



Tue 10th August 2021

Today's issue of PD

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

Improving mental health skills

MASTER of Pharmacy students from the University of Western Australia are conducting an online survey focused on pharmacists' mental health skills and behaviours.

The students are inviting pharmacists and interns to share their experiences through an anonymous survey.

The research aims to identify solutions to further enhance the profession's role in supporting patients with mental health conditions.

Participants who complete the survey will earn the chance to win \$200.

CLICK HERE to participate.

Moderna needs adolescent approval

MODERNA Australia's COVID-19 vaccine needs to be approved for use in adolescents before it is rolled out through community pharmacies in the coming weeks, Pharmacy Guild of Australia National President, Trent Twomey, believes.

Welcoming the Therapeutic Goods Administration's (TGA's) decision to grant provisional approval for the two-dose mRNA vaccine, which has been earmarked to be administered by community pharmacists, Twomey said the profession needs "to have it approved for adolescents from the get-go".

"We welcome this action by the TGA and look forward to Moderna approval for Australians aged 12 years and over, before it becomes available in pharmacies in about six weeks' time," he said.

Twomey added there was "ample data" to support both the safety and efficacy of the vaccine in younger patients. Pharmaceutical Society of



Australia National President, Associate Professor Chris Freeman, also backed the provisional approval, noting the first doses of the Moderna vaccine will be administered through community pharmacy, but called for further improvements to access of COVID-19 vaccines.

"Whilst this is welcome news for Australians, it is important that governments continue to expand access to vaccines. This includes allowing pharmacists to administer all COVID-19 vaccines where supply is available," he said.

"In order to ensure we achieve high rates of vaccination and overcome vaccine hesitancy, we must utilise all pharmacists, all TGA-approved vaccines, and all practice settings.

"Pharmacists are one of our most accessible frontline health workforces and community pharmacies are open beyond business hours and on weekends. Pharmacists must play a key role for Australia to complete this vaccine rollout."



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Dispensary Corner

ONCE again we're holding our heads in our hands as conspiracy theorists race for the next unproven COVID-19 miracle cure, rather than getting vaccinated.

As had been the case with hydroxychloroquine, when it was touted as a treatment for the pandemic virus, without significant evidence, pharmacies in the US are now facing a flood of prescriptions for ivermectin, after a preprint study (which has since been withdrawn) suggested it delivered positive results.

US news site, *The Daily Beast*, reported that as pharmacies have limited supplies of the antiparasitic, some of those refusing Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved COVID vaccines have "taken to raiding rural tractor supply stores in search of ivermectin horse paste" to treat the virus.

"Personally I haven't had this situation, but if I did, I would sneak horse paste into the hospital and would rub it into the armpit myself to save my loved one," one Facebook conspiracy fan said.

While it may seem far-fetched to believe there are people out there who will turn to veterinary medicines over human vaccines, a Texas-based poison control specialist noted "there is certainly a noticeable increase in calls to poisons centres regarding ivermectin being misused".

"It's clear the majority are associated with a belief it will prevent or treat COVID-19," the specialist said.

Fair COVAX funding

PLANNED incentive payments for GPs to provide in-reach COVID-19 vaccination (COVAX) services to workers in aged and disability care should be available to all immunisers, Pharmacy Guild of Australia National President, Trent Twomey, says.

Under a Federal Governmentfunded scheme, GPs will receive a \$1,000 payment once they vaccinate 50 aged care and disability workers, with a \$20 fee paid for every additional employee immunised through a dedicated in-reach program.

Royal Australian College of General Practice President, Dr Karen Price, said the "additional payments are just what the doctor ordered".

However, Twomey told *Pharmacy Daily* that community pharmacists and other vaccinators should not be excluded from such payments.

"The Guild believes all vaccinators should be on an equal footing to ensure maximum uptake



of vaccinations across Australia," he said.

Twomey said that community pharmacies were well-equipped to provide similar in-reach services for the aged and disability care sectors.

"Community pharmacists have all the skills and training to provide a service for the aged and disability care sectors - where many pharmacists already have a close relationship on medicines supply and medicines checks," he said.

Upskilling for emerging aged care role

THE Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) *Residential Aged Care Pharmacist: Foundation Training Program* aims to upskill pharmacists to play a greater role in the sector the Society's National President, Associate Professor Chris Freeman, says.

Launching the course Freeman said it supported recommendations from the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety which focussed on ways to improve quality use of medicines and reduce the use of chemical restraints.

"The Aged Care Foundation Training Program is the only short CPD course available of its kind that specifically focuses on the needs of pharmacists, taking into account their background as medicines experts," he said.

"Completion of this course will ensure that pharmacists are equipped with the knowledge, skills and confidence to work with the elderly, ensuring pharmacists can better contribute to quality use of medicines in residential aged care.

"We need all pharmacists to practise to full scope, and playing a more targeted role in residential aged care will be a significant step toward improving safety."



Increased COVAX supply

PHARMACY Guild of Australia national president, Adjunct Professor Trent Twomey, has welcomed the expected delivery of more COVID-19 vaccine doses.

In recent days Governments have announced six figure numbers of doses to be delivered immediately into some capital cities and regional areas to help address supply problems.

Experience shows that in some areas, two weeks of vaccine stocks have been used in two days.

Twomey is also calling for minimal wait times between pharmacies joining the rollout and arrival of vaccine stocks. It's important pharmacies be able to use the Community Service Obligation wholesaler network for prompt deliveries.

The Prime Minister continues to acknowledge to Australians the vital role pharmacists play in the national vaccination effort.

As Twomey says, all aspects of life carry risk but the way to mitigate COVID risk is through having the vaccine if you are over 18.





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