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**Victorian CMO scraps 60-day script supply advice**

Tassone told *Pharmacy Daily*, that the initial recommendation had “inadvertently caused much panic in the Victorian community and placed a community pharmacy workforce already under pressure to endure more anxiety from patients who felt it was absolutely necessary to obtain 60 days’ supply”.

Tassone welcomed the CMO’s decision to roll back his advice, but suggested “the genie may well already be out of the bottle”.

“The initial advice did not take into consideration the standard Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) quantity should generally be sufficient for patients to have ongoing supply, pharmacists have legal and professional obligations in order for the supply of prescription medicines to be in accordance with the prescriber’s intention and interests of the patient and the very real and unintended consequence of stock-piling by patients triggering medicine shortages meaning others may miss out,” he said.

“This could have potentially dire consequences on a health system bracing itself for an unprecedented challenge in meeting the direct demands of what COVID-19 could bring without preventable hospitalisations due to patients inadvertently missing medicines because there was too much at their home or some missing out altogether.”

Pharmaceutical Society of Australia National President, Dr Chris Freeman, told *Pharmacy Daily* that he had written to the Australian Medical Association and the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners to urge their members to refrain from providing regulation 24 prescriptions, following the Victorian CMO’s recommendation.

“What we don’t want is a disruption to the supply chain because of stockpiling,” Freeman said.

Tassone noted pharmacies have been experiencing supply chain issues, with delayed deliveries in some areas over the weekend.
**RPNA fears big players gaming PBS**

PHARMACISTS operating in rural and remote parts of Australia are calling for an urgent review of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) dispensing following a surge in order volumes from “major accounts”, which emptied warehouses, in response to concerns over COVID-19.

In a statement issued this morning the Rural Pharmacy Network Australia (RPNA) called on the Community Service Obligation (CSO) Agency to take a deeper look into the “unprecedented run on wholesale stocks of PBS medicines” since the beginning of March.

“We believe that order volumes in some cases were six to seven times normal ‘beginning of month’ volumes and that such quantities cannot be justified on any public health grounds,” the RPNA said.

“Our members have reported serious medication shortages including stock unavailability, orders cancelled by wholesalers without explanation and missing deliveries of PBS medicines following unconfirmed but credible reports of some large pharmacy groups placing orders far in excess of reasonable needs.

“No one seems to be denying that there has been an unprecedented spike in buying.

“If it was consumer demand, there would be a corresponding spike in PBS prescriptions dispensed preceding the big buys.

“The Government/Department of Health should have this data.

“Even if there has been a spike in PBS scripts dispensed this needs to be assessed against the volume of buying that occurred.

“The PBS and the CSO are meant to ensure equity of access to PBS medicines for all Australians but clearly on this occasion that hasn’t happened.

“We’d like to know if there have been any breaches [of the CSO Requirement to supply rural and remote pharmacies] this month.

“It looks a lot like the coronavirus crisis has been used by deep-pocketed players as an excuse to game the PBS - a vital national public health institution - for commercial advantage.

“We call on consumers not to purchase more medicines than they need, and we urge health professionals to reassure patients that there is no need to buy more than is necessary,” the TGA said.

“We call on pharmacists to avoid over ordering medicines, to help ensure that medicines are available to all Australians who need them.”

SIGMA Healthcare has opened its first Victorian WholeLife Pharmacy and Healthfood store, in Langwarrin, Melbourne.

The pharmacy is the first of 10 new stores Sigma will open across the country over the next 12 months, and follows a successful trial of the concept in Queensland.

The store is owned by Wael Hanna and Niki Singh, who previously ran the store under Sigma’s Discount Drug Store banner.

The official opening took place on Sat, with Sigma CEO, Mark Hooper, in attendance to mark the occasion.

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**Dispensary Corner**

WHILE many patrons of pubs and public transport around the world have been less than adherent of called to practice "social distancing" in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, a photo of patients visiting a Moroccan pharmacy has gone viral as they lined up outside the store.

The shoppers (pictured below) outside a Casablanca pharmacy have unwittingly become internet sensations for following World Health Organization (WHO) advice for people to maintain a safe distance from one another to limit the spread of the virus.

The north African nation has 28 confirmed cases of the virus, including 20 new cases confirmed yesterday, with the majority originating from Europe.

The country’s Minister for Transport and Logistics, Abdelkader Amara, has been adherent of called to practice "social distancing" in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, “social distancing” in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, urging to maintain a safe distance from one another to limit the spread of the virus.

**Weekly Comment**

Welcome to Pharmacy Daily’s weekly comment feature. This week’s contributor is Dan Gillham, Group ICT Manager, TerryWhite Chemmart.

**PUTTING THE POWER BACK INTO BUYING**

A KEY challenge facing pharmacies today is having the resources and time to navigate the multitude of supplier and promotional deals to maximise store profitability. One of the advantages of being with a brand like TerryWhite Chemmart is not only having regular access to the top deals through promotions and everyday buying opportunities but also having access to the systems to ensure these deals are captured correctly.

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To win, be the first person from NSW or ACT to send the correct answer to comp@pharmacydaily.com.au.

**Win with Plunkett’s**

Name one of the active ingredients in Superfade Accelerator Serum.

**Pharmacist's COVID-19 guide**

PHARMACY owners are being urged to prepare signage at store entry points asking patients to self-identify as ‘at risk’ of COVID-19 to allow staff know immediately.

A COVID-19 guide produced by the Pharmacy Guild of Australia to be used in conjunction with normal operating protocols.

The Guild is recommending that pharmacies should have a space where pharmacists can isolate patients with suspected COVID-19 infections, and accompanying carers or family.

“The room/area needs to be free of clutter and non-essential furniture and items to make any necessary decontamination easier after the patient/s has left,” the Guild said.

“The room/area should have a patient ‘support pack’ which could include bottled water, disposable tissues and a clinical waste bag.

“There should be a mechanism to ensure there is regular contact between suspected patient/s and designated pharmacy staff whilst the patient/s are in the isolation room/area.

“Prepare signage for the room/area such as ‘Do not enter unless authorised and wearing Personal Protective Equipment’ for use as necessary.”

The guide also includes details on preparing staff to ensure they are aware of their roles and responsibilities when a patient with COVID-19, and what to do after the presentation has been completed.

CLICK HERE to see the Guild’s COVID-19 resources.

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**Vaccination changes**

for NSW, Qld and SA pharmacists

**GuildCare**

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**Comment**

**Weekly**

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