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Today's issue of *PD*

Pharmacy Daily today has three pages of pharmacy news.

COVID a catalyst for rural change

FEDERAL and State Governments are being urged to extend emergency measures that have allowed pharmacists to broaden their scope of practice during the COVID-19 crisis on a permanent basis.

In a statement issued this morning, the Rural Pharmacy Network Australia (RPNA) said the pandemic had been "a catalyst for positive change in rural healthcare", but stressed further measures could be introduced to improve access to health services for patients living in rural and remote areas.

"Rural patients rely heavily on their local community pharmacy for healthcare advice and triaging, and even more so now with GPs delivering consults via telehealth rather than face to face," an RPNA spokesperson said.

"Pharmacists are involved in the monitoring and management of patients with chronic disease as well as treating minor ailments.

"There is value to the healthcare system by supporting pharmacists to deliver this care in terms of reducing hospitalisations and enabling GPs to focus on patients with more complex needs.

"Governments must look at



formalising this role and ensuring that pharmacies are appropriately supported to provide this care. RPNA has already suggested that capitation payments tied to pharmacy service obligations would provide the expenditure control governments desire and the flexibility that rural community pharmacies require to adapt service delivery to meet local needs/context.

"The development of rural community pharmacy as a telehealth hub would also improve access to vital healthcare services for rural patients.

"Pharmacies located in towns without a permanent doctor should be supported to provide GP services via telehealth within the pharmacy.

"Rural community pharmacies should also be supported to provide pharmacy services via telehealth where appropriate.

"This might include such services as HMR follow-up consultations with remote patients as well as telehealth consults.

"Governments will inevitably look for efficiencies in the health system in order to gain greater value from their healthcare spend.

"Rural community pharmacies are well positioned to support governments to achieve this objective.

"If ever there was a time for governments to better utilise rural community pharmacies within primary healthcare - that time is surely now."

Meds misuse

THE Pharmacy Guild of Australia's Guild Learning and Development arm has launched a new CPD module to tackle medication misuse.

Using the findings of an NSW coronial inquest into the deaths of three patients from prescription medicine misuse, the course looks at the role that pharmacists and other healthcare professionals play in reducing prescription medication-related deaths.

The module provides practical advice on interprofessional collaboration and partnering with patients to ensure the safe use of medicines such as opioids and benzodiazepines.

This activity has been accredited for one hour of Group 1 CPD (or 1 CPD credit), which can be converted to one hour of Group 2 CPD (or 2 CPD credits) upon successful completion of an assessment.

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Contactless delivery goes next level

US PHARMACY chain, CVS, is taking the concept of contactless home delivery to the next level with autonomous robotics start-up, Nuro.

Last Thu the businesses began testing a new home medicines service using self-driving Toyota Prius vehicles to shuttle prescription and non-prescription pharmacy products to patients. Nuro hopes to transition the



service to its fleet of custom-built R2 delivery robots, which are currently being used to support temporary COVID-19 field hospitals in California.

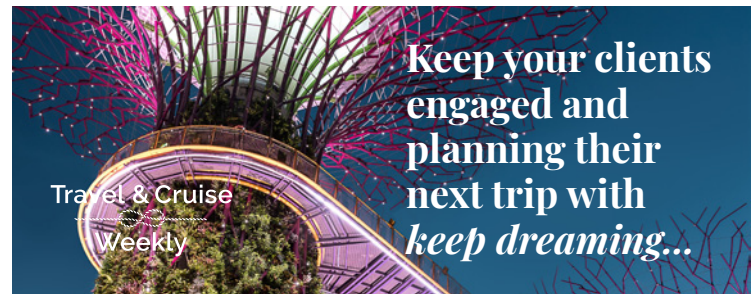


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PBS listing for asthma reliever

ASTRAZENECA'S Symbicort Turbuhaler 200/6 and Symbicort Rapihaler 100/3 are now available for the treatment of asthma in patients aged 12 years and over, through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS).

The listing will enable health professionals to prescribe Symbicort (budesonide/formoterol [eformoterol] fumarate dihydrate) to patients with mild asthma, without daily maintenance treatment, through the PBS.

With approximately 2.7 million Australians living with the condition, Asthma Australia CEO, Michele Goldman, said that maintaining control of a patient's condition was one of the key ways to protect against a flare-up and improve quality of life.

Global surge in MyDispense uptake

COVID-19 is fuelling international demand for access to Monash University's web-based pharmacist training platform, MyDispense.

Speaking during an International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) webinar on Wed, Monash University Faculty of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences Lecturer, Dr Vivienne Mak, revealed there had been an increase in the number of universities rolling out the free online education platform.

"Over the last few weeks the platform have been rolled out across pharmacy schools in the US, Jamaica, even in Australia and Kuwait, because of coronavirus," she said, with the expansion taking the total number of schools using the platform to over 120, with some 18,000 students worldwide using it.

Mak explained that MyDispense allows pharmacy students to practice their professional skills



"in a safe online environment", without the need to be on campus.

"You can use it anytime, anywhere and all that's required is an internet connection," she said.

Mak told the webinar that the platform had evolved from being focused on dispensing in community pharmacy settings to providing a broad range of scenarios including in virtual hospital environments.

"Students can undertake

scenarios where patients can present with a prescription or self-care requirement, but they can also be challenged with validation tasks, requiring them to check the work of virtual colleagues for accuracy, legality and medicines safety," she said.

"Around the world people have used it to teach ethics, cold storage, cold chain requirements and scheduling, a lot of different activities."

