

Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features four pages of news plus a full page from UTS.

TGA's approved RAT list grows

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has released an updated list of COVID-19 rapid antigen tests (RATs) that are approved for home use from 01 Nov.

Panasonic's CareStart COVID-19 Antigen Home Test, and Emergence Technology's Ecotest COVID-19 Antigen Saliva Test Kit (COV-S35 Pen) were given the regulator's tick of approval last week.

The new approvals bring the number of RATs that have been given the green-light for home testing by the TGA to eight.

CLICK HERE for the full lists of approved home RATs.

Third COVAX dose payment confusion

PHARMACY software providers and industry leaders were caught off-guard by the Federal Government's announcement to roll out third doses of COVID-19 vaccinations for severely immunocompromised patients (**PD** 11 Oct).

Speaking during a webinar last week, Pharmacy Guild of Australia National President, Trent Twomey, told pharmacy owners that the announcement was an example of "where government policy got ahead of system design".

While pharmacists will be able to administer a third dose to eligible patients, Twomey noted that they will not be able to record it through GuildCare or MedAdvisor software until mid-Nov, and they will have to make claims manually through the Pharmacy Programs Administrator (PPA).

Twomey said that under the current payment structure "if patient A has never been to your pharmacy [for a COVAX shot]

before, and if you satisfy all the clinical criteria and provide them with the third dose... you're going to be paid \$16".

"If they've been to your pharmacy once before [for a COVAX jab], you're going to get \$26, because even though this is the third dose and you can satisfy that by checking the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR), it is only the second dose that you've give from the pharmacy," he said.

"[However], if you've already given the first and second doses from your pharmacy you can't claim at all until after 14 Dec, until the PPA and the new business rules have come up [to date].

"This isn't good enough.

"It's completely confusing... the Guild is completely against the confusion that this has created.

"But we are obviously very supportive, and would encourage all of you to do the right clinical thing and provide their clinical service to anyone who is severely



immunocompromised that presents to your practice."

Twomey added that he and the Guild's Vice President for Health Economics, Anthony Tassone, had been in discussions with "the highest levels of government" to push for "same job, same pay" in relation to third COVAX doses, and "to ensure that this is a subsequent dose payment, not an initial dose payment".



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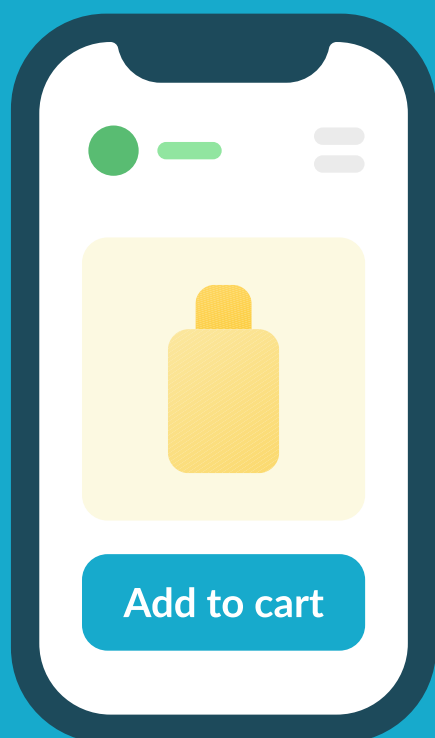
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FIP calls for health worker protection

CONCRETE action needs to be taken to ensure the safety of health professionals around the world, the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) believes.

In a joint statement published by the World Health Organization (WHO), FIP CEO, Catherine Duggan, called for governments to strengthen the monitoring and reporting of COVID-19 infections, ill-health and deaths among health and care workers.

"It is imperative that health and care workers must get adequate protection to be able to do their jobs safely," the WHO said.

"The world cannot recover from the COVID-19 pandemic without long-term, sustainable investments in the people who provide care to us.

"These investments are not only necessary, they are also common sense: with dividends accruing to national gender, health, labour and socio-economic goals.

"Many health and care workers

have died... recognition and commemoration are not enough.

"It is our moral obligation to protect and invest in health and care workers."

