

## Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features three pages of news.

### Countdown to Connect

PHARMACY Connect will return to the Hilton Sydney tomorrow after a two-year COVID-19-induced hiatus.

The event will get underway with workshops covering harm minimisation and full scope of practice.

A separate session focused on the role of the Pharmacy Council of NSW will provide insights into the regulator's complaints process, which issues land pharmacy owners in the most trouble and tips to minimise regulatory exposure.

Australian Tobacco Harm Reduction Association Chair, Dr Colin Mendelson, will discuss nicotine vaping, in the penultimate session of the day.

## Australia faces US-style opioid crisis

AUSTRALIA must take decisive action to prevent overdose related deaths, or face a US-style opioid crisis, Penington Institute CEO, John Ryan, warns.

Launching the Institute's *Australia's Annual Overdose Report 2022*, which presents data from 2020, Ryan said it marked the seventh successive year that overdose deaths have exceeded road fatalities, with 2,220 drug-induced deaths recorded in 2020.

"When we first breached 2,000 overdose deaths back in 2014, the announcement was met with dismay and alarm," he said.

"In our communities, as in political and professional circles, there was an acknowledgement that we had arrived at a crisis point demanding swift action.

"The shock of realisation prompted us to reflect on how we had allowed this to happen, and now that it had happened, what we could do about it.

"In Australia, someone dies from

an overdose every four hours.

"Non-fatal overdoses, which can have devastating long-term effects, are estimated to occur at around 30 times this frequency.

"Overdose is a leading cause of death for Australians of all ages. It is the second- and third-leading cause of death for those in their thirties and twenties, respectively.

"Australians aged 40 and above now account for over two-thirds of unintentional overdose deaths.

"Stimulant overdose is becoming more common.

"The total number of unintentional drug-induced deaths involving stimulants (a category that includes ice and MDMA) has increased ten-fold over the last two decades, from 53 deaths in 2001 to 526 in 2020.

"Perhaps most worrying of all, Australian overdose deaths involving fentanyl (along with two other synthetic opioids, pethidine and tramadol) have increased by 1,275% since 2006.



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"Without decisive action, the slide into US-level overdose mortality seems not just possible but assured.

"A National Overdose Prevention Strategy, developed in collaboration with experts, including frontline workers and those with lived experience, represents our best chance of arresting the crisis before we draw level with the US.

"Developing this strategy should be made a national priority. With so many lives lost, so many more at risk, and the solutions within our grasp, 2022 must be the year we decide that one more overdose death is too many."

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## Provisional approval for bivalent shot

**MODERNA'S** bivalent COVID-19 vaccine (Spikevax Bivalent Original/Omicron) has been granted provisional approval by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) to be administered as a booster for adults.

The shot has become the first bivalent COVID-19 vaccine to be approved for use in Australia.

"The adapted vaccine triggers an immune response against two different COVID-19 variants: the original virus and the BA.1 Omicron variant," the TGA said.

"The vaccine should be administered at least three months after a primary series and/or previous booster dose with Spikevax or other authorised COVID-19 vaccine, in accordance with official recommendations.

"The Spikevax Bivalent Original/Omicron vaccine contains 25 micrograms of imelasomeran that targets the Omicron variant BA.1, and 25 micrograms of elasomeran that targets the original strain of SARS-CoV-2.

"All other ingredients are the same as those used in Moderna's original COVID-19 vaccine.

"The Spikevax Bivalent Original/



Omicron vaccine elicited a superior neutralising antibody response against Omicron BA.1 strain and a similar response against the ancestral strain, 28 days after use as a booster dose compared with the original Spikevax vaccine.

"Initial analysis shows that the bivalent vaccine also generates a higher immune response against the sub-variants BA.4 and BA.5 than the original Spikevax vaccine.

"In making this regulatory decision, the TGA carefully considered data from an ongoing clinical study, which showed that

the Spikevax Bivalent Original/Omicron booster has a similar safety and reactogenicity profile to the original Spikevax booster given as a second booster dose.

"No new safety signals were identified."

The potential use of the bivalent shot as part of the national COVID-19 immunisation program, has yet to be confirmed, with the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) expected to provide advice to the Federal Government in the coming weeks.

