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Today's issue of PD

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

Business support

SIGMA Healthcare is offering pharmacy owners the tools to grow their business with support from Sigma Financial Services.

See **page five** for more.

TGA warning

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration has issued a warning that ipilimumab "has been linked to the rare yet serious adverse event of serous retinal detachment".

The warning has been incorporated into the product information for ipilimumab.

CLICK HERE for more.

RACGP continues attacks on NQPSPP

POLITICAL donations rather than patient safety may be driving the proposed North Queensland Pharmacy Scope of Practice Pilot (NQPSPP), the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) claims.

Ramping up the RACGP's efforts to shut down the planned trial before it starts, the organisation's Vice President, Dr Bruce Willett, highlighted the Pharmacy Guild of Australia's contributions to political parties (PD 02 Feb).

In the 2020/21 financial year the Guild spent \$295,149 on political donations nationally, with more than \$80,000 paid to the Liberal National Party of Queensland (\$43,490) and the Queensland Branch of the Australian Labor Party (\$36, 821).

Speaking with *The Australian*, Willett suggested the Guild's political spending appeared to be influencing health policy around the NQPSPP and the extension of the Urinary Tract Infection Pharmacy

Pilot - Queensland.

"The Pharmacy Guild donates very significant amounts of money to political parties and it's hard to feel that these things are unrelated," he said.

"They have been extremely effective in doing quiet, sophisticated lobbying in terms of donations, but also in terms of just a constant presence with parliamentarians."

Willett said the primary concern with the NQPSPP was the "safety aspect of it", but added "the second concern is the business part of it".

"Currently there is a separation between the prescriber and the dispenser," he said.

"If the pharmacist is both initiating the prescription and then dispensing it, there really is a significant financial incentive to provide a script where it may not necessarily be appropriate."

The latest comments from the RACGP follow the organisation's decision to walk away from its



position on the NQPSPP Steering Reference Group (PD 14 Feb).

Speaking at a Queensland Parliamentary Health and Environment Committee hearing earlier this month, Guild Queensland Branch President, Chris Owen, moved to allay safety concerns, noting that of the more than 6,300 occasions of service provided by pharmacists in the UTIPP-Q "no adverse events have been recorded, and as part of the pilot pharmacists have referred more complex cases to local practitioners, where clinically appropriate and required, without prescribing any medicine".

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WA pharmacists need access to PPE

PRIMARY Health Networks (PHNs) across Western Australia need to be supported to effectively distribute personal protective equipment (PPE) to frontline workers, including pharmacists, the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) warns.

With the state's borders set to reopen on 03 Mar, PSA WA Branch President, Keegan Wong, said there was a small window of opportunity left to adequately protect those on the frontline ahead of an anticipated surge in COVID-19 cases.

"We cannot have a situation like on the East Coast, where there wasn't adequate access to PPE when it was desperately needed – and fortunately for the McGowan and Federal Governments, there is still time to provide frontline workers with equipment like N95 masks and adequate eye protection," he said.

"The end to the State's border restrictions is now in sight, and for many, this is welcome news – but for primary healthcare, increased

interstate socialisation poses significant risk to clinicians and their patients.

"We know there's sufficient supply of PPE in the country and this should be made available so that all primary care clinicians can safely support their patients and the broader community.

"The WA Primary Health Alliance is doing everything in its power to ensure that distribution delays are expedited and have been managing this brilliantly in the face of uncertainty.

"We are calling on the Federal and State Government to support our PHN to keep vital primary care services, including all pharmacies, open as the Omicron wave hits.

"Currently, only pharmacies providing COVID-19 vaccinations are included, and access to this PPE stops at the end of Mar, right when cases are expected to rapidly rise.

"This needs to be extended to all pharmacies, otherwise all pharmacy staff and vulnerable patients will be



unnecessarily put at risk.

"Omicron has proven that future waves of different variants are inevitable and we need be ready for whenever that may be.

"We cannot risk furloughing of staff and primary health closures as a result of inferior protective equipment.

"We know that our frontline workers will need to use this protective equipment for the foreseeable future, and it is not acceptable that our health workers are not provided with adequate PPE."

Pharmacy4Less scoops awards

PHARMACY4LESS Top Ryde Shopping Centre, has taken out Sydney's Northern Districts Local Business Awards 2021 Business of the Year title.

The pharmacy claimed the top honour for local businesses across the City of Ryde, Hunter's Hill Council and Lane Cove Council areas, earlier this month, in addition to the area's Pharmacy of the Year gong.

The Pharmacy4Less store succeeded Max Value Pharmacy North Ryde as the region's 2020 Pharmacy of the Year.



EleCare recall

ABBOTT Australasia Pty Ltd is conducting a precautionary recall of infant formula products including EleCare and Similac, due to potential microbial contamination.

The Pharmacy Council of NSW has urged pharmacists to assist parents and carers to identify and source suitable alternative products.



Sydney Uni opens door for use of Doctor of Pharmacy title

COMBINED Bachelors and Masters of Pharmacy programs announced by the University of Sydney (**PD** 18 Feb) will pave the way for further growth and development of the profession, Pharmacy Guild of Australia National President, Trent Twomey says.

"The Extended Masters qualification includes the Intern Year, and graduates will be able to use the title Doctor of Pharmacy," he said.

"This was agreed to in the Seventh Community Pharmacy Agreement which was signed in 2020, but is yet

to be implemented by the Commonwealth Government.

