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Always have a COVAX vial on the go

PHARMACISTS providing COVID-19 vaccination (COVAX) services are being urged to ensure they have a vial ready at all times to ensure as many doses go into arms as possible.

Addressing concerns about potential wastage of doses of the vaccine during a webinar last week, Pharmacy Guild of Australia National President, Trent Twomey, stressed that the Federal Government was more concerned about opportunities to vaccinate being taken than wastage.

Twomey noted that the AstraZeneca vaccine - which is currently the only COVAX available through community pharmacy in Australia - comes in a 10-dose multi-dose vial, which can be stored between 2° and 8°C in a vaccine fridge.

"You should always have a vial on the go," he said.

"The Government is not concerned if there is some wastage.

"What we're concerned about is the spread of the Delta strain couldn't have been prevented, lockdowns couldn't have been prevented, if we had more needles in arms.

"So if you are worried that some of your multi-dose vial will go to waste, if you're worried that you won't use five doses a day, please don't be.

"Any vaccine that you give into any Australian's arm - who is over the age of 18 - is not only completely in line with the guidelines, it's actually what we're asking all of you to do.

"Please don't be worried about wastage."

During the hour-long webinar, Twomey said pharmacies could adopt clinic or walk-in models, or a hybrid of both to deliver the vaccine.

"Whatever suits you, your pharmacists and your pharmacy assistants," he said.

He added that "any door is the



right door" for Australians seeking access to COVAX services.

"Whether they walk-in, phone-in, email, whether they come from Facebook and social media, there's no such thing as a wrong door for Australians to be obtaining this service from their community pharmacy, as long as they obtain it from their community pharmacy.

"I just want you to vaccinate, vaccinate, vaccinate."

Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features three pages of news plus a full page from **Sigma Healthcare**.

Sigma can help

SIGMA Healthcare is today highlighting the range of models available under its Amcal brand, including Community, Express and Health Hub formats. See **page four** for details.

Pharmac pledge

NEW Zealand's medicines purchasing agency, Pharmac, has promised more transparency, for the first time sharing its priority lists for all funding applications for drugs it has assessed but not funded. The move aims to give applicants and the public more certainty - see pharmac.govt.nz.

Qld metro pharmacies join COVID fight

THE Pharmacy Guild of Australia Queensland Branch has welcomed an announcement today that from next week more than 200 metropolitan community pharmacies across the state will be able to deliver COVID-19 vaccinations.

The additional outlets are on top of the 131 community pharmacies in regional and outer-metro areas already rolling out the vaccines, with Queensland Guild Branch Acting President, Chris Owen, saying that "at the end of this week we should be able to offer access to community members right across

Queensland".

The move follows the allocation by the State and Federal Governments of 150,000 extra AstraZeneca doses for Qld community pharmacies, with Owen saying this will "hopefully mean everyone who is currently on a waiting list to get their COVID-19 vaccination will now have the opportunity to do so".

"Rolling out the vaccine to all eligible community pharmacies will prove to be a real game changer...the only way to ensure we can stop these revolving lockdowns is to get as many people as possible vaccinated."

Arrotex thanks community pharmacy

AUSTRALIA'S largest generic medicines company, Arrotex, is showing its appreciation for the country's community pharmacy network, thanking the sector for its efforts through COVID-19-induced lockdowns.

In a post published on LinkedIn this morning, Arrotex Operations Manager - Programs, Tanya Nagy, said it was a "privilege to support and partner with community pharmacy to offer both essential and innovative health services, as they support the health of Australians through these turbulent times".

"Community pharmacies

are a major artery for public health access and represent so much more than a location for medicines," she said.

"The most humbling reality of the more recent inclusion of pharmacies in public health services such as the COVID-19 vaccinations, is that this service is about identifying and offering something that is very much in the public interest and is without consideration of any real financial benefits.

"Their 'call to arms' and genuine passion for their communities health access is what drives them."

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Black, Gold and Love tablet alert

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has issued safety warnings about three products: Gold Ant tablets, Black Ant King tablets and One Night Love tablets.