Duggan noted that a WHO working paper estimated that between 80,000 and 180,000 health workers - including pharmacists - had died as a result of the pandemic, as of May 2021, with additional data showing that two-in-five health and care workers globally had been fully vaccinated by Sep.

"The WHO working paper provides a stark number to stimulate greater action; we cannot afford to lose more health and care workers and our world will not recover from the pandemic without long-term, sustainable investments in the health workforce," she said.

WHO Health Workforce Department Director, Jim Campbell, added that steps needed to be taken to strengthen vaccination rates amongst health professionals.



"We have a moral obligation to protect all health and care workers, ensure their rights and provide them with decent work in a safe and enabling practice environment," he said.

"This must include access to vaccines.

"Beyond vaccines, economic recovery and all new investments in emergency preparedness and response must prioritise the education and employment of health and care workers, linking to the UN Secretary-General's Global Accelerator for Jobs and Social Protection."

Pharmacy trainee facing charges

A **VIRGINIAN** pharmacy technician trainee is facing criminal charges relating to the theft of prescription medications.

Local broadcaster, *WDTV* reported that 39-year-old Julianne Noffsinger-Hess was arrested at the store, and confessed to taking phentermine capsules and suboxone strips without permission.

Noffsinger-Hess later admitted consuming the medications and told police where the remaining quantities of the drugs were in her home.



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EMA issues Moderna booster advice

THE European Medicines Agency's (EMA's) human medicine committee (CHMP) is advising that patients aged 18 years and older may benefit from a booster dose of Moderna's "Spikevax", COVID-19 vaccine.

In a statement issued overnight, the European medicines regulator noted that data had indicated that a third dose of the vaccine, administered six to eight months after the second, "led to a rise in antibody levels in adults whose antibody levels were waning".

The recommendation follows similar advice relating to the Pfizer BioNTech vaccine (Comirnaty), issued by CHMP earlier this month.

"In addition it [CHMP] recommended that an extra dose of Comirnaty and Spikevax may be given to people with severely weakened immune systems, at least 28 days after their second dose," the regulator said.



The EMA noted that the Moderna booster dose would consist of half the vaccine used for primary shots, and that the side effects of the additional jab were similar to those experienced after the second dose.

"The risk of inflammatory heart conditions or other very rare side effects after a booster is being carefully monitored," the EMA said.

"As for all medicines, EMA will

continue to look at all data on the safety and effectiveness of Spikevax.

"At the national level, public health bodies may issue official recommendations on the use of booster doses, taking into account the local epidemiological situation, as well as emerging effectiveness data and the limited safety data for the booster dose."

Pharmacy's phenomenal effort praised

COMMUNITY pharmacy's efforts to boost COVID-19 vaccination rates in South Australia have been recognised by the State's Minister for Health, Stephen Wade.

Speaking in the Legislative Council earlier this month, he noted that pharmacy workers "have been at the forefront of primary healthcare efforts" throughout the pandemic.

"Whilst the pharmacy network was a relatively late

addition to the battery of vaccine distributions, they have undertaken a phenomenal effort in a short time," he said.

Wade added that having pharmacies involved in the vaccine rollout would be "extremely important" in reaching out to their communities and immunising "the high fruit... people who, unlike the first tranches of South Australians stepping up, are not keen to get the vaccine".

Multi-lingual COVAX campaign

THE Commonwealth Department of Health has released a video campaign to promote community pharmacies as COVID-19 vaccination (COVAX) sites.

The video is now available in English, Arabic, Cantonese, Greek, Italian and Korean, to help overcome language barriers that may be impacting access for patients.

CLICK HERE for more.

Pharmacy Guild Update

New PBS resources

THE Pharmacy Guild of Australia has acknowledged new resources provided by the Australian Government to assist community pharmacists ordering PBS stationery.

Prescribers, authorised delegates and approved suppliers are all able to order through Health Professional Online Services (HPOS).

The system is available 24/7 and offers faster responses than ordering using a form. Services Australia advises nine new education resources are now available on the Health Professional Education Resources Gateway which can be accessed via www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/organisations/health-professionals/services-medicare/pbs-and-rpbs-stationery/how-order.

