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Mental health full scope opportunity

PHARMACISTS have the skills to play a greater role in the care of patients with mental health issues, Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, Emma McBride (pictured), believes.

Speaking at the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia's (PSA's) conference last week, the pharmacist-turned-politician told delegates that the area of mental health was one "that pharmacists can truly reach their full scope of practice".

"I know that pharmacists are doing a lot in mental health and suicide prevention, and I know that we have a lot more to offer," she said.

"We know that through the [COVID-19] pandemic some people experienced mental ill health for the first time.

"I'm sure many of you saw the AIHW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) report that came out last week, with quite stark figures about the prevalence of mental ill



health, particularly being expressed in young people and women.

"We know that in 2020/21 15% of Australians aged 16 to 85 experienced high to very high levels of psychological distress.

"We know women were more likely to experience psychological distress than men, and young people were more than twice as likely to experience distress than those over the age of 35.

"Pharmacists have so much to

contribute to the mental health and wellbeing of all Australians - you're often the first port of call, the first contact that someone has with the healthcare system when they're seeking support, and we need to do more.

"As a pharmacist, I worked in a high dependency acute unit - we want to make sure that people get early intervention, early in life, early in the course of illness.

"We will always need critical care, but pharmacists have a greater role to play in primary care, so that we can make sure that people get the best chance.

"It's an area where I think that pharmacists can truly reach their full scope of practice."

Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features two pages of news, plus full pages from:

- Minfos
- Pharmacy Guild of Australia

Minfos demo

PHARMACY software provider, Minfos, is offering pharmacies the opportunity to experience its dispense to retail solutions designed to support store management. See **page three** for more.

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BRANDS seeking to reconnect with pharmacy assistants (PAs) after two years without a PA National Conference, are being urged to book a stand at this year's event in Brisbane.

The two-day conference will provide exhibitors with an opportunity to engage with and educate PAs.

See **page four** for more.

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Dispensary Corner

COVID-19 is continuing to wreak havoc around the world, with Hong Kong's annual exhibition of global gourmet food the latest event to be impacted by restrictions imposed to curb the virus' spread.

Exhibitors at the five-day expo will be allowed to display their produce, but visitors will be prohibited from sampling the delicacies on show.

The city's Trade Development Council's Acting CEO, Sophia Chong, said all attendees will be required to wear masks while at the event, in addition to the 'try before you buy' ban.

"We understand that visitors would like to taste the samples," she said.

"We hope we can resume this arrangement after the pandemic, when it's safe and hygienic to do it."

Despite the ban on visitors consuming samples of exhibitors' offerings being in its second year, Chong said that exhibitor numbers were up on last year's event.

Australian pharmacists attending conferences around the country over the next few weeks will be pleased to know buffet lunches are still available.



ACT Budget disappoints pharmacy

PLEAS to authorise Canberra-based pharmacists to do more for their communities have fallen on deaf ears, with the ACT Government's 2022/23 Budget failing to invest in the profession, the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) believes.

PSA ACT Branch President, Olivia Collette, said Chief Minister and Treasurer, Andrew Barr, has abandoned pharmacists who kept the community safe throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, describing the Budget as a "missed opportunity".

"The ACT Budget has yet again ignored the opportunity to invest in our health system and improve the accessibility of health care to Canberrans," she said.

"Throughout the pandemic, pharmacists remained the most accessible health care professional in our communities, remaining open while others closed their doors and have shown their dedication to the wellbeing of Canberrans."

"PSA's 2022-23 Budget Submission

urged the ACT Government to improve patient access by increasing the range of vaccinations provided by pharmacists.

"This simple regulatory change that could save the lives of Canberrans has been overlooked despite the clear benefits to the community."

"The ACT has the most stringent restrictions in the country when it comes to which vaccinations pharmacists can administer, despite pharmacists having been on the frontline of the COVID-19 vaccination rollout throughout the pandemic."

"Investment in pharmacists will improve the care Canberrans receive from the wider health system and has the potential to reduce the increasing number of Canberrans presenting to emergency departments with minor ailments as well as assisting with current workloads and wait times being experienced by GP clinics."

"We urge the ACT Government to



reconsider its needless restrictions and give Canberra's pharmacists the tools to provide world class care to our communities."

MEANWHILE the Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) welcomed the ACT Government's additional \$29.8 million investment to deliver more elective surgeries.

However SHPA CEO Kristin Michaels said "it is essential that commensurate funding for surgical and perioperative pharmacists is provided under the announcement".

Infant COVAX for at-risk children: ATAGI

THE Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) has recommended that children aged between six months and five years with severe immunocompromise, disability, or complex health conditions, should be vaccinated against COVID-19.

The recommendation follows the Therapeutic Goods Administration's (TGA's) decision to grant provisional approval for Moderna's COVID-19 vaccine (COVAX) for children aged six months to five years (**PD** 20 Jul).

ATAGI stated that it did not currently recommend vaccination

for healthy children under five years, noting "these children have a very low likelihood of severe illness from COVID-19".

However the group reiterated that all children five years and older should receive a two-dose course of a COVAX.

Meanwhile, the TGA announced that it has commenced the evaluation of an application from Pfizer to extend the approval of its COVAX for use in children aged six months to five years.

The application is for a three-dose course of the vaccine at a dosage of three micrograms in 0.2mL.

TGA continues vape clampdown

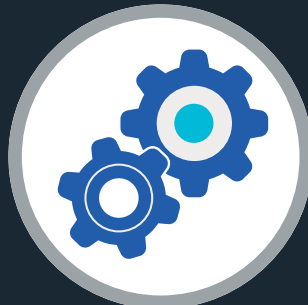
THE Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) is continuing to pursue businesses and individuals for breaching advertising rules relating to nicotine vaping products (NVPs).

The regulator issued a NSW resident with a \$2,664 infringement notice yesterday over the promotion of the products, while it has also ordered Queensland-based business, Phenix Health Pty Ltd to cease advertising the use and supply of NVPs on its website.



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