focus.

"There are approximately 307 towns in PHARIA 4-6 (moderately accessible, remote, very remote) that have only one pharmacy, and in many cases, the pharmacist is the only health professional in the town, the Guild said.

It demonstrates that if rural and remote community pharmacies cannot recruit or retain staff, many Australians will no longer have access to medicines and primary care services.

The response also advocates pharmacists being allowed to work to their full scope of practice to fill service gaps in rural and remote areas.



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