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Today's issue of PD

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

- MSC Signs
- Omnicell

Creating a barrier

WITH pharmacists on the frontline of efforts to manage in the COVID-19, access to personal protective equipment (PPE) is important, Royal Australian College of General Practice Board Chair, Dr Charlotte Hespe, told a webinar hosted by the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia last night.

Hespe said PPE such as face masks, gloves and perspex screens could help protect pharmacists from the virus.

Find out more about MSC Signs' PPE including sneeze guards, corflute signs and anti-slip floor decals, on [page 4](#).

Plan for further restrictions: Guild

PHARMACY owners and managers are being urged to speak to their landlords to ensure access to their stores will be maintained in the event of further restrictions being imposed by State, Territory and Federal Governments, as the COVID-19 pandemic evolves.

Speaking at the Australian Pharmacy Professional (APP) Conference online last week, former Pharmacy Guild of Australia National President, Kos Sclavos, said there was a need to plan for a scenario where non-essential retailers are shutdown.

"It is important that we have the conversations with our landlords in terms of access," he said.

"We know from overseas where pharmacies have remained open and the supermarkets have remained open that is an issue.

"It is very important if, for instance, some shopping centres say 'we can't afford to keep the aircon running in the whole centre



[while other tenants are closed]".

"We need to hear those scenarios, because it would be quite embarrassing for them if a politician hears about that.

"Don't wait for two or three weeks time if things deteriorate [to talk to your landlord]."

Sclavos also warned that despite being on the frontline of efforts to support the community through the pandemic, international

experience showed pharmacies located in shopping centres that were not close to a supermarket have been experiencing "really tough times".

He also urged owners and managers to engage with landlords in relation to updating their rental agreements as the retail industry faces a difficult future as a result of reduced retail spending and foot traffic.

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NSW pragmatic on dispensing: Guild

NSW Health Minister, Brad Hazzard, and Chief Medical Officer, Kerry Chant, are being hailed for their “pragmatic” decision to extend emergency prescribing measures in the state (*PD* Breaking news).

The move will see emergency authorities granted to pharmacists to dispense 30-day supplies of Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) medications to patients without a prescription, during the state’s bushfire crisis earlier this year (*PD* 09 Jan) continue until 30 Sep.

Pharmacy Guild of Australia NSW Branch President, David Heffernan, told *Pharmacy Daily*, he was optimistic that similar provisions would be rolled out across the other states and territories.

“I want to thank Brad Hazzard and the Chief Medical Officer, Kerry Chant, because these are pragmatic measures that benefit the patient, especially those who have to self-isolate, that cannot see a doctor,” he said.

“NSW going first will hopefully send a domino effect through the other states and then the Federal Government, I believe will come through with the PBS.



“The provision [as it stands] is we can give a month’s medicine, but not necessarily under the PBS.

“So [Minister for Health] Greg Hunt just needs to approve the PBS supply [as he did during the bushfires].”

Heffernan added the Guild would continue to work with the NSW Health Ministry to support pharmacists.

“Everyone is working together and doing their best,” he said.

“We’re working with the Ministry and looking at other pragmatic solutions to benefit the patients and make life easier for pharmacists, because they’re under

a lot of pressure at the moment.”

Guild Branch representatives from a number of other states and territories have voiced their support of the roll out of similar emergency prescribing authorities for pharmacists.

Emergency dispensing measures relating to the bushfire crisis are currently in force in Victoria until 01 Apr, with approvals announced during the fires in the ACT and South Australia also set to expire on 31 Mar.

POLL: should emergency dispensing authorities be granted to pharmacists nationwide - have your say **HERE**.

PSA backs Guild on ditching pen

PHARMACY’S peak bodies are calling on the Federal Government to remove the need for patients to sign receipts for Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) prescriptions, as an infection control measure.

Speaking during a COVID-19 webinar last night, Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) National President, Dr Chris Freeman, echoed concerns raised by Pharmacy Guild of Australia National Vice President, Trent Twomey, to remove the requirement (*PD* 24 Feb).

“There hasn’t been any formal advice around this as yet,” he said.

