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Pharmacy Daily today has two pages of news including our weekly Events Calendar.



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A solution in search of a problem?

PROPOSED legislation aimed at protecting religious freedoms are “a perceived solution in search of a problem”, in the eyes of Pharmacy Guild of Australia Victorian Branch President, Anthony Tassone.

Responding to an article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* claiming pharmacists would be able to refuse to dispense contraceptives under the Federal Government’s proposed Religious Discrimination Bill, Tassone said he was unsure what would change for pharmacists under the legislation.

“It is unclear what issue the Religious Discrimination Bill will help resolve beyond the already long standing professional expectations of pharmacists,” he said.

“That is, if they have a conscientious objection to provide a treatment for a patient on faith or religious grounds they are obligated to refer the patient and help

facilitate access of that treatment from another provider.

“Patients have a right to access treatments and care that have been recommended for them in their best interests - and what we don’t want to see are unintended consequences that compromises that.”

In response to criticism from social media users of pharmacists being entitled to refuse to dispense on religious grounds under the Bill, Tassone said “our members haven’t called it, we have never been asked for these types of legislative amendments”.

Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) National President, Dr Chris Freeman, also questioned how legislation would impact the healthcare role of pharmacists.

“As stated in the Pharmacy Board of Australia’s Code of Conduct, practitioner decisions about access to care need to be free from bias



and discrimination,” he said.

“Good practice by pharmacists also involves:

- being aware of a pharmacist’s right to not provide or participate directly in treatments to which the pharmacist objects conscientiously, informing patients or clients, and
- not allowing moral or religious views to deny patients or clients access to healthcare, recognising that pharmacists are free to decline to provide or participate in that care personally.”

API dividend up

AUSTRALIAN

Pharmaceutical Industries Limited (API) shareholders will receive fully franked dividend of 7.75 cents per share, up from 7.5 cents in 2018.

In a letter to shareholders published on the Australian Securities Exchange (ASX), API said the dividend payout ratio was 70% reflecting earnings per share of 11.2 cents.



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Dispensary Corner

THERE are many who criticise Australia's Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS), noting some medications are cheaper elsewhere.

However, there's a lot to be grateful for, with a recent study in the US revealing Americans are turning to fish antibiotics to avoid the prohibitive costs to seeking medical care.

The Guardian reported that researchers analysed reviews for medications usually marketed for fish sold online, and found a small, but significant percentage of reviews suggested they had been consumed by people.

University of South Carolina College of Pharmacy Director of Residency and lead author of the study, Brandon Bookstaver, described the use of medications intended for animals by humans as "alarming".

"Self-medication and the availability of antibiotics without healthcare oversight might contribute to increasing antimicrobial resistance and delayed appropriate treatment," he said.

"We were particularly concerned that the high volume of positive feedback on the comments about human use might encourage others to attempt to use these drugs."

While a proportion of comments suggesting human use of fish antibiotics is modest, they attracted nine times more attention through 'likes' and 'dislikes'.

It all seems a bit fishy.

Tackling mental health

WITH close to half of Australians expected to experience a mental illness at some stage of their life, research conducted by Griffith University found consumers believe community pharmacists are well placed to provide mental health promotion.

The research explored consumer opinions of mental health promotion in the community pharmacy setting, with more than 85% of respondents saying the pharmacy was a suitable environment.

More than half of respondents believed that both pharmacists and pharmacy support staff were well placed to provide mental health promotion.

"Regular pharmacist-consumer contact (51.2%) and the potential to build relationships (48.4%) were considered key facilitators for pharmacy-based mental health promotion," the authors said.

However, close to 70% of respondents flagged concerns over lack of privacy in the pharmacy setting as a barrier to mental health promotion.

"Participants expressed a preference for pamphlets on the pharmacy counter to promote



mental health and wellbeing," the authors said.

"This may be related to the potential anonymity of taking a leaflet to read at home, as pharmacy related stigma has been an issue when seeking mental health support."

"Community pharmacy staff should consider connecting with established organisations/campaigns that are acceptable to consumers.

"The impact that Beyondblue has had in increasing the public's awareness of depression and positive outcomes from the R U OK? campaign further supports their promotion in pharmacy settings."

The study has been published in *Health Promotion Journal of Australia*.

Pharmacist faces child sex charges

NSW-BASED pharmacist is facing multiple charges relating to alleged child sex offences.

Originally charged in May, three fresh charges have been brought against, Luigi Sbirziola, including two counts of paying a child aged between 14 and 18 for sex, and a charge of aggravated sexual intercourse with a child aged 14 to 16, *The Daily Telegraph* reported.

The alleged incidents were reported to have happened between Dec 2018 and Feb.

Sbirziola has yet to enter a plea in relation to all the charges.

Events Calendar

WELCOME to *Pharmacy Daily's* events calendar, opportunities to earn CPE and CPD points.

If you have an upcoming event you'd like us to feature, email info@pharmacydaily.com.au.

23 - 29 Jan: NAPSA Congress; University of Newcastle; for more info visit: www.napsa.org.au

6 - 8 Mar: NSW/ACT Annual Therapeutic Update 2020; Crowne Plaza Terrigal; Save the date - registrations open 2 Dec: www.psa.org.au

19 - 22 Mar: APP 2020; Gold Coast Convention & Exhibition Centre; Early bird registrations now open: www.appconference.com



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