

Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today has three pages of news, plus full pages from:

- Menarini
- MSC Signs

Pharmacy staff quarantined

STAFF at a pharmacy in the Riverlink Shopping Centre in Ipswich, Queensland, are being quarantined after an employee at the store tested positive for COVID-19.

Health authorities revealed 10 staff members have been placed in isolation after one of them tested positive on Sat, the *Brisbane Times* reported.

Queensland Health has said customers at the pharmacy are believed to be at low risk of infection, due to the hygiene and social distancing measures that have been in place in the store.

Evidence not emotion must guide us

HEALTH professionals must rely on scientific evidence to guide their approaches to tackling COVID-19, rather than emotion, former Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) CEO, Dr Shane Jackson, believes.

Responding to a seven page 'COVID-19 Pharmacologic Treatment' overview released by the Australian Medical Association (AMA) National Vice President, Dr Chris Zappala, which provided a review of available treatments, Jackson urged caution.

He noted the document did not mention prescribing restrictions, which the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) implemented to curb the off-label prescribing of hydroxychloroquine, by GPs (PD 09 Apr).

"I'm sure the document came from the right place," he said.

"Ideally the introduction would have specifically called out the TGA requirements around the prescribing of hydroxychloroquine.



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"This is not off-label prescribing as might be done for other treatment... what we actually saw because of the heightened anxiety around COVID-19 was that people weren't making the right decisions.

"Doctors were prescribing it for themselves as a 'just in case'... and what we don't need is to go back to where we were two weeks ago, with people thinking that's okay - it's not okay.

"We've just got to be a bit circumspect about the messages that we put out in public, especially

around treatments before we've got accurate and informed evidence about what we should do.

"We just need to be patient and let the science guide our decisions, not emotion, because there's a lot of emotion going around about COVID-19."

In a tweet, PSA SA/NT Branch Vice President, Sam Keitaanpaa, warned that over and self prescribing of medicines, including hydroxychloroquine, for COVID-19 could cause more problems than they solve.

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COVID claims pharmacy tech

PHARMACY staff in the British city of Chester are mourning the passing of pharmacy technician, Many Siddorn, after contracting COVID-19.

The 61-year-old had worked for the Swettenham Chemists group, in pharmacies across Chester, Wirral and North Wales.

Qld pharmacists to provide COVID vax

PHARMACISTS in Queensland will be on the frontline of vaccination efforts should a vaccine for COVID-19 be developed.

Queensland Health Minister, Steven Miles, announced pharmacist immunisers will be part of any COVID-19 vaccination rollout, on Sat, as part of a suite of measures aimed at improving access to medicines during the pandemic, including the implementation of emergency dispensing and therapeutic substitution authorisation, in line with rules previously implemented in other states and territories.

Welcoming the measures, Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) Queensland Branch President, Chris Campbell, noted the move to approve pharmacist administered COVID-19 vaccinations was an Australian first.

"This forward thinking plan will allow the most rapid uptake of COVID-19 immunisation possible, leveraging off the wide network of pharmacists in the state and will help to rapidly protect Queenslanders and will save lives," he said.

"Pharmacists are on the front line of health care and are doing a

tremendous job of supporting the community during the COVID crisis.

"We are seeing more and more patients get the influenza shot this year in pharmacy than ever before, last year over two million influenza vaccinations were provided by pharmacists, this year with the improvement in access from 10 years and older in Queensland people are quite rightly choosing to be immunised."

Campbell added the moves to support therapeutic substitution and continued dispensing would ensure continuity of patient care.

Pharmacy Guild of Australia National Vice President, Trent Twomey, also voiced support for the Palaszczuk Government's changes to the Drug Therapy Protocol, saying the move would adjustments provide a greater scope for pharmacists to administer vaccinations and prescribe certain medicines to patients, if a prescriber is unavailable.

"Sharing the load between trained primary healthcare professionals will be essential during the coronavirus pandemic," he said.

"It's going to be a marathon and we need to work together to

support Queenslanders.

"These Drug Therapy Protocol changes help to increase healthcare access for the community, with more than 6,200 pharmacists located in Queensland."

