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## Codeine move fails to tackle addiction

**UPSCHEDULING** low-dose codeine products to prescription-only is not tackling the issue of addiction, Pharmacy Guild of Australia NSW Branch President, David Heffernan (**pictured**), says.

Responding to a study by researchers from the University of Sydney, which reported a 50% decline in the monthly rate of codeine-related poisoning calls NSW Poisons Information Centre (PIC) (**PD** yesterday) since the rescheduling, Heffernan said it was no surprise that there had been a decline, but refuted claims there had been no increase in use of high strength codeine.

"What we do know is that high dose codeine use has gone up," the NSW Guild President said.

Heffernan said prescribing for high strength formulations had climbed by 13%, reversing a previous downward trend in the use of prescription codeine.

"That's hard data," he said.

"The study hasn't shown anything. If you up-schedule [a product] sales will go down; you don't need an academic to tell you that, but there's still an issue with pain treatment.

"Real-time prescription monitoring is essential, because the opioid problem is rising - addiction is the issue and upscheduling did nothing to tackle it."

Australian Medical Association (AMA) Council of General Practice Chair, Dr Richard Kidd, also backed real-time monitoring during an interview with *ABC News*.

"Real-time prescription monitoring is absolutely needed," he said.

"Sadly there are still doctor-shoppers who, because of their addictions, are going from doctor to doctor and getting prescriptions - quite often jumping back and forth across state borders, and we're still seeing deaths from that kind of behaviour.



"We know from where real-time prescription monitoring has been in place, like it was in Tasmania for some time, [there has been a] dramatic reduction in deaths... these people are people who've got genuine medical problems and need medical help."

Real-time monitoring has been rolled out in Victoria, Tasmania and the ACT, with plans announced for systems to be introduced in Queensland and South Australia.

### Today's issue of *PD*

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

### MedAdvisor halts trading

**ASX-LISTED** digital medicines management company MedAdvisor has had its shares suspended from trading on the Australian Securities Exchange, pending the release of an announcement prior to the opening of trade next week.

### Bod Rx boom

**LISTED** medicinal cannabis company Bod Australia has advised in an ASX announcement that it dispensed 549 MediCabilis prescriptions in Sep this year, representing a 224% increase on Jul (169) and a 67% increase on Aug (329).

This brings the total prescriptions dispensed for this year to 1,158.

There has been a strong repeat customer trend underpinning the growth, the company said, and the product is now being used to treat 17 different conditions including chronic pain, post traumatic stress disorder, epilepsy, anxiety, dementia, Parkinson's and other neurological conditions.

### Guild NSW corporate vax program

**THE** Pharmacy Guild of Australia NSW Branch has announced the roll-out of its new Corporate Vaccination Program to be available for the 2020 influenza season.

The program will allow organisations and businesses to register their employees and book a vaccination appointment at a participating pharmacy.

To become an accredited



vaccinating pharmacist, the NSW Branch offers blended training for all interested pharmacists.

See details at the Guild Clinical webpage [guild.org.au](http://guild.org.au) or call on 13 484 53.

### Gout Rx CVD alert

**THE** Therapeutic Goods Administration has issued a safety advisory alerting health professionals to an increased risk of death in patients with a history of major cardiovascular disease (CVD), taking Adenuric (febuxostat) tablets for their gout.

A boxed warning has been added to both the PI and CMI for febuxostat.



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## Dispensary Corner

**WITH** the northern hemisphere heading into the winter months, and Britain glaring into the uncertainty of life post-Brexit, one Bristol-based food critic is suggesting an alternative to pharmacy products to tackle colds and flus.

Reviewing Bristol Pho, a Vietnamese street food restaurant, the *Bristol Live* foodie compared the restaurant's flashing neon sign to a pharmacy's frontage, and that's not where the similarities begin and end.

"People may be stockpiling medicines for fear of what happens after October 31, but I just hope the owners of Pho have put into place plans for 24-7 production overdrive for their huge stock pots of 12-hour simmered broths," the culinary expert urged.

"If we are heading for the long, hard winter that's predicted, it's the least they can do to keep the nation in rude health.

"When you're feeling fragile and need something steady - usually after a heavy night - these bowls of joy are just the ticket.

"If I'm feeling snuffly and snotty, I go straight for the 'hot and spicy' bowls or the house specials, which are so persuasive and robust that they're more like a vigorous session with a hairy Turkish masseur the size of a Sumo wrestler.

"It can only be a matter of time before the house specials at Pho are available on the NHS."

## Hunt pushes biosimilars

**FEDERAL** Minister for Health, Greg Hunt, has urged Australia's health professionals to "embrace more innovative ways to support the appropriate uptake of biosimilar medicines".

He was giving the keynote address at a high-level forum for the health sector on Wed this week, hosted by GBMA Education, the educational arm of the Generic and Biosimilar Medicines Association (GBMA).

The event, at NSW Parliament House, was titled 'Your Patients Your Government Multidisciplinary Forum and Workshop'.

Medical specialists, GPs, community and hospital pharmacists, private and public hospitals, patient advocacy groups and Government representatives came together to explore key topics for biosimilar medicines and their role in supporting the future of sustainable healthcare in Australia.

The occasion was also streamed online nationally to the broader healthcare sector.

Hunt welcomed the forum, saying it was a "co-operative endeavour to deliver better health for all Australians."



"The Government is committed to working closely with the GBMA and the health care sector, to support a robust generic and biosimilar sector for the benefit of all Australians now and into the future," he said.

GBMA Education Chief Executive Officer, Marnie Peterson, supported Hunt's commitment, highlighting education as just one of the tools to drive biosimilar medicines uptake.

"We all have an important role to play in ensuring that biosimilar medicines deliver to their full potential, to support the sustainability of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme allowing all Australians greater, and more affordable, access to innovative medicines," Peterson said.

## FIP launches self-care policy

**GOVERNMENTS** and health insurers should include self-care as an important element of the care continuum and include its coverage as part of their health benefit offerings, the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) and the Global Self-Care Federation (GSCF) have said in a joint Statement of Policy issued yesterday.

The statement describes 14 responsibilities for pharmacists and 10 for manufacturers.

FIP CEO, Dr Catherine Duggan, said, "Pharmacists are key in ensuring the rational selection, the administration and the responsible use of self-care products.

"Effective care is augmented by a pharmacist's counselling, support and follow up of an individual to ensure safety and efficacy. We are pleased to work with the GSCF in the common goal of serving the public with quality products and care."

## D is for diabetes

**PATIENTS** given 5,000 IU of vitamin D3 daily showed 23% increased sensitivity to insulin over six months, compared to placebo, in a study published in the *European Journal of Endocrinology*.

Authors called for larger and longer randomised controlled trials to evaluate the findings.

**CLICK HERE** for access.



## 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](mailto:info@pharmacydaily.com.au).

**09 Oct:** 2019 Annual Conference & 20th Annual Industry Awards; Doltone House, Sydney; register here: [www.cmaustralia.org.au](http://www.cmaustralia.org.au)

**11 - 13 Oct:** Pharmacy Assistant National Conference; Sofitel Brisbane Central; for more info and to register see: [www.pharmacyassistants.com](http://www.pharmacyassistants.com)

**27 - 30 Oct:** Pharmacy Alliance Members' Forum; Pullman Cairns International; for details visit: [www.pharmacyalliance.com.au](http://www.pharmacyalliance.com.au)

**14 - 16 Nov:** SHPA Medicines Management 2019 (MM2019); GCCEC, Gold Coast; register now at: [www.mm2019shpa.com](http://www.mm2019shpa.com)

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