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Get pharmacy onboard now: Twomey

FEDERAL Deputy Prime Minister, Michael McCormack, is being urged to push for rural pharmacies to be given the green light to join the COVID-19 vaccination rollout ahead of schedule.

In a letter sent to McCormack and Minister for Regional Health, Mark Coulton, yesterday, Rural Pharmacists Australia (RPA) Chair, Georgina Twomey, expressed concern over the lack of access to COVID-19 vaccines in rural and remote Australia, "particularly for vulnerable populations and frontline healthcare workers".

"Our respective members have indicated the current challenges with access in regional, rural and remote towns, including eligible populations in Phase 1a and 1b being asked to travel long distances to Pfizer hubs or general practices that are providing AstraZeneca (AZ) vaccines," she said.

"The recent advice from the Australia Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI), that recommends the use of the Pfizer vaccine in those age under 50 and the subsequent 'recalibration' of the vaccination rollout has further exacerbated the access issues.

"This also adds to the hesitancy

to receive either of the available vaccines.

"It is for this reason we ask that serious consideration be given to activating the community pharmacy network in regional, rural and remote areas (MMM 3-7) earlier than the planned Phase 2a.

"Community pharmacies in regional, rural and remote areas are embedded personally and professionally in their communities.

"They are a trusted source of advice and healthcare provision.

"They are often open extended hours, and are accessible - in fact there are over 1,300 pharmacies in MMM 3-7.

"Of these we know that there are more than 400 pharmacies in towns where there is only one medical centre/GP or none at all.

"It makes sense to us that every available trained and willing vaccination provider is used to protect our most vulnerable, especially where access to other vaccination centres is limited.

"We do understand that the rollout is dependent on vaccine availability, and that solutions for regional, rural and remote delivery of vaccine have logistical implications.



"Solutions need to be tailored for individual communities.

"We ask for your support in bringing the rural community pharmacy network into the rollout as soon as possible, so that our members can play their part in protecting their communities."

MEANWHILE, Pharmacy Guild of Australia National President, Trent Twomey, also called for pharmacies to be given an "early call-up" to the campaign, while dubbing plans for mass vaccination centres as "a last resort."

Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features four pages of news, plus full pages from:

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WITH the opening of the Australia and New Zealand travel bubble today, Flo Travel nasal spray can help those looking to getaway to avoid catching a cold in air-conditioned hotels and planes.

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See **page five** for more.

Discover Sigma's PharmaSave

SIGMA Healthcare's PharmaSave brand offers pharmacy owners the tools to drive their business to the next level.

The low-cost, self-managed model focuses on 'care, value and service', and can be tailored to individual needs.

See **page six** for more.

Pharmacy prices expected to rise

PROSPECTIVE buyers of community pharmacies expect that prices will increase over the next 12 months, the latest edition of the *Attain Pharmacy Market Sentiment Survey* reveals.

Attain Director, Natalie Sirianni, said the survey, which tracks pharmacy business sales market trends, found more than 60% of respondents - including current and aspiring owners - were looking to purchase "a or another pharmacy".

The latest survey conducted in Mar, found 37% of pharmacy owners said they expected to sell their pharmacy within the next five years, up from 31% in Dec 2020.

The proportion of owners who said they planned to bring in a junior partner instead of selling remained at 10% in Mar, having dropped by 14% in the Jul 2020 survey.

Over the course of the first three editions of the survey, increasing numbers of pharmacists have expressed the view that pharmacy



business prices will increase in the next 12 months - with the latest report finding 59.3% believe they will rise, compared with 44% in Jul 2020.

"The results from the Mar 2021 *Pharmacy Market Sentiment Survey* show that the pharmacy business sales market continues to be quite strong and indicates that this will

likely continue," Sirianni said.

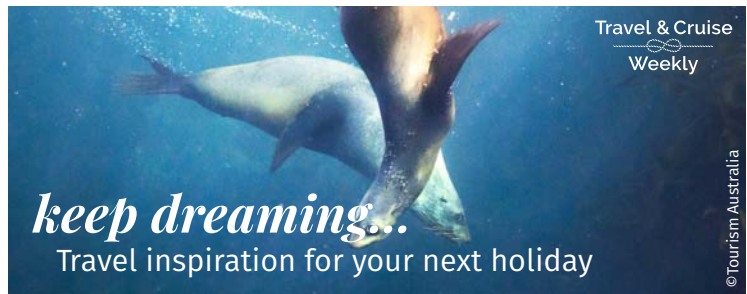
"The results show very strong buyer demand and that supply of pharmacies on the market is likely to increase within the next six months.

