

Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features two pages of news, plus a full page from **Nova Pharmaceuticals**.

Health workforce needs normality

HEALTH professional working in State-run COVID-19 vaccination hubs need to be brought back other parts of the system, including pharmacists as soon as possible, Pharmacy Guild of Australia Victorian Branch President, Anthony Tassone, believes.

Responding to the introduction of a Limited Scope COVID-19 Vaccinator class by the Victorian Government, which would allow State-run hubs to recruit new staff (PD 13 Jan), Tassone said securing staff was a challenge for all vaccination providers including pharmacies.

"A major challenge being faced by all parts of the vaccination program is access to workforce and pharmacies are no exception," he said.

"We understand why the Victorian State vaccination hubs would seek to increase their workforce capacity to help play their part along with primary care in rolling out booster doses and the paediatric Pfizer vaccine program.

"[But] there needs to be the freeing up of as much pre-existing health workforce in the vaccination hubs as possible to return to other parts of the health system including community pharmacies and hospitals."

Union calls for paid pandemic leave

EMPLOYEE pharmacists' union, Professional Pharmacists Australia (PPA), is calling on the Federal Government to "step up and look at supporting paid pandemic leave".

With rising COVID-19 infection rates impacting the pharmacy workforce, PPA CEO, Jill McCabe, told *Pharmacy Daily* that the issue of paid pandemic leave needed to be revisited.


McCabe noted that many pharmacists have voiced concerns about how changes to the definition of a close contact will impact them, noting that under the revised meaning "they could've been working with someone who has contracted COVID and they're no longer consider a close contact".

"That's causing them anxiety," she said.

"People need to be aware that if you're not feeling well [you should] notify your employer as soon as you possibly can.

"You can't be compelled to work if you're not fit for work.

"There's a concern there that if you're not well that somehow your employer could be calling you out, saying 'well you haven't got COVID, unless you've got COVID




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come into work'.

"That's not what we want to see... people who are genuinely unwell should not be at work.

"They still have their normal sick leave rights... there is still access under the Awards to unpaid pandemic leave.

"That's been extended by the Fair Work Commission until Jun 2022, and that covers the Pharmacy Industry Award, so people have access to two weeks unpaid pandemic leave.

"We would like to see paid pandemic leave, because [while] unpaid leave is better than nothing, it's really important that people are economically and financially

provided for during the pandemic."

McCabe said that while there are some Government-funded pandemic payments available to employees, "there are lots of caveats" limited who is eligible to receive them.

"I don't think there are any payments for workers who are not close contacts or if your business closes down," she said.

"The Government needs to step up here... we know that a number of employers in other sectors have agreed to paid pandemic leave for their workforces, so I think in the interests of equity, we need to ensure that paid pandemic leave is also looked at in other sectors."

Proctocaine deal

NOVA Pharmaceuticals is offering pharmacies a 40% discount on orders of its Proctocaine haemorrhoid ointment.

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Phased rollout for concessional RATs

PLANS to distribute free rapid antigen tests (RATs) to concession cardholders will be rolled out on a phased basis from 24 Jan.

Welcoming confirmation that the costs of the program will be split 50:50 between the Commonwealth and respective State or Territory Government, Pharmacy Guild of Australia National President, Trent Twomey, warned that sourcing adequate supplies would remain a challenge for pharmacies.

"This is a huge logistical exercise, at short notice," he said.

"Pharmacists are moving heaven and earth to source and stock adequate supplies of RATs.

"If stocks are not immediately available, we ask customers to be patient but to be assured we are doing all we can to match supply to the demand."

In a statement released following yesterday's National Cabinet meeting, the Guild confirmed it had reached an agreement with the Federal Government to supply free RATs to eligible patients.

"This will be a staged rollout in



much the same way as the COVID vaccination was rolled out in stages, with some pharmacies participating from 24 Jan and the majority coming on board over the following fortnight," the Guild said.

Meanwhile, employee pharmacists' union, Professional Pharmacists Australia (PPA) has called for the free concession cardholder RAT rollout to be conducted through other distribution points.

"We've got massive concerns about pharmacists' health and safety, because of increased workloads, but also the potential for people to go into pharmacies

who may be unwell and potentially have COVID," PPA CEO, Jill McCabe, told **Pharmacy Daily**.

"Pharmacy owners have health and safety obligations, so we'd like to know what they're doing to protect pharmacists and other staff in pharmacies.

"Just because COVID is there doesn't mean their health and safety obligations have in any way diminished - they haven't.

"That's why we'd like to see RATs distributed elsewhere - not just in pharmacies.

"It's just putting too much pressure on our working pharmacists."

Dispensary Corner

VACCINE hesitant Italians have been going to great lengths to avoid COVID-19 jabs, and it appears at least one health professional may have been helping them to obtain fraudulent vaccination certificates.

Police in Ancona, on Italy's Adriatic coast, have arrested a nurse over, claiming she was part of a syndicate providing falsified vaccination records, through a COVID-19 immunisation clinic, in exchange for cash.

Authorities were alerted to the rogue nurse's behaviour after a doctor at a local hospital became suspicious of her actions.

CCTV footage released by authorities showed the nurse allegedly emptying syringes into bins before pretending to administer the shot into a patient's arm and placing a bandage over the injection site to avoid detection.

Alongside the nurse, a further four suspects have been placed under house arrest on charges of corruption, falsifying information and embezzlement, *Euronews* reported.

Police are investigating 45 patients who allegedly received their jabs from the nurse.

Under COVID regulations unvaccinated Italians are currently prohibited from using public transport or attending restaurants or bars.

The nurse's arrest came a month after an Italian dentist attempted to con his way round vaccination rules using a fake arm (PD 06 Dec 2021).

Max RAT pricing

EFFORTS to stem the rising costs of COVID-19 rapid antigen tests (RATs) in Spain will see the implementation of a maximum sale price of just over \$4.60 per test, come into effect from tomorrow (15 Jan).

Under current legislation the RATs are only available through community pharmacies.

The move was announced after prices surged over the Christmas period, with patients paying up to \$19 for individual tests, news outlet *Murica* reported.

Ezy Company in hot water over RATs

MELBOURNE-BASED business, Ezy Company, has been issued with infringement notices totalling \$26,640, in relation to the unlawful importation of rapid antigen tests (RATs) and nicotine vaping products.

The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has alleged that the company imported products which were not listed on the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods (ARTG) when they were brought into the country, in breach of the *Therapeutic Goods Act 1989*.

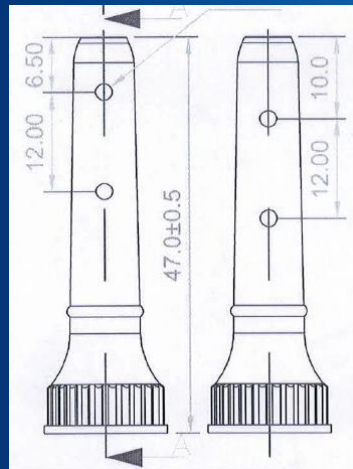


The TGA noted that RATs need to be granted a biosecurity import permit unless they can demonstrate that the goods are for personal use only or, for lateral flow test kits, meet the import conditions published on the Australian Biosecurity Import Conditions.

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