## PA2022 early bird deadline

**EARLY** bird registration for the Pharmacy Assistant National Conference (PA2022) closes tomorrow.

Delegates planning to make the trip to Brisbane for the conference on 28 and 29 Oct, can save \$65 off the full registration package, which includes entry to conference sessions, the refresher training workshop, the trade exhibition and tickets to the welcome reception and gala dinner, by registering before tomorrow's deadline.

Pharmacies which register two or more staff will also be rewarded with a free registration for next year's Australian Pharmacy Professional Conference (APP) on the Gold Coast, valued at over \$1,000.



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## Shoplifter told to take responsibility

**LIGHT-FINGERED** Western Australian, Megan Merice Tucker, has been ordered to do 60 hours of community work and pay a fine of \$1,200 after pleading guilty to shoplifting at a Wizard Pharmacy store in Kalgoorlie.

The 48-year-old had pilfered \$420-worth of products from the store on 05 Aug.

She visited the pharmacy again on 24 Aug, and threatened to "bash" the store manager when she was asked to leave, the *Kalgoorlie Miner* reported.

Police arrested Tucker at her home on 25 Aug, where they found cannabis, a homemade bong, and charged her with two drug offences.

The Kalgoorlie Magistrates Court heard that Tucker's actions put her in breach of a



community-based order, which had been placed on her in relation to two burglary offences earlier this year.

Addressing Tucker, Magistrate, Andrew Matthews, urged her to take responsibility for her actions.

"You are an adult," he said.

"You're ultimately responsible for your choices,"

"I want you to engage (with the order), but we need you to stop offending.

"I just need you to try a bit harder."





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### Dispensary Corner

**TECHNOLOGY** outages can cause carnage for retailers, so getting point-of-sale infrastructure right is critical. When payment systems breakdown in community pharmacies, the flow-on can impact access to medicines, or patients can leave with an IOU. The nightmare scenario hit food and drink vendors at Dublin's Aviva Stadium, when a card-reading system from the Bain Capital-backed SumUp fintech firm failed, as the ground hosted a US college football game between Northwestern University and the University of Nebraska on Sat. Faced with close to 35,000 hungry and thirsty fans, the stadium's caterer, Levy UK + Ireland, opted to dole out free food and drinks while SumUp's technology was failing to deliver, as the venue operates a cashless policy. Over the course of the two-hour payment system outage, Levy dispensed close to \$750,000-worth of booze and burgers. SumUp has announced it is conducting an investigation into the incident, which could see it stump up for the large drinks bill, while also copping significant reputational damage.



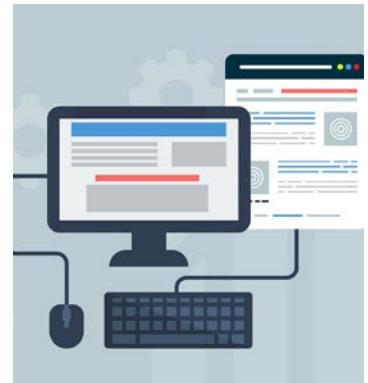
## TGA launches revamped website

**ACCESSING** information through the Therapeutic Goods Administration's website is set to become easier, following a redesign of the platform. The regulator launched its reorganised and consolidated site yesterday, transitioning content from the old site to the National Library of Australia web archive, TROVE. The new-look site features news, clearly accessible information about medicines shortages, clinical trials and the Database of Adverse Event Notifications (DAEN), links to open consultations and frequently searched topics. "We have designed and built our website to align with the Digital Transformation Agency's Service Design and Delivery Process, and Digital Service Standard," the

regulator said. "We have moved from a website that was structured around how TGA works, to one that's structured to make sense to you. "Information is now organised into the following topics:

- Products we regulate - categorises the product types and what we do and don't do.
- Product safety - includes safety alerts, recalls and how to report problems.
- How we regulate - resources for Industry to understand what they need to do and how.
- Guidance and resources - our databases, guidance, fact sheets and publications are here.

"Organising our content in this way will help you to find it more easily.



"It also helps us remove duplicated information and display content consistently, so you know what to expect. "When we re-write more of the website content, we will be applying a consistent government style based on the Australian Government's Style Manual."

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