"Overall, these results show positive market sentiment for the pharmacy business sales market from both buyers and sellers."

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Personal use behind cannabis growth

CLOSE to three-quarters of small-scale medicinal cannabis growers in Australia are cultivating crops for their personal use, research from Curtin University's National Drug Research Institute (NDRI) reveals.

The survey of 440 Australian marijuana cultivators found 54% chose to grow their own supplies as they felt it was healthier than cannabis they can buy elsewhere, with 45% saying their cannabis would never contain adulterants, while 48% opted to develop their personal crops to avoid contact with criminals.

The research also noted that one-in-four respondents said they were growing medicinal cannabis to provide to others, while 6% indicated that they were farming crops to sell.

The data, which forms part of the *Global Cannabis Cultivation Research Consortium International Cannabis Cultivation Survey*, showed

Australian growers were more likely to be cultivating crops for medicinal use than their peers elsewhere.

NDRI's Professor Simon Lenton noted the international survey, which included responses from almost 7,000 growers, found that while medicinal use was the primary motivation for Australians, it was ranked sixth as a motivator internationally.

"Growing for personal medical use appears much more common in Australia than most other countries and the proportion of Australian growers reporting medical use as a motivator substantially increased from the first survey, from 54% in 2012 to 74% this year," Professor Lenton said.

"This likely reflects shifts in the policy landscape over the past decade, where new legal and medical regimes have brought medicinal cannabis to the forefront of discussion around



public health policy."

While a large proportion of Australian cannabis growers indicated they were cultivating crops to provide themselves with medicinal marijuana, 60% also said they were growing it for personal recreational use, the survey revealed.

Dispensary Corner

THE COVID-19 pandemic has created opportunities for some entrepreneurial businesspeople - including the unscrupulous owner of a mattress factory in India which has started using discarded face masks and gloves to stuff its products.

Police in Maharashtra have conducted a raid of the manufacturing facility, about 400km northeast of Mumbai, after a tip-off raised concerns about the practice being likely to further spread coronavirus.

"When the officials visited the premises, they found a mattress being stuffed with used masks...a case was registered against the factory owner," a police statement noted.

After gathering evidence, officers then set the piles of discarded medical waste on fire to reduce the risk of secondary COVID-19 spread.

India is in the midst of a major surge in infections, with the Maharashtra region having so far experienced more than 3.4 million COVID-19 cases and almost 60,000 deaths.

The pandemic has also led to huge burdens on India's already heavily stressed waste management system, with a recent report from the country's Central Pollution Control Board revealing over 18,000 tonnes of coronavirus-related biomedical waste had been disposed of in a three month period last year.

Training trainers

UNIVERSITY of Technology Sydney (UTS) Senior Lecturer in Pharmacy Practice, Dr Cherie Lucas, will be part of an International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) panel tomorrow night discussing innovative cultural sensitivity training for pharmacy students.

The webinar aims to equip educators with strategies and techniques used in cultural sensitivity training.

CLICK HERE for more information.

Crime spree hits New York pharmacies

POLICE in New York are hunting a criminal quartet behind a string of pharmacy robberies over the last month.

A total of six stores across New York City have been hit by the gang since 15 Mar, with the thieves targeting prescription medications and cash.

Police said the criminals unsuccessfully attempted to remove an ATM from a store in the South Slope district on 15 Mar, before moving on to EZ Rx Pharmacy in Bay Ridge, where

they stole prescription drugs valued at US\$30,000.

The gang then broke into Organic Pharmacy in Astoria, making off with US\$27,000 worth of medications, before breaking into Corner Pharmacy in Williamsburg on 12 Apr, where they stole an unspecified stash of pills.

Their most recent raid at Strand Pharmacy in Williamsburg on 13 Apr netted the gang US\$2,000 in cash, and an estimated US\$10,000 worth of medicines.

