



Scrap barriers to pharmacist flu vax

PHARMACISTS should be allowed to administer influenza vaccinations to children from as young as six months of age, a US paediatrician believes.

Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health Clinical Professor, Health Policy, Management and Paediatrics, Dr Irwin Redlener, told *Pharmacy Daily* he supported measures that would "expand access to flu vaccines".

In an article by *CNN Health* published earlier this week, which noted 40% of US children were not vaccinated against the flu, with more than 140 children dying in the US last year, Redlener said, "parents should have no barriers to getting a flu shot" for their child.

"There is really no reason why a licensed pharmacist should be prohibited from administering vaccines," he said.

However, he added that children should be "at least six months of age", have no history of allergic reaction to the vaccine or any component thereof, show no evidence of serious infection or significant fever at the time of vaccination, or have a history of immune deficiency.

"Otherwise, we should be very thankful that pharmacists have the skills and willingness to help keep all of us protected from influenza," he said.

While Redlener described lowering age-limits on pharmacist administration of flu vaccines as a "no brainer", Royal Australian College of General Practice (RACGP) President, Dr Harry Nespolon, expressed concerns about potential adverse events.

"Pharmacists do not have the medical training required to safely deliver vaccinations and respond to associated risks that can occasionally occur, particularly for children as young as six months," he said.

"I fear it will take a child as young as six months suffering anaphylaxis or a serious seizure caused by a high fever in a public retail environment to make people realise this could cost lives."

Currently age restrictions on pharmacist administration of flu vaccinations in Australia vary between states and territories, with Victoria, Western Australia and Tasmania, allowing pharmacists to immunise patients aged 10 years and older, while the South



Australian Government is reviewing its regulations with plans to change the age limit to 10 under consideration.

Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) National President, Dr Chris Freeman, voiced his support for reducing the minimum age for pharmacist administration of flu vaccination to 10 across all states and territories.

"The jurisdiction variances make it confusing for consumers and prevent pharmacists from providing life-saving vaccines to persons at risk," he said.

"[However] we don't believe that at this point in time there is a need to provide vaccinations to children below the age of 10 years."

Today's issue of *PD*

Pharmacy Daily today has two pages of news.

Dual dispensing threatens states

PHARMACY owners should take their concerns about the potential "catastrophic consequences" of the proposed introduction of dual dispensing, to their state or territory representatives, Independent Pharmacies of Australia founder, Steve Flavel believes.

"With the State Government funded hospital system set to cop the cost of increased hospitalisation as a result of dual dispensing it's time we take the battle to our state representatives for assistance and support," he said.

"Once made aware, wouldn't it be interesting if the State Governments feel the same as us and share our concerns?"

Flavel, said pharmacy owners should highlight the potential hospitalisations stemming from poor medication use as a result of dual dispensing.

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Dispensary Corner

INDONESIAN Health Minister, Terawan Agus Putranto, is urging his colleagues in the Ministry of Tourism, to cash in on some of the country's alternative medicine practices, including penis enlargement massages, to lure visitors.

Putranto described the unique massage treatment as a national asset, claiming it had the potential to fuel a health tourism industry.

"We must popularise the idea of traditional medicine for tourism," he said.

"We have an incredible herbal medicine industry that no one knows about outside Indonesia.

"If we package it correctly, foreigners will be interested."

Putranto said treatments such as Mak Erot (penis enlargement massage), Tongkat Ali (a leaf that is believed to bolster athletic performance) and Purwaceng (a substance that boasts similar effects to sildenafil), could all be exploitable services.

The Health Minister added that seeming cure-all "kerok" could also attract visitors.

Kerok involves rubbing a coin against a patient's skin with menthol oil, which Patranto said visitors would find "intriguing".

Fears over meds safety

FEDERAL MP, Julian Hill, has taken aim at the Government over its lack of "specific commitments" on medicines safety, close to six months after Health Minister, Greg Hunt, announced it would be a National Health Priority Area.

Speaking in the House of Representatives on Wed, Hill highlighted "flaws in our medicine safety system" stemming from doctors' "failure to inform and warn patients" of potential risks when prescribing off-label medicines.

"The Health Minister declared in July this year that medicine safety is a national health priority," he said.

"But it's almost six months on and there's no evidence that the Government has a plan or any specifics beyond the rhetoric.

"It looks as if the Minister needed an announcement to go to the conference so they dreamt this up."

Hill told the House that his daughter had been prescribed a medication without being told it was not approved by the TGA for the indication it was prescribed for, and suffered blood clots as a result.

"In Australia, the pharmacist does not know if a prescription is off label, so the pharmacists has no ability to warn or provide information about possible side-effects and the heightened risk that we all know will come," he said.

"I believe we should look at a system whereby pharmacists can simply be notified by a tick box from the doctor if a prescription is being given for a drug [off-label]."

Mental health

STUDENTS from Griffith University and the University of South Australia are conducting a survey to explore the role of community pharmacists in mental health promotion.

CLICK HERE to share your views on mental health promotion in pharmacy.



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: NAPSAC 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

Win with freezeframe

This week Pharmacy Daily and freezeframe are giving readers the chance to win NEW WRINKLE BLOCK valued at \$69.

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