

Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features three pages of news.

Pharmacist Rx

PATIENTS in New Zealand are set to gain improved access to certain medicines through pharmacist prescribers under new legislation that comes into force today.

Under the changes, pharmacist prescribers can now apply for special authorities to prescribe specific restricted medicines, removing the need for patients to wait for a doctor to sign-off on scripts.

Backing the move NZ Ministry of Health Clinical Advisor, Andi Shirtcliffe, said the pharmacists would be able to improve access to the medicines, and reduce costs while saving doctors' time.

GP clinics safest for COVID vaccine

GENERAL Practitioners should be front and centre in plans to rollout successful COVID-19 vaccines, Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) Acting President, Associate Professor Ayman Shenouda, believes.

Highlighting a paper published in the *Australian Journal of General Practice*, Shenouda said GPs needed to be engaged at an early stage in any COVID vaccination program.

"We should not wait until the day after a vaccine becomes available to consider the role of general practice," he said.

"Past mass vaccination programs have demonstrated that planning for vaccine rollout and community engagement needs to start beforehand.

"So in order to optimise confidence and uptake, GPs must be properly consulted and significantly involved from start to finish.

"That includes our work in educating patients and carers

about the vaccine, administering it, recording uptake and reporting any adverse events.

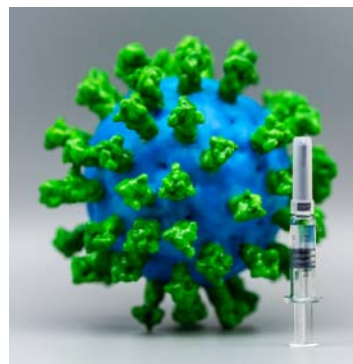
"This paper refers to studies from the H1N1 pandemic, which showed that GPs were highly influential in encouraging vaccine uptake.

"The stakes are even higher this time, so we must get this right.

"As the authors state, GPs will need up-to-date information about the vaccine and be engaged in pre-vaccination planning to counteract anti-vaxxer campaigning and address patient doubts about mass vaccination policies."

When contacted by **Pharmacy Daily** about the role of pharmacists in delivering the pandemic vaccine, and RACGP spokesperson said, "The RACGP's view is that general practice is the safest place to deliver a COVID-19 vaccination".

"GPs draw on a comprehensive patient history and are equipped with the training and facilities to respond promptly in the rare case



that a patient responds adversely to a vaccination," the spokesperson said.

"General practice is also connected to the Australian Immunisation Register to ensure accurate record keeping of vaccine administration."

Shenouda also called for public health campaigns to be rolled out outlining the benefits and success of vaccinations to promote uptake of the vaccines when they become available.

Digital image scripts measure extended

PHARMACISTS will continue to be able to dispense medicines using digital images of legal paper prescriptions until 31 Mar 2021, after the Commonwealth Department of Health announced an extension of the emergency measure this morning.

The special arrangement was announced in Mar in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Under the measure pharmacists

are still expected to require patients, or their agents, to acknowledge receipt of a Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) listed product where it is practical to do so.

"This interim measure will provide healthcare providers the ability to continue to provide their essential services to the community during the COVID-19 pandemic," the Department said.

PSA announces virtual AGM date

THE Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) will host its annual general meeting (AGM) on Thu 29 Oct at 6pm (AEDT).

The meeting will be conducted using webcasting platform, Zoom.

"Due to the extraordinary circumstances of COVID-19, PSA's AGM will be held virtually and all members and proxyholders can participate via the PSA Member

portal," a spokesperson from the Society said.

"PSA members are encouraged to participate in the AGM by watching the live webcast, asking questions and voting by Zoom poll where members will be prompted to answer the polling questions with a Yes or No answer and all responses will remain anonymous."

CLICK HERE to register.



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Seqirus Australia. Date of preparation: August 2020. SEQ/NVD/0820/0118b.



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RTPM comes to unintended effects

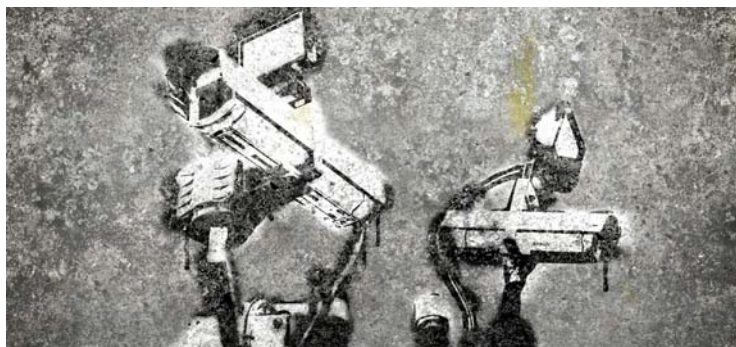
PLANS to rollout real-time prescription monitoring (RTPM) of opioid medications will change clinical practice, but could deliver unintended consequences, new research warns.