A Provider Digital Access (PRODA) account is needed to access HPOS; providers not yet holding one can register for a PRODA account and link to HPOS.

The nine new sets of advice include how to order PBS stationery online as an approved prescriber, how to search and re-order and editing the order.

Tailored advice is available for each of the approved suppliers, authorised delegates and approved prescribers.

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Dispensary Corner

A 1993 plumbing mishap has seen staff and patients at a Japanese hospital drinking and washing their hands in water which was actually only intended for use in flushing toilets for almost 30 years.

Authorities at Osaka University have confirmed that during the construction of the local Ministry of Medicine building, a pipe intended for toilets was mistakenly connected to a drinking water line, affecting about 120 taps.

The error was discovered by inspectors who were planning the development of a new diagnosis and treatment clinic.

Fortunately there appear to have been no adverse effects relating to the mistake, with hospital staff checking the taste, colour and smell of the water on a weekly basis as part of hygiene protocols.

However the official in charge of the project issued a public apology, saying "the university hospitals that provide advanced medical services have caused the public's anxiety, and I am very sorry for this".

Price-fixing guilty plea

A FORMER export manager from pharmaceutical ingredients company, Alkaloids of Australia, is set to face sentencing over criminal cartel conduct charges next month.

Christopher Joyce entered guilty pleas to three charges relating to breaches of the *Competition and Consumer Act* and admitted being involved in seven further offences including price-fixing, bid rigging and market allocation cartel arrangements between Alkaloids of Australia and other overseas providers of scopolamine N-butylbromide (SNBB), an ingredient produced by the company for use in antispasmodic medications, at a hearing in Sydney's Downing Centre Local Court this morning.

The charges followed an investigation by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC), and related to price-fixing over an eight-year period from Jul 2009, when criminal cartel laws came into force in Australia.

"This is the first guilty plea by an individual to criminal cartel conduct under the criminal cartel laws," ACCC Chair Rod Sims noted.

Following his guilty pleas, Joyce



has been committed to the Federal Court of Australia for sentencing, with the matter listed for case management on 10 Nov.

Under the legislation Joyce could face up to 10 years' imprisonment and/or fines of up to \$444,000.

In a statement following Joyce's latest hearing, the ACCC said that proceedings against Alkaloids of Australia were continuing.

"Alkaloids of Australia is yet to enter pleas to the criminal cartel charges it is facing. That matter is listed in the Downing Centre Local Court on 09 Nov 2021," the ACCC said.

"As these matters are currently before the court, the ACCC will not be providing further comment at this time."

Dispense Assist inks first deal

RECENTLY launched pharmacy service provider, Dispense Assist, has announced it has secured its first pharmacy customer.

The start-up, which launched last month (PD 22 Sep), offers pharmacy owners a secure online tool to meet dispensing challenges, while freeing up pharmacists to deliver professional services, or alleviate staff shortages.

"It took just a quick demonstration to convince the pharmacy's owner that Dispense Assist was just the solution he was looking for to solve his dose administration aid (DAA) staffing issues whilst significantly boosting DAA profits," the company said.

"Every pharmacy who has received an online demonstration has become excited at the prospect of immediately finding dispensary staff, particularly for their DAAs, whilst saving up to 91% on award rates.

"Based on early interest, Dispense Assist is confident it has the right solution at the right time."

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- Excellent support network across our 4 local pharmacies (Direct Chemist Outlet Emerald, Direct Chemist Outlet Central Highlands, Emerald Plaza Pharmacy & Emerald Superclinic Pharmacy) with a combined team of over 40 members and backed by the wider network of Direct Chemist Outlet and QVIC pharmacies with a dedicated State Manager

- Career support and progression is always raised amongst our local stores and extended group.
- Strong focus on training with funds contributed towards further education for our pharmacists.
- Focus on professional services with ongoing implementation of new services.
- Ability to have input and drive change within the business. We operate in a highly collaborative environment involving all members of our team from junior assistants to managing pharmacists.

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