"With the influenza season upon us, it's critical that the community has greater access to flu vaccinations to limit the spread and reduce the likelihood of simultaneous flu and coronavirus hospitalisations.



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Dispensary Corner

PHYSICAL contact is seen as key for mental health - so what do we do in these crazy COVID-19 times of social distancing?

The Icelandic Forest Service has come up with a perfect solution, saying that people should simply hug a tree while we can't hug each other.

Forest rangers in the country's eastern Hallormsstaður National Forest (pictured) have been hard at work clearing snow-covered paths, allowing socially distanced people to "get up close and personal with their forest friends," according to the *IcelandReview* newspaper.



"When you hug a tree, you feel it first in your toes and then up your legs and into your chest and then up into your head," said forest ranger Por Þorfinnson.

"Five minutes is really good... if you can give yourself five minutes of your day to hug a tree, that's definitely enough," the tree hugging expert said.

The best technique, Þorfinnson added, is to close your eyes, lean your cheek against the trunk and "feel the warmth and the currents flow."

However visitors to the national park are also being urged to ensure they don't all hug the same tree, in case of COVID-19 transmission.

NSW to accept e-scripts

PHARMACISTS in NSW will be allowed to dispense medicines using email or fax copies of the original prescription from 17 Apr, under measures announced by State Health Minister, Brad Hazzard, on Sun, as part of the State's response to the COVID-19 crisis.

The move follows similar authorisation announced by the Victorian Government last week (PD 08 Apr), but will exclude scripts provided in text message format, to prevent potential fraud and diversion of medicines.

"These changes are designed to make accessing your medications easier and safer, particularly for those in the community with chronic conditions," Hazzard said.

"It ensures people with compromised immune systems will not need to go to the doctor's surgery in person and can get their script entirely through a telehealth appointment."

Welcoming the announcement, Pharmacy Guild of Australia NSW Branch President, David Heffernan, the move would help maintain



access to medicines throughout the pandemic.

"This is very important to maintaining supply in the pharmacy industry," he said.

"But also in maintaining social distancing.

"It's also important to note that scripts will not be filled if they are sent from a GP to the patient, it must be from the GP to a pharmacy."

MEANWHILE the Australian Digital Health Agency interim CEO, Bettina McMahon, has said electronic prescriptions are expected to be progressively rolled out from the end of May, as part of a move to fast-track the introduction of electronic prescribing.

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Guild Update

Rent relief

THE States and Territories have agreed to implement a national retail leasing code of conduct to provide rent relief for businesses hit by the COVID-19 crisis.

The mandatory retail leasing code of conduct imposes a set of good faith leasing principles to commercial tenancies which are eligible businesses under the JobKeeper program.

The agreement applies a proportional formula to rent reductions based on the tenant's decline in turnover due to the COVID-19 crisis to ensure that the burden is shared between landlords and tenants.

In a statement the Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, said: "The code provides a proportionate and measured burden share between the two parties, while still allowing tenants and landlords to agree to tailored, bespoke and appropriate temporary arrangements that take account of the particular circumstances".

The National President of the Pharmacy Guild of Australia, George Tambassis, said the Code would provide clarity for commercial tenants, including community pharmacies, where they need to negotiate arrangements with landlords during the COVID-19 downturn.

"Fundamentally, as the Prime Minister said, it is about sitting down and working out an agreed course so that we can all get through this together, and with normal business and employment able to resume," he said.

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References: 1. Seremind Unit sales, Data on file. 2. Seremind Consumer Leaflet, July 2019. SER-AU-1316. 04/20
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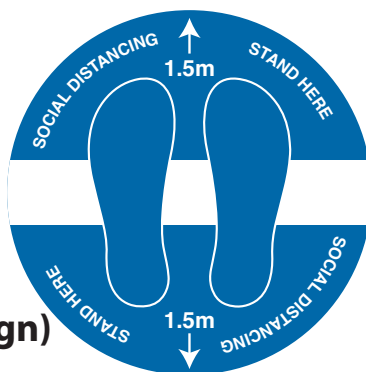
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