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Pharmacy solution to medical costs

EMPOWERING pharmacists to practice to their full scope would reduce patients' out-of-pocket costs, Pharmacy Guild of Australian Victorian Branch President, Anthony Tassone believes.

Concerns about rising medical expenses were flagged by *SBS's Insight* program on Tue night, and the *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's (AIHW) Health Expenditure Australia 2017-18 Report*, released yesterday.

SBS reported that Australian patients incur \$30 billion in out-of-pocket spending when accessing health services, more than twice the amount contributed by private health insurers, noting a study of 11 developed economies found Australians were the second most likely nationality to avoid accessing health care "because they can't afford it", after Americans.

Tassone said the AIHW report highlighted that patients often face non-subsidised costs when accessing GP services that pharmacists could assist with.

"In other countries, like the UK and Canada, pharmacists are playing a greater role in their health systems helping reduce the cost for patients by up to \$1 billion a year,"



he said.

"Giving pharmacists a greater role to treat common ailments, issue repeat prescriptions for stable and ongoing conditions, and administer more vaccinations, will provide better health outcomes and make accessing basic healthcare more affordable for Australian families."

Speaking from the audience of the *SBS Insight* program, one health economist noted that specialists were free to set their own charges above the Medicare rate, with non-hospital-related costs not always covered by private health insurance.

The economist added that there was no cap on the level of fees specialists can charge their patient, adding they were not regulated.

Pharmaceutical Society of Australia South Australia and Northern Territory Branch Vice President, Sam Keitaanpaa, took to Twitter after the show aired, noting the Australian Medical Association had published 26 articles critical of pharmacy over the last two years, compared to three pieces advocating against requiring specialist medical professionals from listing their fees.

"Time to shift focus?" he asked.

Today's issue of *PD*

Pharmacy Daily today has three pages of news plus a full page from *eze Allergy*.

Corum requests trading halt

AUSTRALIAN Securities Exchange (ASX) listed pharmacy software provider, Corum Group, requested a halt to trading yesterday.

The company sought approval from the ASX for the trading halt pending the release of an announcement in relation to a material capital raising, which will be delivered to the market by the commencement of trading on Fri 27 Sep.

The move follows Tue's announcement that Corum will issue 63.6 million to BMM Administration Group (*PD* yesterday), after the two companies signed a deal to develop a cloud-based pharmacy head office management platform.

The share issue would see BMM holding about 20% of Corum's total share capital.

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Pharmacists facing rising hostility

PHARMACISTS are facing increasing levels of aggression and rudeness from consumers, pharmacy indemnity insurer, Pharmaceutical Defence Limited (PDL), reports.

The pharmacist-owned company issued an alert to its members flagging reports that several pharmacists have contacted its support service seeking advice on how to handle rude and aggressive behaviour from consumers.

"Aggression towards pharmacists is sometimes used as a bullying tactic by an individual to get their own way in such matters as early supply of staged supply or the prompt dispensing of a prescription for a restricted drug that requires further checking with a prescriber," the PDL alert said.

"Rude and aggressive behaviour is also often displayed towards pharmacy staff who are asking the appropriate questions before providing an S2/S3 medication."

The alert noted that pharmacists were not the only people bearing the brunt of rising hostility.

"It is apparent from recent media, it is not only pharmacy

experiencing this unwarranted abuse, it is occurring in fast food outlets as well as other establishments serving the public," the company said.

In the alert, PDL urged pharmacy owners to establish procedures for managing these types of incidents, recommending that the pharmacist-in-charge should "step in to handle and diffuse the situation".

"The procedure could include immediately requesting a senior pharmacist to intercept with all other staff moving away from the space to minimise the focus, and avoid crowd gathering, which could inflame the situation," the PDL update advised.

"In dealing with a regular customer who is continually abusive and rude, this person should be privately spoken to.

"Such a customer should have explained to them what standard of behaviour is expected in the pharmacy and that future episodes of rudeness will result in this person being banned.

"It is possible that in enforcing a ban on a consumer, a complaint



may be made to a pharmacy regulator for denial of pharmacy service.

"However, providers of medical services such as doctors and pharmacists have a right to refuse to treat persons who have behaved inappropriately in the past."

New AusPARs

NEW Australian Public Assessment Reports (AusPARs) have been released for three products now listed on the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods.

The documents detail the approval processes for HIV oral therapy Biktarvy, (bictegravir/emtricitabine/tenofovir alafenamide) from Gilead Sciences, as well as the extension of indications for AstraZeneca's Tagrisso (osimertinib mesilate) for non-small cell lung cancer.