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Pharmacists blamed for drug denials

“NOTORIOUSLY risk-averse” pharmacists are being cited for denying patients access to a morning sickness treatment, according to a key women’s health medical specialist.

Dr Debra Kennedy is Director of the MotherSafe teratogen information service at Sydney’s Royal Hospital for Women, and says the organisation receives calls from “hundreds of women” each year over the issue, which relates to OTC doxylamine in combination with pyridoxine.

The medications are recommended for the treatment of nausea and vomiting in pregnancy by the Society of Obstetric Medicine of Australia and New Zealand, with the combination also listed as a Category A medicine meaning it is safe for use during pregnancy, according to a report in *Australian Doctor*.

The Therapeutic Goods Administration’s Category A classification means it is among “drugs which have been taken by a large number of pregnant women...without any proven increase in the frequency of malformations”.

Kennedy told the publication that incorrect interpretation by pharmacists means “pregnant



women are potentially being denied an important treatment on really spurious grounds.

“We sometimes tell patients to lie to their pharmacist and say their partner needs the medication for sleep,” the specialist said.

She raised the matter in a letter to the *Medical Journal of Australia (MJA)*, noting that the confusion arising from notes on the packaging which states “do not use in pregnancy”.

“Despite raising our concerns with the TGA over the confusing labelling, we are yet to see any progress in correcting this significant misinformation among

health professionals and patients,” Kennedy wrote to the *MJA*.

In the meantime she urged GPs to reassure pregnant women doxylamine is safe in pregnancy.

The specialist also urged the TGA to change the way its existing pregnancy database is alphabetically organised, and “move to a similar system to that of the US Food and Drug Administration which requires all packaging and medicines information to include consistent, evidence-based information”.

Kennedy said the current system is “not very nuanced and it’s often misinterpreted”.



Weekly Comment

Welcome to Pharmacy Daily’s weekly comment feature. This week’s contributor is

Anthony White,
Executive Director of Pharmacy Network Development at TerryWhite Chemmart.



Taking the leap

IN THE many years I have been helping grow the TerryWhite Chemmart business I have been fortunate to meet many enthusiastic young Pharmacists with a drive for innovation who would make excellent business operators but have been somewhat overwhelmed by the prospect.

At TerryWhite Chemmart, we want to make it easy for that next generation of Pharmacists to realise their ownership dreams.

You may be new to searching for your ideal pharmacy, working within a pharmacy with a view to a partnership opportunity or have been searching for your ideal pharmacy for a while.

Whatever stage you are at, it is crucial that your first pharmacy is a success. That’s why myself and other industry experts are providing a Webinar series over the month of May to help ‘get you going’.

This series will identify the key steps in the ownership process and, importantly, introduce you to industry experts in the field. Key topics covered: State of the Market, Performance Benchmarks, Finance Options, Critical Due Diligence, Dealing with Brokers, Offers to Purchase and Key Milestones.

[CLICK HERE](#) to find out more and to register today.

New UK pharmacist counselling service

BRITISH pharmacy charity group Pharmacist Support is set to launch a new service offering pharmacists, interns and students access to six free counselling sessions to help them cope with pandemic stresses.

The project is being funded with support from the COVID-19 Healthcare Support Appeal, a

fund which has been established to help with mental health support for UK health workers during and after the pandemic.

The new service is being offered in partnership with The Counselling and Family Centre, with the initiative coinciding with the 180th anniversary of the founding of Pharmacist Support.

Opdivo US tick

OPDIVO (nivolumab) has been approved by the US Food and Drug Administration for the first-line treatment of patients with gastric cancer.

The move makes Opdivo the first FDA-approved immunotherapy drug for the condition, which has a five year survival rate of just 5%.



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*References: Cabin air filtration: helping to protect occupants from infectious diseases. Bull, K. Travel Med. Infectious Diseases 2008. Vol 66 pp142-144. Efficacy and safety of an antiviral Iota-Carrageenan nasal spray: a randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled exploratory study in volunteers with early symptoms of the common cold. Eccles et al. Respiratory Research 2010, 11:108. Aerobiology and its role in transmission of infectious diseases. Fernstrom, A et al. Journal of Pathogens Vol 2013 Article 493960

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