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Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features two pages of news.

EMA approves COVAX for kids

THE European Medicines Agency (EMA) has followed the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in granting approval for the use of Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine (COVAX) in children aged five to 11 years.

The EMA confirmed that the dose regime would see children receive lower doses of the vaccine than people aged 12 years and older (10 µg compared with 30 µg).

The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) had granted a provisional determination for a similar approval of the shot last month.

ECPs urged to stick with pharmacy

EARLY career pharmacists (ECPs) who walk away from the profession seeking greater rewards in other healthcare roles are likely to be disappointed, Pharmacy Guild of Australia National President, Trent Twomey, believes.

Speaking on the latest episode of Raven's Recruitment's *Your Pharmacy Career* podcast, Twomey said the majority of health professions were undergoing their own challenges.

"Pharmacy is not unique and different," he said.

"General practice is going through an immense period of change, tertiary healthcare is going through an immense period of change [too]."

"There are financial pressures in every healthcare sector, and there are technological disruptions happening in every single sector, so thinking the grass is greener on the other side and jumping the fence, I'm really sorry you'll invest

all that risk, skills and training, and you'll wake up in five years' time in a new profession and realise you've got exactly the same challenges."

Twomey said that embracing change and pushing for pharmacists to be able to work to their full scope of practice, including the authority to prescribe and administer medications (*PD 24 Nov*), would be crucial to keeping ECPs in the profession.

"I want to retain talent," he said.

"I want a professionally rewarding profession, a highly remunerated profession.

"But we're only going to get those things if everybody changes, and that's from the pharmacy owners, the pharmacist managers to the pharmacy assistants.

"We need to embrace technology to take over a lot of those repetitive things that are contributing to burnout - ordering,



stock management, a lot of those technical aspects of dispensing, so we free our time up to do those more professionally rewarding things.

"Those cognitive things that we've spent half a decade training [in] and obtaining - that's what will ensure not only do we attract the very best talent to our profession, but we also most importantly retain the very best talent in our profession."

CLICK HERE to listen to the podcast in full.

Time to talk boosters with patients

PHARMACISTS are being urged to use their position in the community to discuss COVID-19 vaccine boosters with older patients.

Speaking during a webinar hosted by the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA), Australian Technical Advisory Group of Immunisation (ATAGI) member, Professor Kristine Macartney, said that while the committee was not recommending that boosters

be mandated, but noted that patients aged 65 years and older could benefit from a top-up dose.

"It's about saying you're better to meet this disease with this protection onboard," she said.

"This is a group you need to be talking to out there in the community - you've known Mrs Smith for a long time, you've been looking after her for years, drop in to the conversation 'have you booked your booster yet?'"

Packapill signs telehealth partnership

PERTH-BASED on-demand medicine delivery app, Packapill, is expanding its services into telehealth, signing a partnership with Western Diagnostics Pathology.

Packapill co-founder, Lenin Rajendran, said an initial month-long trial of the app's telehealth feature, Consult, saw 4,000 patient calls being made, with prescriptions being dispensed by partner pharmacies.

"The demand for this feature



confirms the need to extend health services to platforms that are readily accessible to use," he said.

Packapill currently lists 80 partner pharmacies on its website.

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Govt needs to support primary care

AUSTRALIA'S COVID-19 booster vaccination program could be derailed if the Federal Government does not adequately remunerate immunisers in primary care settings, Pharmacy Guild of Australia Victorian Branch President, Anthony Tassone, warns.

With the Victorian State Government confirming it will close eight mass vaccination centres by mid-Dec, Tassone told **Pharmacy Daily** it was clear there will be a reliance on pharmacies and GPs to deliver booster shots.

However, both pharmacy and medical professionals have criticised current remuneration levels, with the Guild reporting that many pharmacies are opting out of the program, because the fees fail to cover the costs of administering the doses.

"It is a recipe for disaster for patients in the New Year wanting to stay protected," Tassone said.

"From the start, the Guild has advocated that there should be a 'same job, same job, same pay' approach to remuneration when it comes to the COVID-19 vaccine.

"The vaccine is no more effective in protecting patients or preventing hospitalisation or death just because

a doctor administers it rather than a pharmacist.

"On multiple occasions, the Guild has made representations to the Federal Government to urgently review the COVID-19 remuneration and provided modelling for the indicative costs of delivery of the program.

"We have clearly stated that anything less than \$26/dose, which was the remuneration for the second dose of the primary schedule when given to a patient who had seen the same pharmacy provider would be seen as a cut by the profession and not viable.

"With over 2.2 million doses of the COVID vaccine administered through community pharmacies nationwide – it is obvious that patients have accepted and valued the participation by pharmacies.

"The numbers of pharmacies participating in the booster program speak for themselves.

"It's a loud and clear message being sent by pharmacies and primary care of the need for proper remuneration to be involved in the booster dose program.

"It's not up to community pharmacies to subsidise the Australian Government's booster



dose program – which is critical to keeping borders and the economy open and patients out of hospital.

"It's now up to the Federal Government to decide whether they want to listen to ensure patients continue to be protected against the COVID virus, or risk seeing what is occurring in parts of Europe with a new wave of infections and more lockdowns."

MEANWHILE a spokesperson for Federal Health Minister, Greg Hunt, told *The Age* that the Government supported the delivery of COVID vaccines by community pharmacists, and would "continue to support their work".

Dispensary Corner

THERE are plenty of good reasons to lose weight, but sometimes you need a little bit of extra motivation to keep the kilojoules at bay.

That wasn't a problem for an Indian man who has admitted to police that he deliberately lost 10kg in order to commit a robbery of his former employer.

34-year-old Moti Singh from Ahmedabad revealed his cunning plan under interrogation, confirming a strict diet regimen which had allowed him to slim down enough to enter the property via a ventilator shaft.

The alleged offender is believed to have told officers that when he worked at the home two years ago he had taken note of the location of valuables and the security system, with the property fitted with CCTV cameras monitoring electronic doors.

However he figured out the alternate access route, realising he would have to significantly slim down in order to slide through the unorthodox entry.

He said he only ate one meal a day for about three months to shed the weight.

Unfortunately his carefully laid plans came to naught after investigators spotted him on video footage from a hardware store when he was buying a saw to cut the glass of a window also used during the break-in.

Officers then were able to track him using the location of his cellphone, and recovered stolen cash and valuables after they apprehended him.

Stand up with PDL

PHARMACISTS are being invited to enjoy a night of stand up comedy courtesy of Pharmaceutical Defence Limited (PDL) on 15 Dec.

The free online event will raise funds for the Pharmacists' Support Service with comedians, Dave Thornton, Claire Hooper and Lewis Garnham performing. **CLICK HERE** for more.

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