"Since then the university has been developing the combined course which will be available to students from next year.

"The University of Sydney is the first but other universities will certainly follow in the very near future as this is what students, employers and patients will be wanting.

"The BPharm (Hons) degrees are considered sub-registerable by an increasing number of developed countries.

"This move will bring us into line with the developed world.

"The Guild looks forward to working with all universities across Australia to help introduce this qualification, which will see full scope of practice pharmacists who can prescribe, dispense, administer and review all medicines for all patients.

"We just need to work with State and Territory Governments to remove barriers to full scope.

"It is the way of the future for the profession and underscores our commitment to the wellbeing of our patients and the communities we serve."

CLICK HERE for more information about the courses.



Pharmacist exchange

THE Pharmacy Guild of Australia is set to assist a British pharmacist to secure a placement in an Australian store under an exchange scholarship program being launched by the World Pharmacy Council (WPC).

The UK's Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee announced that it was accepting applications for the program, with the successful candidate expected to spend between four and 12 months in Australia before sharing their experiences of the differences in practice between the jurisdictions at the WPC's annual conference.

The successful applicant will be responsible for ensuring they have a valid visa and must commence their exchange within six months of being awarded the scholarship.

Pharmacists' morale at all time low

EMPLOYEE pharmacists are reporting high levels of stress and burn-out due to increasing workloads stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic, a survey by Professional Pharmacists Australia (PPA) reveals.

The union's CEO, Jill McCabe, said the pandemic has amplified issues relating to working conditions, high workloads and wages in the pharmacy sector.

"For over two years, day-in, day-out, pharmacists have been on the front line in the battle against COVID-19, providing vaccinations, dispensing medications and providing information and other services to support the community's health and wellbeing throughout the pandemic," she said.

"The lack of adequate preparation for dealing with the Omicron variant led to a massive increase in the demand for pharmacy services, and already stretched employee pharmacists have reached

breaking-point.

"Over 79% of pharmacists said their pharmacy was not adequately staffed to deal with the increased demands placed on it.

"Unsurprisingly, morale in the pharmacy sector is at an all-time low, with over two thirds of pharmacists feeling either 'very negative' or 'negative' about their working experience in pharmacy.

"We're continuing our campaign 'Keep Pharmacy Safe', working with employers to ensure that pharmacists are provided adequate PPE, receive their rest and meal breaks and are consulted about their workloads.

"We'll continue our calls for the Federal Government to ensure that rapid antigen tests are distributed in a range of settings, making them free and accessible to all community members who need them.

"This will reduce some of the pressure on employee pharmacists



who are already struggling with excessive workloads.

"To deliver a much-needed pay increase and to attract and maintain quality pharmacists in the sector we're continuing our 'Graduate to a Fairer Wage' campaign to increase the pay of graduate pharmacists by 30%.

"We will also be pursuing a new classification and wage structure for pharmacists to address low levels of pay and lack of career progression opportunities."

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Dispensary Corner

STREET vendors are a commonality in New York City, but typically, they are hawking items such as jewellery, clothes, books, paintings, and sports paraphernalia, not pharmaceuticals.

However, a large amount of black market "pharmacies" have popped up on New York City's Lower East Side of late.

Palettes showing off a random assortment of items such as hygiene products, diapers and moisturisers, have been spotted laid out on blankets for sale near the corner of 14th and 1st streets recently, the *New York Post* reported.

Gillette Daisy razors, Shea Moisture body scrubs, and Jouviance face creams, have also been spotted for sale, one of which even still had a tag on it from the local CVS.

Another merchant was spotted selling Gillette replacement razors and even CVS-brand Ibuprofen.

Businesses in Manhattan have reported an uptick in retail thefts, which is up 14% so far this year compared to 2020, New York Police Department data shows.



Pharmacies join Novavax rollout

NOVAVAX'S long-awaited COVID-19 vaccine is being rolled out through close to 870 community pharmacies across the country, with more set to receive stock of the shot in the coming weeks.

Pharmacy Guild of Australia Victorian Branch President, Anthony Tassone, told *Pharmacy Daily*, that more than 3,000 doses of the vaccine have been administered through the community pharmacy network in recent days.

Tassone said more pharmacies will be allocated supplies of the vaccine on a phased basis, based on their interest and quantities ordered.

He noted the additional vaccine option was likely to be of interest to the very small proportion of

vaccine hesitant Australians and people who have been unable to receive other COVID-19 vaccines due to medical reasons.

However, he added that as Novavax has yet to be approved as a booster, "in three months' time if it has not been approved as a booster [in the meantime] they will need to get a dose of another vaccine to be considered up to date with their vaccines".

MEANWHILE, he said the current remuneration model for the vaccination program was a factor in the sluggish rollout of paediatric vaccines, with many pharmacies reporting that the \$16 fee for administering a first dose did not appropriately compensate pharmacies for the additional steps involved in administering the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine to children.



He added the some pharmacies may consider administering the Moderna vaccine to children once the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation issues its recommendations on the use of the vaccine in children.

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Herbal remedy leads to arrest

EGYPTIAN pharmacist, Ahmed Abul-Nasr, is facing a number of charges relating to the possession and promotion of "herbs and medications of unknown origins", *Ahram Online* reports.

The pharmacist was arrested in Giza over the weekend for dealing in the unapproved products.



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