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Pharmacists to deliver free COVAX

PHARMACIST immunisers will join Australia's free COVID-19 vaccine (COVAX) rollout as part of the second phase of the Federal Government's immunisation plan.

Federal Health Minister, Greg Hunt, confirmed pharmacists will play a key role in the administration of vaccines following discussions with the Pharmacy Guild of Australia yesterday.

Hunt's support for pharmacist involvement in the rollout plan has been welcomed by the Guild and Pharmaceutical Society of Australia, however, details as to how pharmacies will be remunerated for the administration of doses have yet to be clarified.

Under the rollout plan, pharmacists and other health professionals alongside aged care, disability, quarantine and border security workers will be immunised in phase 1a, in mid-Feb, with GPs joining the inoculation campaign as part of phase 1b, during which pharmacy assistants will be able to be vaccinated.

Guild National President, George Tambassis, described ensuring the success of the COVAX program as "the biggest public health challenge Australia has ever faced".

"Trained community pharmacist immunisers are standing ready to make a significant contribution to the health workforce charged

with administering these vaccines to all Australians who wish to be vaccinated," he said.

"Through advocacy, training and commitment, pharmacists are now authorised to administer vaccines across all jurisdictions in Australia.

"Pharmacist immunisers are now providing significant and demonstrable public health dividends – through the millions vaccinated against influenza at their local pharmacy in 2020, and now as community pharmacists add to the health workforce preparing to administer these absolutely essential vaccines.

"Pharmacists are trusted health professionals, and local pharmacies are the most accessible health infrastructure in the country – it just makes sense to utilise these key assets."

PSA National President, Associate Professor Chris Freeman, said the profession would play a "vital role" in supporting rapid rollout of the vaccines.

Freeman called on State and Territory Governments to "amend legislation that will allow pharmacists to administer a COVID-19 vaccine", noting that some jurisdictions have been "slow to act" on introducing reforms.

"A proactive approach to legislation amendments means that the entire available health care



workforce, including pharmacists, will be able to undertake a large-scale vaccination program," he said.

"Pharmacists are more than capable, qualified and willing to provide this service to ensure the large scale rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine."

Today's issue of *PD*

Pharmacy Daily today features two pages of news.

Du-Zhong alert

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) is warning that herbal medicines containing *Eucommia ulmoides* (also known as Du-Zhong or Tu-chung) may pose a risk to patients with a latex allergy or sensitivity, after a report of an allergic reaction associated with a listed medicine.



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Doctor faces sexual touching charges

A **CENTRAL** Coast-based doctor is set to face Gosford Local Court later this month charged with two counts of aggravated sexual touching without consent.

The 38-year-old man attended Gosford Police Station on Tuesday evening, where he was arrested

and charged.

The arrest follows an investigation by detectives commenced following allegations the doctor inappropriately touched a female patient at a West Gosford medical centre.



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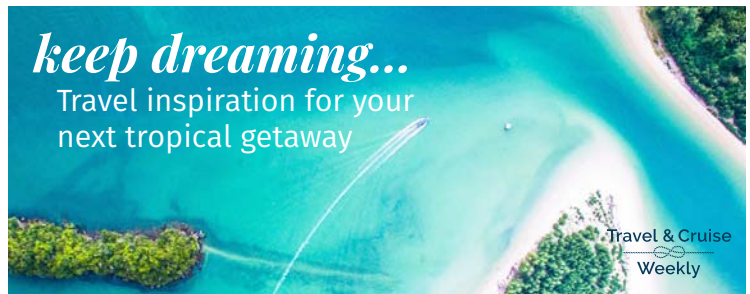
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MyDispense hits milestone

MONASH University's online pharmacy education tool, MyDispense has seen users from around the globe complete one million exercises.

The virtual platform developed by the university's Faculty of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences (FPPS) in 2011, allows students to practice professional skill in a simulated environment, and saw significant growth in 2020, as pharmacy schools shifted to online training as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

FPPS Digital and Learning Technologies Project Manager, Keith Sewell, said it was gratifying to see a million exercises had been completed using MyDispense.

"It's been particularly rewarding to work with the dozens of tertiary partners from across the globe throughout the pandemic to ensure pharmacy students have not had to miss out on honing their professional abilities, despite the major disruptions to on-campus learning," he said.

Crackpot health claims

AUSTRALIA needs consistent health messaging to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, Australian Medical Association (AMA) President, Dr Omar Khorshid believes, hitting out at "crackpot ideas on health issues" being touted by Federal Government backbenchers.

With Federal Health Minister, Greg Hunt, announcing plans to commence a national COVID-19 vaccination rollout program from mid-Feb, Khorshid stressed the need for accurate information to be disseminated to the public, to ensure people have confidence in the safety and efficacy of the immunisations.

Responding to claims by Liberal MP, Craig Kelly, that topical ointment, Betadine, could significantly reduce COVID-19 hospitalisations, Khorshid said it was "really disappointing to see people who should know better getting out there and putting out these crackpot ideas on health issues".

"We're at a critical time now with a vaccination program just about to start," Khorshid said.

"And I guess everyone is really sensitive to these messages, because for a vaccination program



to work, we need everybody to be vaccinated, so we get those numbers up, we get the whole population immunised and therefore, immune to the virus.

"Any significant numbers of people who feel nervous, or just lose confidence, they may not believe the messages that they hear, but they may lose confidence in what is being said by the Government, and that is a real risk to all society, and most particularly, it's a risk to the vulnerable people in society, for whom vaccination may not be the solution.

"So that's children, for instance, who won't be able to access the vaccine early on.

"It's people living with immune deficiency syndromes and people on chemotherapy who may not get an adequate protective response from a vaccination. They rely on the rest of us doing the right thing, and that's why these comments are so dangerous."



CHRISTMAS movie hero, Bruce Willis (not to be confused with Royal Australia College of General Practitioners Vice President, Bruce Willett), appeared willing to risk his health at a pharmacy in Los Angeles on Mon, the *New York Post* reports.

The action star refused to wear a face mask while stopping off at a Rite Aid pharmacy in the city, despite having a bandana draped around his neck.

With more than 2.7 million confirmed COVID-19 cases, and 30,000 deaths, the *Post's Page Six* column noted that people inside the pharmacy voiced concerns at the sight of the unmasked *Death Wish* actor walking through the store.

Given his seemingly flagrant disregard for the safety of others, the Dispensary Corner team hopes Willis doesn't *Die Hard*, as we're craving another John McClane blockbuster.

Maybe he just has a *Sixth Sense* on how to avoid *Armageddon*, guess we'll find out in about 14 days' time.



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