TGA testing has found the items contain the undeclared prescription-only substance sildenafil, while the One Night Love and Black Ant tablets also contain ciprofloxacin.

The supply of the products in Australia is illegal, with the items believed to have been purchased online by consumers in Australia.

Users are being told to stop using the items and return them to their local pharmacy for safe disposal.

Aged care patients need pharmacists

PATIENTS in aged care facilities need pharmacists on their side to bridge the gap between residents and medical staff, patient advocate, Theresa Flavin believes.

Speaking during the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia's (PSA's) virtual national conference last week, Flavin, who lives with early onset dementia, stressed the need for pharmacists to support better medication use in the treatment of aged care patients.

"We need to help people feel comfortable in their later years - it's really important - but the risks [of medications] aren't always communicated well to the families," she said.

"We need pharmacists on our team to help build the bridge between us as the residents or patients, family members, the care staff and the medical team and GPs.

"We just need that bridge to help us communicate and manage the risks, and for someone who knows what they're talking about to look at these combinations of vast amounts of medications that are all prescribed with the best possible intent, but the cross-effects can be disastrous for us.

"Anything that shuts down our

cognition is just making life worse for us... it's like giving a drunk person a spiked drink.

"It's just cruel."

Flavin expressed concerns about the use of sedative medications in the treatment of patients in aged care facilities.

"When you are diagnosed with dementia you have a grieving process," she said.

"It's almost like you're divorcing or separating from your life as you knew it, you're future's gone.

"You get a lot of negative emotions of loss and grief.

"Your body wants to express these emotions, but it comes out the wrong way...we'll be angry with ourselves for our loss, we're angry with this disease.

"If we behave, or what we say isn't to your social standards or to your taste, surely to God that's not a reason to shut us down [with sedatives], because in the end what I think from personal experience is that the side-effects of these medications results in falls.

"We give our lives so that somebody can have a quieter day at work, and that offends me, that hurts me and it's wrong."

Flavin also told delegates she



felt "cheated" by the lack of choice in the aged care system - expressing her disappointment at the limitations on access to the Residential Medication Management Review (RMMR) program.

PSA Board Member and residential aged care group IRT CEO, Pat Reid, described the RMMR as "a joke".

"Two-yearly is just rubbish," he told delegates.

"It should be on entry, and then regularly reviewed.

"It's not something you look at haphazardly or whenever someone flies in from out of state to do 110 reviews in a day.

"This is stuff where you need continuity, because people do decline over time and their circumstances change."

UK warns on inaccurate thermometers

BRITAIN'S Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has issued a formal warning about "unreliable infrared thermometers," with an increase in the number of dodgy items making their way onto the UK market.

The MHRA said it believes the COVID-19 pandemic had created a massive increase in demand for the products, with contactless infrared thermometers widely used to detect raised temperatures as a screening method for possible coronavirus infection.

Products marketed with claims that they can be used for a medical purpose are medical devices, and are therefore regulated by the MHRA.

"People in the UK are unknowingly buying poor quality infrared thermometers which do not meet the required standards of safety and performance," said MHRA Devices Division Director, Graeme Tunbridge.

He said customers in the UK should always look for a CE or UKCA mark on the packaging.

"In addition, people should be aware that temperature screening is not a reliable method for detecting SARS-CoV-2 infection," he said, noting that 12 months ago the MHRA had issued a warning to manufacturers and suppliers of thermal cameras cautioning them against making claims which directly relate to COVID-19 diagnosis.

Mayne legal case

MAYNE Pharma today confirmed it had been served with a class action proceeding in the Supreme Court of Vic.

The proceeding is being brought on behalf of anyone who acquired Mayne shares between 24 Nov 2014 and 15 Dec 2016, alleging misleading or deceptive conduct and breaches of continuous disclosure obligations relating to allegations of anti-competitive conduct in the US.

An American investigation of the claims led to a significant drop in the Mayne share price.