“We’re asking the Department of Health to come out as a matter of urgency and provide advice to pharmacists, so that they can be supported in actually taking this action.

“From an infection control point of view, it makes sense to me that we shouldn’t be having patients sign off on receipts of prescriptions.”

COVID shows need for RPMA revamp

THE COVID-19 pandemic is exposing flaws in the current pharmacy distribution system, heightening the need for reform of the Rural Pharmacy Maintenance Allowance (RPMA), the Rural Pharmacy Network Australian (RPNA) believes.

RPNA Chair, Fredrik Hellqvist, welcomed calls from the Pharmacy Guild of Australia for the Federal Government to invest

in the RPMA (*PD* 23 Feb).

“COVID-19 has well and truly exposed the lack of equity in Australia’s pharmaceutical distribution system,” he said.

“And it is not just our distribution system that’s flawed.

“The whole pharmacy remuneration system is geared towards maximizing dispensing volume at the expense of quality care.”

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Travel & Cruise Weekly

Dispensary Corner

TOILET tissue panic-buyers can now access a useful online calculator which will enable them to estimate just how long their preciously purloined paper will last.

Australia is not alone in the stockpiling stakes, with a German website launching the service for anxious hoarders who can enter the size of their stash and the average number of visits to the bathroom each day to come up with a very useful survivability metric.

For example, with a stock of 10 rolls, and three daily trips to the dunny, the calculator advises that you have enough toilet paper for 53 days - significantly longer than any COVID-19 quarantine period.

There's also an "advanced mode" where you can provide details (too much information?) such as the "number of wipes per trip" and "number of sheets used per wiping" to get a more accurate result.

"Many people use more toilet paper than necessary...for the 'small business', one or two sheets are quite sufficient," the website advises.

Saving sheets, to eke out the scarce stocks, can be as simple as using less each time.

The site also helpfully notes that "nutrition can have an influence on the amount of paper needed for 'big business' - if a lot of toilet paper is used, this can be a sign that the bowel is not working properly".

Check out the English language version of the site at blitzresults.com/gb/toiletpaper.

Pharmacies to go 24/7 in NSW

PLANNING restrictions are being eased in NSW to enable pharmacies and supermarkets to operate 24 hours a day, to cater for the needs of patients during the COVID-19 pandemic (**PD** Breaking news).

The State's Planning and Public Spaces Minister, Rob Stokes, announced the move to "cut red tape" aiming to ensure the community has access to food and medicines, and follows similar measures in other jurisdictions around the world.

"These orders cut red tape so we can move quickly and decisively to ensure the health, wellbeing and safety of our community during this time," he said.

"The focus of our first order is giving people flexibility to visit their local supermarket, pharmacy or corner store at any time of day if those retail premises choose to operate for extended hours.

"This means the community will have access to food, medical supplies and essential household goods whenever they need it.

"Stores will also be able to dispose of their waste at any time



of day, rather than during restricted hours, to dispose of the significant and sudden increase in stock."

Stokes added the order would provide greater flexibility for home-based businesses to operate at any time and expand their business as necessary.

"For those businesses operating out of home, we are facilitating more flexible operating hours and increasing the number of people working together from two to five, providing they can abide by the social distancing rules," Mr Stokes said.

"This is important as more and more people work from home and need flexible working arrangements."

The NSW State Government said the changes to planning regulations "will be in place until the crisis is over".

While the move is expected to bolster access to medicines, it contrasts with advice from pharmacy organisations in the UK, who have recommended that pharmacies should seek to curtail operating hours in the interests of staff and patient safety (**PD** 23 Feb).

NPS meds list

HEALTH professionals are being urged to encourage their patients to ensure they have an up-to-date medicines list to ensure medicines safety should they be hospitalised during the COVID-19 pandemic.

NPS MedicinesWise Medicines Line Manager, Nerida Packham, said all prescription, over-the-counter and complementary medicines should be recorded, with active ingredients included.

Win with Munch Mitt

Everyday this week Pharmacy Daily and the Dale Group are giving away a 3 piece Malarkey Munch Mitt kit valued at RRP \$57.

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