There is also a new AusPAR for Novartis Pharmaceuticals' Aimovig (erenumab), indicated for prophylaxis of migraine in adults and presented in a pre-filled syringe or pen.

CHP likes 'Australian made' move

CONSUMER Healthcare Products Australia (CHP) has welcomed the progress made by Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science, Karen Andrews, to ensure that Australian-based manufacturers of therapeutic goods can claim 'Australian made' for their products.

This week Andrews detailed an interim regulatory change which will provide the industry with the certainty required to continue its confident and substantial investment in Australian manufacturing, CHP said.



While acknowledging there is still significant work to be done, CHP Australia said it is optimistic that the implementation of necessary amendments to s255 of the Australia Consumer Law will, where possible, be expedited.

US doctors back OTC contraceptives

OBSTETRICIANS and gynecologists in the US are calling for hormonal contraceptives to be made available without prescription through pharmacies.

In a statement issued on Tue the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, described prescriptions as "an unnecessary obstacle for some women to get their preferred contraceptive method".

"Over-the-counter (OTC) hormonal birth control would be a step toward greater access to an essential component of women's healthcare and give adolescents and women more options to manage their reproductive health," a spokesperson said.

"Each woman should be able



to select the contraception that works best for her, including OTC hormonal contraceptives, a long-acting reversible contraceptive provided by her health care provider, or other methods."

Ohio-based specialist, Michelle Isley, said OTC access to contraceptives would lead to more consistent use.

"The need to consistently obtain a prescription, get a refill approval, or schedule an appointment can lead to inconsistent use of a preferred birth control method," she said.

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Dispensary Corner

PIZZA giant Domino's is offering someone the opportunity to take a not-so-healthy "dream job" as the organisation's Chief Garlic Bread Taste Tester.

The Brisbane-based role has been advertised on LinkedIn, saying the ideal candidate will have "never met a carb they didn't care for".

Applicants should "understand the perfect 'crunch to softness' ratio" and have at least five years' experience in garlic bread consumption.

They should also have "burned their fingers at least once not being able to wait for the garlic bread to cool down".

It's not exactly a full time role, with Domino's actually only employing the successful candidate for one day at \$30 per hour - but of course with a pizza lunch included.

THE romantics amongst us might say it is possible to die of a broken heart, but there may also be a physical manifestation which is apparently caused by eating too much wasabi.

BMJ Case Reports this month cites an incident where a woman in her late 60s attended a wedding where she ate a "large amount" of what she thought was avocado dip.

Unfortunately it turned out to be Japanese horseradish, and after feeling pressure in her chest an ECG revealed she was suffering from takotsubo cardiomyopathy, also known as "broken heart syndrome" which is normally triggered by extreme emotional stress.

VPA warning for owners

NEW pharmacy owners are being urged to review their store's compliance with legislation and guidelines.

The Victorian Pharmacy Authority (VPA) noted "it is not uncommon for serious deficiencies to be identified during pharmacy inspections that follow a change in ownership", in a circular released this week.

The VPA recommended that new owners should pay attention to pharmacy security, privacy arrangements, the management of Schedule 8 poisons, appropriate storage and display of other scheduled medicines, maintenance of cold chain, compliance with premises and equipment requirements for complex compounding, maintenance of current editions of mandatory references, and dose administration aid packing records.

"If you become the licensee of a pharmacy you then become responsible for ensuring the pharmacy is carried on in

accordance with legislation and good pharmacy practice," the Authority said.

"An inspection will be conducted following the change of ownership.

"If the inspection identifies areas of non-compliance you will be required to rectify the matters and serious non-compliance may result in a panel hearing."

The VPA added that based on statistics from recent inspections, inspectors are currently focusing on the adequacy of reference libraries, timely and accurate recording of transactions of S8 poisons, regular reconciliation of S8 medicine stocks and records, appropriate storage of S8 products, whether barcode scanning is undertaken routinely during dispensing, is the dispensary maintained as a private area dedicated to dispensing, and appropriate storage and display of S3 medicines.

The VPA highlighted the availability of its self-audit form as an aid to monitoring compliance - view it at pharmacy.vic.gov.au.

Win with AROMABABY

This week **Pharmacy Daily** & AROMABABY are giving away each day, a prize pack valued at \$39.95.

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older children, choose from a complete range of naturally soothing products to cleanse, moisturise, protect and pamper. Offering a variety of unscented options, AROMABABY prides itself on a long history of safety and efficacy as a pharmacy specialist brand.

For more info see www.aromababy.com. To win, be the first person from SA or NT to send the correct answer to comp@pharmacydaily.com.au

Congratulations to yesterday's winner, Lusi Sheehan.



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Travel Specials

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