

## TGA volunteers

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) is seeking volunteers to assist it in refining its Good Clinical Practice Inspection Program, following an initial pilot in Jun 2020.

Investigator sites involved in clinical trials of SARS-CoV-2 vaccine candidates are particularly encouraged to consider volunteering.

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## Pharmacists on Aus Day Honours list

**FORMER** Pharmacy Board of Australia Chairman, retired Colonel Bill Kelly, was one of five pharmacists recognised in the 2021 Australia Day Honours List.

Kelly was appointed as a Member (AM) in the General Division of the Order of Australia, "for significant service to pharmacy through a range of roles".

Kelly was awarded the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) Lifetime Achievement Award in 2019, and was presented with the Geoffrey Harkness Medal 'for outstanding contribution to the Royal Australian Army Medical Corps in 1985.

PSA NSW Branch immediate past President and former University of Sydney Department of Life Sciences Head, Peter Carroll, was also made a Member (AM) in the General Division of the Order of Australia, "for significant service to pharmaceutical education and to community health".

Former Dean of Monash University's Faculty of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, and International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) Education Bureau Chair, Professor Bill Charman, was appointed as an Officer (AO) in the General Division of the Order of Australia, "for distinguished service to tertiary education, particularly to the pharmaceutical sciences and to professional organisations".

PSA 2017 Victorian Pharmacist Medal winner, Rodney Whyte, and NSW pharmacist, Judith Ingham, were awarded the Medal (AOM) of the Order of Australia in the General Division, for their service to

the community and the pharmacy profession.

PSA National President, Associate Professor Chris Freeman, congratulated the five pharmacists on their honours.

"It is fitting to see the work of these respected professionals recognised with their Australia Day honours – a tribute to their ongoing work on their own behalf and those they work with and for," he said.

"They have earned their awards for many years of dedication



and commitment to pharmacy and Australian society – PSA congratulates them."

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## Today's issue of PD

**Pharmacy Daily** today features four pages of news.

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## Irish pharmacists face COVAX snub

**IRISH** pharmacists are questioning the rationale behind a decision to exclude the profession from the rollout of COVID-19 vaccines (COVAX) to patients aged 70 years and older.

Under the Emerald Isle's COVAX plan, the over 70s will be vaccinated using the AstraZeneca vaccine, exclusively by GPs.

Irish Pharmacy Union Secretary General, Darragh O'Loughlin, said there was no clinical reason for the move.

"Pharmacists have safely vaccinated over 70s for the flu every year for a decade," he said.

"[There is] no valid reason why they couldn't be vaccinated by the pharmacist".



## Hope won't solve meds shortages

**ONGOING** medicines supply shortages are not going to go away without strong leadership and collaboration between pharmacists, prescribers and regulators, Pharmacy Guild of Australia Victorian Branch President, Anthony Tassone, believes.

Responding to comments from a Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) spokesperson, that pharmacists should contact overseas manufacturers to source medicines, reported in *The Australian*,

Tassone told *Pharmacy Daily* that "prescribers and pharmacists are busy enough delivering care to patients without having to contend with contacting overseas-based manufacturers and suppliers to source supply for their patients".

"Prescribers and pharmacies are doing their absolute best to ensure there is no interruption of treatment for patients and collaborate every day across the country to do so," Tassone said.

"Recent media coverage regarding medication shortages and comments from doctors and pharmacists are a clear cry for help to rectify the untenable situation we are facing for the sake of our patients."



"We need to collaborate to work on deliverable solutions such as: more timely therapeutic substitution notices, more transparent reporting obligations for manufacturers and defining what a critical medication shortage is, supply guarantees for any medication that is listed on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) and considering what ongoing impact is the current price disclosure regime having on certainty of medicines for Australian patients?"

"Hope is not a strategy - hoping the problem goes away is not going to fix it."

"We need leadership, we need solutions and we need to work

together to see that happen for the sake of our patients."

The Australian Medical Association (AMA) suggested the TGA had been "asleep at the wheel", failing to address shortages that have been a problem for several years.

"Is our Federal Department of Health going to deal with medication shortages by delegating all responsibility to the cottage industry end of the pharmacy industry?" an AMA spokesperson asked.

"Do they truly believe that suburban pharmacies should be conducting international trade inquiries?"

## Pharmacist faces 20-year sentence

**WISCONSIN** pharmacist, Steven Brandenburg, is facing up to 20 years behind bars after agreeing to plead guilty to spoiling more than 500 doses of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine.

The US Justice Department reported that the 46-year-old is set to plead guilty to two counts of attempting to tamper with consumer products with reckless disregard for the risk that another

person will be placed in danger of death or bodily harm.

Department of Justice Civil Division Acting Assistant Attorney General, Brian Boynton, said that tampering with vaccine doses during a global health crisis called for "a strong response".

The Department noted that while an agreement suggested Brandenburg will plead guilty, no formal plea has been entered.

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## PSA welcomes COVAX approval

**PHARMACISTS** may not be set to administer the recently approved Pfizer BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, but the profession will be vital to its successful rollout, Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) National President, Associate Professor Chris Freeman believes.

Welcoming the Therapeutic Goods Administration's (TGA's) decision to grant provisional approval for the vaccine - which will be administered through designated Pfizer Hubs - Freeman said it was a "significant first step in Australia's fight against COVID-19".

