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Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features two pages of news, plus a full page from Sigma Healthcare.

Keep pressure on COVID - WHO

COUNTRIES around the world are being urged to maintain vigorous efforts to suppress the spread of COVID-19.

World Health Organization (WHO) Health Emergencies Program Executive Director, Dr Mike Ryan, told a press conference this morning that the virus had "demonstrated no seasonal pattern".

"What it has clearly demonstrated is that if you take the pressure off the virus, the virus bounces back," he said.

"That's the reality... keep the pressure on the virus - suppress, suppress, suppress."

Ryan added that the COVID crisis required "global solutions" and called on the G7 to play a major part in supporting preparedness and response strategies.

Appreciated - but others more so

ALL health workers are appreciated in Victoria, but some appear to be more appreciated than others in the eyes of the State Government, a Pharmacy Guild of Australia representative believes.

Despite reassurances from Victorian Health Minister, Jenny Mikakos's office, that testing sites had been told to give priority status to pharmacy employees (PD 06 Aug), Guild Victorian Branch President, Anthony Tassone, told *Pharmacy Daily* that staff were being told they were not seen as essential workers by testers.

Tassone said he was "sick of waiting" for the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to clearly identify pharmacists as "essential workers" for COVID-19 testing, in line with other key health professions.

"This is in no way a criticism of the hard-working professionals on the front-line of those testing centres," he said.

"They need to be given clear guidance from the DHHS - they need to get on with it."

Tassone flagged an open letter that was issued by Victorian Premier, Daniel Andrews, and Minister Mikakos, in a post on



Twitter last week, acknowledging the work of nurses, midwives and carers.

In his tweet, Tassone noted the praise was "well deserved", and called for a similar acknowledgement of the efforts of the pharmacy sector to be issued.

"We received a letter of appreciation from a DHHS bureaucrat earlier in the pandemic," he said.

"We chose not to send the letter signed by someone our members wouldn't know, and suggested a letter from the Minister would be more appropriate, but haven't heard anything since."

Tassone suggested that while the efforts of front-line health workers

may be appreciated by the State Government, some appeared to be appreciated more than others.

Speaking on *ABC News at Noon* yesterday, Tassone noted community pharmacy workers were still being impacted by the NSW State Government's decision to close its border with Victoria (PD 27 Jul).

"A really disappointing aspect of the NSW/Victoria border closure at the moment is that hospital pharmacists are actually considered essential workers and have certain exemptions... but pharmacists working in community pharmacies on the front-line in patient-facing roles don't have the same exemption," he said.

NZ COVID outbreak impacts AFT AGM

AUSTRALIAN Securities Exchange (ASX) listed drug company, AFT Pharmaceuticals, has been forced to adjourn its annual general meeting (AGM), due to an outbreak of COVID-19 in New Zealand.

The AGM had been scheduled to take place in Auckland this morning, but the introduction of Stage Three restrictions, has forced AFT to postpone it.

"We believe this is the prudent response in the circumstances to protect the health and safety of all involved and to comply with the guidelines announced by the Government," AFT Chief Financial Officer, Malcolm Tubby, said.

"Shareholders will be notified of the time and place of the adjourned meeting within the next 10 days.

Tuesday 25 August 2020 at 7pm (AEST)

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Dispensary Corner

FACE masks are being compared to condoms by one Irish doctor, who is trying to educate the public on how best to use them.

In an effort to tackle confusion around face masks during the Emerald Isle's COVID crisis, Dr Maitiu O Tuathail, said people should carry multiple masks every time they leave home to minimise their risk of catching the virus.

"[I'm] getting lots of questions about face coverings and if they can be put on, taken off and put on again," he said in a post on Twitter.

"No, once you take it off it goes straight into a 60°C wash - then you put on a new, clean one.

"Think of it like a condom - would you reuse a condom?"

O Tuathail advised people should change masks when visiting different locations, placing used masks into a zip-lock bag before putting them in a hot-wash at home.

The doctor also recommended cotton masks over disposable options.



Qld to trial pharmacy COVID testing

PHARMACIES in Queensland are set to become part of the State's COVID-19 testing infrastructure, with Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk, announcing plans for a trial of a pharmacy-based service.

Palaszczuk revealed the State Government's intention to use community pharmacies as testing sites in a Twitter post at 10.18am today.

"We will launch a trial of coronavirus testing in community pharmacies," she said.

"Queensland pharmacists will be provided with relevant training to conduct the testing, with samples to be analysed by Queensland Health.

"Queenslanders have been getting tested in big numbers already, but we want to make it as accessible and convenient as possible."

Pharmacy Guild of Australia Queensland Branch President, Trent Twomey, welcomed the decision to involve the pharmacy sector in testing, and urged community pharmacists to take



part in the trial.

"Queenslanders are already presenting in community pharmacies with possible COVID-19 symptoms," Twomey said.

"It makes sense to opportunistically test those members of the community with possible symptoms, as they are already attending the pharmacy for their medications and healthcare advice.

"Community pharmacy has a

proud history of playing our part in the evolution of Queensland's primary health care network.

"We'll work with the Queensland Government to ensure the success of the pilot."

The move follows South Australia's decision to run a two-week pharmacy-based COVID-19 testing pilot last month (PD 20 Jul), involving five stores.

Details of the SA trial have yet to be revealed.

Going above and beyond in COVID

COMMUNITY pharmacies in the Riverina region are being praised for "going above and beyond" throughout the COVID-19 crisis.

Speaking to ABC News, Murrumbidgee Primary Health Network Pandemic Lead, Dr Alison Koschel, lauded local pharmacies' COVID response.

She said pharmacists were offering contactless pick-up and delivery services to support patients who have been told to self-isolate after being tested for the virus.

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