In an article published in *Australian Prescriber*, the authors noted that while RTPM could identify patients using high daily doses of opioids, high-risk combinations and those with treatment that is not coordinated, moves to abruptly cease treatment could lead to adverse health risks.

"Activities intended to prevent harm can result in unintended consequences if they are not supported by the right clinical approach," the authors said.

"The tapering of opioid doses requires special care, especially given that many patients taking opioids have a history of mental health disorder or substance use disorder.

"Patients rapidly or involuntarily



tapered from opioids may have an increased risk of overdose so discussions of risk and ensuring patient agreement before tapering starts are high priorities."

When a RTPM system identifies a patient who has potentially been misusing medications, the authors urged health professionals to confirm the use of the products with the patient, or contact the prescriber to establish whether or not they prescribed the medication.

They added that discussions with the patient should be framed as "an expression of concern about the patient's safety and the need to coordinate treatment with high-risk drugs."

"RTPM will identify people not previously known to have a substance-related disorder," they said.

"There is a need to avoid unfairly stigmatising these patients and to act to provide potentially life-saving treatment.

DHL boosts warehouse cap

LOGISTICS giant, DHL, is expanding its warehouse capacity to support the efficient management, storage and distribution of a successful COVID-19 vaccine.

The company has announced the launch of four new state-of-the-art storage facilities across Australia.

DHL Supply Chain CEO, Saul Resnick, said the new facilities in Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney will boost capacity by 64,000m² including more than 9,000m² of cold chain storage space.

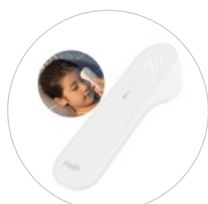


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SHPA's aged care push

AUSTRALIA'S pharmacy workforce needs to boost its understanding of geriatric syndromes to cope with the nation's aging population, the Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) believes.

Marking International Day of Older Persons, SHPA Geriatric Medicine Co-Chair, Gauri Godbole, said maintaining and improving the health of older people will be critical in the years ahead.

"The number of older persons worldwide is projected to double to more than 1.5 billion in 2050, driving the urgency of our efforts to empower not just geriatric medicine pharmacy specialists but a wider pharmacy workforce to improve their understanding of geriatric syndromes," Godbole said.

"Released in February this year and led by the SHPA Geriatric Medicine Leadership Committee, SHPA's *Standard of practice in geriatric medicine for pharmacy services* highlighted the need for pharmacists with specific geriatric medicine expertise to work as part of interdisciplinary teams to improve the safety and quality of care for older Australians in hospitals, residential aged care facilities and in the community.



"SHPA is also driving efforts to expand this knowledge earlier in the careers of hospital pharmacists, with geriatric medicine embedded as one of the four initial practice pathways of SHPA Advanced Training Residencies, with an accompanying knowledge guide that is cognisant of the different practice settings in which pharmacists may be providing care for older persons."

Highlighting the importance of education the pharmacy workforce about geriatric medicine, SHPA CEO, Kristin Michaels flagged research showed "up to 30% of hospital admissions of people aged 65 years and older are medication-related, and approximately half of these could be prevented".



Dispensary Corner

A WOULD-BE bandit is set to spend nine months behind bars after her "hare-brained" plot to hold-up a pharmacy ended in failure.

The 43-year-old woman entered a pharmacy in the Irish city of Cork, and presented a note to a pharmacy assistant (PA), claiming she had a gun and that she wanted drugs to be handed over.

The PA passed the handwritten message to the pharmacist on duty who calmly explained that he was calling the police and would not be dispensing any medications to her, prompting the aspiring thief to flee the scene empty-handed.

However, pharmacy staff spotted her entering a nearby house and directed police to the location where she was arrested.

Addressing Cork District Court yesterday, the woman's solicitor described his client's plot as "inept and ill-conceived" adding it was an "absolutely hare-brained idea, offensive as it was for the staff".

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