The PSA President noted that pharmacist immunisers are set to join the national COVID-19 vaccination campaign from Phase 2a (PD 20 Jan).

"The [Federal] Government has indicated it will be approaching community pharmacies this week seeking to participate in this program, and PSA encourages pharmacists to take the opportunity to be at the frontline of this," he said.

"Pharmacists are appropriately skilled and equipped to deliver these services as the roll out of Australia's COVID-19 vaccination strategy continues, including



providing significant workforce and infrastructure capacity once other vaccines, such as the AstraZeneca vaccine, become available."

Under the TGA's provisional approval the vaccine has been added to the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods, for individuals aged 16 years and older.

"Provisional approval of this vaccine is valid for two years and means it can now be legally supplied in Australia," the TGA said.

"The approval is subject to certain strict conditions, such as the requirement for Pfizer to continue providing information to the TGA on longer term efficacy and safety from ongoing clinical trials and

post-market assessment.

"The TGA will continue to actively monitor the safety of the Pfizer vaccine both in Australia and overseas and will not hesitate to take action if safety concerns are identified.

"As an extra check, the TGA laboratories will undertake batch assessment of each batch of the vaccine before it can be supplied in Australia."

**MEANWHILE, Pharmacy Daily** understands that negotiations are ongoing between the Government and the Pharmacy Guild of Australia in relation to remuneration for pharmacists administering COVID-19 vaccines.

## Pharmacy COVID testing role

**COMMUNITY** pharmacists can play an active role in bringing the COVID-19 pandemic under control, the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) reports.

In a holding statement released late last week, FIP said pharmacists were well placed to provide testing as well as pre- and post-test information to patients.

"Community pharmacists can also help refer positive cases to public health authorities for follow-up and contact tracing," FIP said.

"Where governments are scaling up testing populations FIP encourages and supports pharmacists to play a role if they are able - i.e. trained and authorised."

FIP stressed that it was vital for all countries to expand their testing pathways by engaging pharmacists and their teams in providing additional access to testing, as well as opportunities for people to be advised about testing.

**CLICK HERE** to read the statement in full.

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## Dispensary Corner

**LUSTY** NSW-based singles are being urged to go "solo" during the COVID-19 pandemic.

NSW Health is the latest in a string of health bodies from around the world to encourage people to think twice about casual hook-ups.

"The safest form of sex during COVID-19 is solo sex," the NSW Health Play Safe website noted.

"If you're living with your partner sex is probably okay, as you are already sharing space and being in close quarters.

"Sadly, sex with someone outside of your household or bubble still carries risk and is not recommended due to the 1.5 m physical distancing in place."

While not directly ordering people to control their passions, NSW Health has provided tips for those "still having sex with others", including to wear a three-layer mask during the act, and to avoid kissing.

Would-be lovers are urged to follow their instincts, with NSW Health recommending, "if you're unsure of someone's COVID-19 status avoid sexual contact", and to "speak about it" with prospective partners.

Updating your Tinder status with COVID negative could soon be essential for singles.

## TWC leader honoured

**TERRYWHITE** Chemmart Kapunda Pharmacy Leader, Megan McWaters (**pictured**), has been presented with The Light Regional Council Australia Day Award for South Australian Citizen of the Year.

McWaters was honoured for her role as an ambassador for Ovarian Cancer Australia (OCA), a national not-for-profit organisation, which the TWC network has been supporting as a charity partner for more than 15 years.

McWaters who has a family history of the disease, and has been diagnosed as having the faulty BRAC1 gene, associated with ovarian cancer, has been a tireless advocate for OCA, leading a fundraising committee that hosted an event in 2017 that generated more than \$50,000 for women living with ovarian cancer.

In 2019, McWaters was acknowledged by the TWC group with the TWC Retail Leadership Award for commitment to raising awareness about ovarian cancer and for the leadership she displayed at TWC Kapunda.

TWC CEO, Duncan Philips, said he was thrilled that McWaters' efforts to support OCA had been recognised in the Australia Day Awards.

"There could not be a more worthy recipient than Megan," he said.

"Her willingness to share her story has given a voice to the many



women and families impacted by ovarian cancer, and we thank her for everything she does to help raise awareness and funds for OCA."

TWC is set to continue its support of OCA with a fundraising and awareness campaign set to run across the network in Feb.

Over the last 15 years, TWC has raised more than \$1.5 million for the charity.

Meanwhile, TWC pharmacy owner, Karen Brown, was named as Small Business Person of the Year at the Dickson Australia Day Awards.

In a post on LinkedIn, Brown described the awards as "an accolade that can only be achieved with the amazing work of my pharmacy teams, in a year that we stood tall and proud, and the incredible support of my family, business partners, friends and colleagues".

## Pharmacist earns 'Thanks'

**SOUTH** Australian pharmacist, Irfan Hashmi, has been nominated as part of News Ltd's Thanks a Million campaign, for his efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In an effort to support vulnerable patients Hashmi and his team conducted 24 influenza vaccine clinics outside of his pharmacies, administering more than 1,200 free jabs last year.

"I wanted to give back to the community and I thought this was the best time and this was the best possible way to connect with the community," he said.

"We made video messages and translated our flu vaccination flyer into 15 different languages and circulated them through social media to the wider community."



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