The company said it would vigorously defend the proceeding, saying it "emphatically denies any and all allegations of wrongdoing".

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Dispensary Corner

VACCINE anxiety in some parts of the USA has reportedly led prospective recipients to disguise themselves so their neighbours don't know they are getting the jab.

The state of Missouri has a particularly high level of vaccination resistance - and not surprisingly also significantly high rates of COVID-19 infection.

A blog post from local medical provider Ozarks Healthcare features the organisation's Chief Medical Information Officer, Dr Priscilla Frase, highlighting the "safety and confidentiality" of the vaccination process.

"I work closely with our pharmacists who are leading our vaccine efforts...one of them told me the other day that they have had several people who have come in to get vaccinated, who have kind of tried to disguise their appearance," Dr Frase said.

"They even went so far as to say 'Please, please, please, don't let anybody know that I got this vaccine. I don't want my friends to know. I don't want to get COVID. I want to get the vaccine,'" she added.

It's not clear what types of disguises are being employed, but if someone turns up at your pharmacy with an oversize moustache and an obviously false wig, just act normal and get the jab into their arm ASAP.



Boosting rural pharmacy

EMPOWERING pharmacists to do more in rural and remote areas could be key to attracting young members of the profession out of the cities, Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) National President, Associate Professor Chris Freeman, believes.

Addressing the topic of the Future of Pharmacy in 2023 at the PSA national conference last week, Freeman said opportunities for greater professional satisfaction could lure pharmacists to rural practice.

"Attracting pharmacists to rural and regional areas is complex," he said.

"It's not just about funding, because if you look at the rates of pay for pharmacists in rural and regional areas compared to metropolitan areas, it's often much higher... so it's not the rate of pay that will attract people.

"I think one way is to enhance the role of the pharmacist in rural and remote areas, because there's a need for it.



"There are patients who are not being seen by the GP, because there's no capacity to do so.

"Therefore we have to empower pharmacists in those areas to be able to do more and to be recognised and rewarded for it.

"If we're talking about pharmacist prescribing, that is exactly the area where we should have pharmacists prescribing in community pharmacies, because there is a lack of access to it there."

Freeman said such services could provide opportunities for greater professional satisfaction and could help attract pharmacists to practice outside of the major cities.

Benzene detections prompts recall

JOHNSON & Johnson is recalling all batches of its Neutrogena Ultra Sheer Body Mist Sunscreen Spray SPF 50+, after benzene was detected in some batches supplied for the Australian market.

The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has advised consumers to "discard the products and visit the www.neutrogena.com.au website to request a refund".

"All batches with an expiry date of 30 Aug 2023 or earlier should not be used due to possible health risks linked to

benzene," the TGA said.

"All unsold product will be removed from the market."

The TGA noted that concentrations of benzene must be below two parts per million (ppm) in medicines including sunscreens in Australia.

Product testing had detected concentrations of less than three ppm in two of 17 batches assessed, which prompted the recall, although the TGA said exposure to benzene at those levels were not expected to cause serious adverse health effects.

Pharmacy Assistant National Conference

Pharmacy Assistant National Conference

PHARMACISTS and pharmacy owners wanting to improve their pharmacy's bottom line by increasing sales are encouraged to send staff to this year's Pharmacy Assistant National Conference (PA2021).

Being held on 22-23 October in Brisbane, the PA2021 will feature a dedicated workshop focusing on sales techniques and gaining more customers.

The workshop is aimed at retail managers and senior pharmacy assistants and will delve into simple things a pharmacy can do to ensure every marketing cent spent counts towards building a strong, engaging business that values customers.

The conference will also provide product knowledge sessions, free QCPP Refresher Training, and access to over 30 key industry suppliers.

Pharmacies that send two or more pharmacy assistants to the conference will receive a FREE registration for APP2022 (24-27 March, Gold Coast). This is a great opportunity for your staff to update their knowledge and skills at two of Australia's leading industry events.

To view the full program and to register your staff, visit www.pharmacyassistants.com.



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