Understanding medicinal cannabis

WITH prescribing of medicinal cannabis rising at a rapid rate, the Pharmacy Guild of Australia's Guild Learning and Development sections is launching a new education module.

The CPD-approved course, developed with BioCeuticals, aims to equip pharmacists with the essential knowledge and skills to deliver patient care in this new therapy area.

The module introduces the therapeutic uses and regulatory aspects of cannabis, including the mechanisms of action, pharmacokinetic profile, safety and practical considerations for pharmacists in supplying

medicinal cannabis and counselling patients.

This activity has been accredited for 1.5 hours of Group 1 CPD (or 1.5 CPD credits) suitable for inclusion in an individual pharmacist's CPD plan which can be converted to 1.5 hours of Group 2 CPD (or 3 CPD credits) upon successful completion of relevant assessment activities.

Visit guilded.guild.org.au for more information, alternatively call Guild Learning and Development on 1800 049 056 or email learninganddevelopment@guild.org.au

COVID crisis fuels Amcal app uptake

PATIENTS are looking to build stronger relationships with their community pharmacists in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, Amcal Head, Kurt O'Brien, believes.

Announcing a 185% spike in downloads of the banner group's app in Mar, compared to Feb, O'Brien said patients across all age groups were seeking to streamline their relationships with pharmacists.

"As we prepare for an e-script future, we were determined to strike the right balance with the Amcal app by providing a seamless customer experience with custom-app features,

while also ensuring the app was accessible and easy to use no matter your age or technical ability," he said.

O'Brien added the app had bolstered use of the group's home delivery service, which he said was likely to continue in the post-pandemic environment.

"For a long time, we have offered home delivery capabilities across our national footprint of pharmacies, though as a result of recent circumstances, our app has provided another timely way for customers to fulfil their prescription needs from the comfort of their home," he said.



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Dispensary Corner

COULD COVID-19 be about to leap another species barrier?

Officials in India are somewhat concerned after a troop of aggressive monkeys attacked a lab technician carrying test samples in the country's Uttar Pradesh region.

The fresh samples had just been taken from three patients suspected of being infected with coronavirus, with the primates later spotted high in a nearby tree chewing on the test kits.

Locals are now concerned that the mischievous monkeys may now become another potential source of infection.

Several cases of human-to-animal COVID-19 infections have been recorded, including pet dogs and cats who have contracted the disease from their owners, as well as a tiger in a New York zoo who got it from one of its keepers.

AND while we're on the subject, authorities in Gibraltar have banned tourists from touching the enclave's famous Barbary monkeys in hopes of protecting the primates from COVID-19.

The macaques are Europe's only wild population of monkeys, and low levels of coronavirus in the Gibraltar public mean it is "virtually definite" the animals are OK.

However a strict new bill will "make touching or other interference with the natural behaviour of macaques an offence except under licence for management, research or veterinary purposes".

WHO's pharmacy call

PHARMACISTS need to play a key role in addressing misinformation about COVID-19 in the community, the World Health Organization (WHO) believes.

In a statement issued late last week, the WHO noted that community pharmacies are often the "first port of call for people who are feeling ill", and stressed the importance of pharmacists keeping on top of the latest advice, regarding condition management and use of personal protective equipment.

"Those working in pharmacies should know how to wear personal protective equipment effectively and maintain high standards of hygiene," the WHO said.

"It is also advised that stores display infographics demonstrating good handwashing techniques and the correct use of face masks.

"There are no approved treatments for COVID-19 and



pharmacies must therefore play their part in helping to contain the spread of false claims and misinformation circulating in their communities."

With many pharmacies opening for longer than normal business hours, the WHO also stressed the need to ensure they have enough staff available to cover absences in the event of employees falling ill.

The organisation also emphasised the need for pharmacists to support patients with non-COVID-related chronic conditions.

Life Pharmacy COVID staff support app

LIFE Pharmacy Group is rolling out its new Fit to Work app to its team members, as part of the organisation's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

With pharmacy staff facing increased pressure during the COVID crisis, Life Pharmacy Chief Operating Officer, Warwick Marx, said the team was using the app to check in prior to starting work each day.

Marx said the app allows the staff to indicate how they are feeling both physically and mentally during these uniquely challenging times.

"Not only does the app help us keep our team and patients physically safe, it also provides



a daily reminder to our staff about the Life Pharmacy Group Employee Assistance Program, which we launched in 2019 to provide all staff and their extended families free 24x7 access to trained counsellors," he said.



Weekly Comment

Welcome to Pharmacy Daily's weekly comment feature. This week's contributor is **Rachelle Frain, General Manager, myPak Solutions.**



Packing Efficiency

WITH COVID-19 impacting people and businesses, there is an increased awareness of the need to drive efficiency through processes and systems in daily operations. Community pharmacy has seen unprecedented demand during this time. Although the crisis has seen greater use of technology in communicating, which has allowed us to continue to offer exceptional service to our customers.

As trusted professionals, pharmacists are perfectly placed to ensure medication management, adherence, and supply to the most vulnerable in our community.

As we start reflecting on the recent demands from customers and the impact that this crisis has had on our people and our businesses, it is an ideal time to reassess current resources and systems to ensure efficiency. Investing in software and hardware solutions will assist in delivering efficiency and accuracy to our DAA packing operations, relieving the strain on our teams who service this area of the business.

The myPak DAA solution can assist pharmacists in alleviating some of the stresses and time consumed with their current packing operations. Through the benefits of the integrated software solution, pharmacists can focus on patient care and ensuring the best possible health outcomes. If you would like to learn more, please contact us on 1800 812 649 or enquire through our [website](#).