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Workforce crisis will shut pharmacies

COMMUNITY pharmacies will be forced to close if the current workforce crisis is not addressed, a specialist recruitment expert believes.

In a blog posted on Sun, LocumCo founder, Sue Muller, flagged concerns about the future of the sector, with recruitment issues traditionally only faced by rural pharmacies spreading into metropolitan areas.

Muller said she spent her Sun afternoon "attempting to fill half a dozen locums" for Mon, adding that "a day does not go past when we do not have calls for at [least] two locums" to cover for staff shortages.

"It was common knowledge that rural pharmacies struggled to recruit permanent pharmacists but this has now spread to the metro areas as well," she said.

"If this continues, more pharmacies will be closing."

A spokesperson from the Pharmacy Guild of Australia described Muller's depiction of the sector as "bleak", adding "many pharmacy owners in parts of Australia will identify with the recruitment challenges referred to in the blog".

"That's why it is important to gather up-to-date data on pharmacy workforce issues and build the case for more support for the pharmacy workforce, particularly in rural and regional areas," the spokesperson said.

Muller told **Pharmacy Daily** that employee pharmacist pay was a key

challenge, noting that low pay was fuelling a "mass exodus from the profession".

"Remuneration is the main issue," she said.

"[The] Award rate will have to increase for anyone to feel motivated to stay in the profession."

Raven's Recruitment Operations Manager, David Shaw, described the current workforce shortages as being at "a record high", adding that pay was a significant factor.

"Whilst we have seen an overall increase in the salaries pharmacy employers have been offering this year, many pharmacists have felt that the increases are too low for the responsibilities and workload the role entails and this has been most evident in our metro locations," he said.

Both Shaw and Muller said community pharmacy was no longer the first choice career path for graduates.

"More and more they want to



practice in the hospital pharmacy space, or are moving on to another degree or heading towards nontraditional industries of practice for pharmacists," Shaw said.

"We find there are still many passionate pharmacy students looking forward to providing outstanding patient care in community pharmacies, including in rural areas where there has been a combined push in the industry from stakeholders to encourage rural practice; but the ratio of their intentions of what the pharmacy student will do with their degree is definitely changing."

MHR privacy training for pharmacists

WITH close to 5,000 pharmacies registered to access the My Health Record (MHR), two specialist training modules have been developed to assist pharmacists using the record.

Guild Learning and Development has partnered with the Australian Digital Health Agency to deliver the *My Health Record: Professional, practice and privacy issues for community*

pharmacy.

The CPD accredited program provides details of pharmacists' confidentiality and data security obligations, and gives them the skills to effectively access and manage information stored on the MHR system and dispensary computers.

To enrol in the program visit guilded.guild.org.au.

Call 1800 049 056 for more info.

Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today has two pages of news plus a full page from **Pharmacy Assistant National Conference**.

AFL tipster wins

CONGRATULATIONS to the **Pharmacy Daily** top tipper of the AFL season, **Chris Hickey** from Guild Group, who has won a \$1,000 gift card from Guild Digital - see **page 2**.

And a hearty thanks to everyone who has participated in this year's AFL tipping competition - we will be returning in 2020.

To view the full ladder, see pharmacydaily.com.au.

New PBS listings

HEALTH Minister Greg Hunt has announced the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) listing of medicines to treat lung cancer, lymphoblastic acute leukaemia and severe nausea associated with chemotherapy, effective today.

Tecentriq (atezolizumab), Avastin (bevacizumab), Besponsa (inotuzumab ozogamicin) and Blinicyto (blinatumomab) were named along with cuts to pregabalin and some ezetimibe products.

The latest round of PBS Price Disclosure cuts has also been confirmed.

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Dispensary Corner

A NEW study in Scotland has shown significant community health benefits can be achieved by making alcohol more expensive.

Bad news for alcoholics, the report in the *British Medical Journal* followed the introduction of "minimum pricing" in the country, basing the cost of drinks on their alcohol content.

Since May 2018 the price of booze in Scotland has had to be at least 50p per unit, with the study correlating the levels of drinking before and after the measure debuted.

The researchers found the amount purchased per person per week fell by 1.2 units - or the equivalent of one measure of spirits or about 500ml of beer.

The figures were based on the purchasing habits of 60,000 households between 2015 and 2018, and showed the impact of the minimum alcohol price was about twice as big as originally forecast.

AMERICAN health insurer UnitedHealthcare has clearly had some sort of systems glitch after sending a customer more than 500 letters in a week.

According to *WCSH-TV* in Maine, the letters were addressed to a 19-year-old man in the town of Wyndham, relating to claims which date back to 2016.

The recipient's mother said at first she thought it was a joke - and was particularly amused by a line at the end of each letter saying "Go Paperless!".

Persecuted pharmacist loses asylum claim

AN EGYPTIAN pharmacist who claimed his pharmacy had been attacked due to his political activism has had a bid to remain in Australia dismissed.

The pharmacist who arrived in Australia on 14 Apr 2014, made an application for a protection visa on 30 Jun 2014, reporting that his involvement with the Freedom and Justice Party, and in protest activity, had led to persecution on his livelihood.

On 09 Mar 2015 a delegate of the Minister refused the application, and the following month the pharmacist requested a review of the decision, with an initial appeal hearing in 02 Mar 2017, which was subsequently cancelled, with a second hearing held on 03 Apr 2017.

As part of his "Response to hearing invitation -MR Division" form, the pharmacist indicated that he wished the Administrative Appeals Tribunal to take oral evidence from his then house mate, who also submitted a written character reference.

On the day of the hearing the presiding Tribunal member asked



to interview the pharmacist on his own, with his friend asked to leave the hearing room.

During the interview the pharmacist was asked about an attack on his shop prior to leaving Egypt, with the pharmacist struggling to provide dates, when asked, leading to the appeal being dismissed.

The pharmacist then appealed to the Federal Court of Australia, against the ruling claiming his friend was a support person who should not have been excluded from the hearing.

The Federal Court ruled that the Tribunal did not exercise its powers inappropriately, and that "the appeal must be dismissed".

AFL

AFL OVERALL TOP TIPPER

Congratulations

CHRIS HICKEY

from Guild Group

Pharmacy Daily AFL tipping competition is sponsored by GuildDigital, with the top tipper for the season winning a \$1,000 gift card.

NSW permit: TFS/19/31793 / ACT permit: TP 19/02044

VPA opportunity

VICTORIAN Minister for Health, Jenny Mikakos, invites registered pharmacists to apply for a position on the Victorian Pharmacy Authority (VPA) - pharmacy.vic.gov.au.

Guild Update

Pharmacy approval process

A REMINDER to be aware of the significant change to the pharmacy approval process to take place from 09 Oct this year.

From that date, all applications for approval to supply pharmaceutical benefits will be lodged online.

Introduction of the PBS Approved Suppliers Portal on 09 Oct will bring a number of changes to the process for lodging applications.

This big change affects you if you are planning to:

- Establish a new pharmacy;
- Relocate a pharmacy (with or without change of ownership);
- Change ownership of an approved pharmacy (not involving relocation).

From 09 Oct 2019 - Wednesday week - the above application types must be completed and lodged via the PBS Approved Suppliers Portal. Applications will not be accepted if they are lodged outside of the Portal unless prior arrangements have been made with the Department of Health.



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