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Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features three pages of news plus a front cover page from **The Pharmacy Guild of Australia** and a full page from **Good Price Pharmacy Warehouse**.

APP countdown

THE clock is ticking for delegates planning on attending this year's Australian Pharmacy Professional Conference (APP), with just eight weeks to go.

See today's **cover page** for more.

Guild lotY Award

INTERN pharmacists are being encouraged to self-nominate for the MIMS/ Pharmacy Guild of Australia Intern of the Year (lotY) Award. before entries close on Mon.

The winner will receive a \$4,500 cash prize and full registration to APP 2022.

CLICK HERE to start your nomination today.

Pharmacies can't wait for RAT rebate

EFFORTS to rollout free rapid antigen test (RAT) kits to concession cardholders through pharmacies are being hampered by the sluggish reimbursement process, Pharmacy Guild of Australia National President, Trent Twomey, believes.

With participating pharmacies required to source their own pre-paid stock, and initial payments not expected to be made by the Federal Government until late Feb, Twomey told *The Guardian* that "many small pharmacies can't afford to wait this long".

Under the scheme eligible patients will be able to receive a total of 10 RATs over the next three months, which are required to be provided in packs of two or five, with pharmacies receiving \$10 plus GST for each test, and an administration handling and infrastructure fee of \$4.30 for each transaction - i.e. \$26.30 for a two pack, or \$59.30 for five.

Twomey noted that the reimbursement fees were set by the Government prior to the surge in wholesale prices, which have seen pharmacies pay up to \$17.50 a test in recent weeks.

"The reimbursed price set by the Government has clearly been



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calculated on the wholesale cost of the tests around early Dec," he said.

"The wholesale prices have gone up because of the demand, and distributors are chartering jets to bring the product in, and then employing staff at weekends and on overtime to process orders which are dispatched by express courier services.

"They are also competing with overseas markets for the product. "All of these factors come at a cost which is passed along in wholesale prices to pharmacists.

"If the Government wants to improve accessibility they can improve the timeframe they reimburse pharmacies.

"At the moment the Government

won't be making the first payments until the end of Feb."

Speaking during a Guild webinar last week, the organisation's Health Economics and Policy Committee Chair, Anthony Tassone, acknowledged the requirement for pharmacies to procure stock for the program was "a cashflow impost" for many stores (*PD* 21 Jan), adding that efforts were being made to get the Government to pay pharmacies for RATs provided through the program on a fortnightly basis.

In addition to having to wait for payments pharmacies participating in the program are required to record transactions in the Guild's Project COVID real-time monitoring system.

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Pharmacists honoured

A QUARTET of pharmacists were among the 1,040 Australians whose contributions to society were recognised in yesterday's Australia Day Honours List.

The foursome features Pharmacists' Support Service (PSS) co-founder and 2021 Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) Lifetime Achievement Award winner, Valerie Constable, PSS President and former Pharmaceutical Defence Limited Chair, John Coppock, PSA Victorian Branch 2021 Lifetime Achievement Award recipient, William Horsfall, and Chemist Outlet Group and Pharmacy by Mail founder, Niels Bowen, for their services to the pharmacy profession.

All four were named as recipients of the Medal of the Order of Australia in the General Division.

PSA National President, Associate Professor Chris Freeman, said the honours acknowledged the pharmacists' efforts to improve the health of Australians.



"I congratulate this year's Australia Day Honours recipients for their substantial contribution to the profession, supporting the health and wellbeing of Australians," he said.

"It is pleasing to see that these respected professionals have been recognised for their ongoing work and many years of dedication to improving pharmacy and our nation as a whole.

"Australian society and the health sector has clearly benefited from their efforts, and these Honours are testament to that."

Looking for a Tree Change or just stuck in a rut?

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Discontent is growing in pharmacies

UNSUSTAINABLE workloads and mounting pressure are fueling discontent amongst employee pharmacists in hospital and community settings, Professional Pharmacists Australia (PPA) claims.

In a submission to the South Australian Legislative Council's COVID-19 Response Committee, the union reported that many pharmacists were struggling to manage the increased responsibilities of administering COVID-19 vaccinations and managing shortages of rapid antigen tests, while providing normal pharmacy services.

PPA CEO Jill McCabe, said 75% of South Australia pharmacists believed their workplace was adequately staffed, with 36% saying their workplaces did not have suitable health and safety measures in place for staff and their communities.

"The pandemic has magnified the central role played by pharmacists in our healthcare system," she said.

"We need to better respect, recognise and reward employee pharmacists going forward and take measures to improve their pay and conditions of employment."

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UTIPP-Q extension criticised by Docs

MOVES by the Queensland State Government to extend the Urinary Tract Infection Pharmacy Pilot - Queensland (UTIPP-Q) could expose women to a "wide range of health repercussions" medical groups believe.

In a joint statement released this morning the Urological Society of Australia and New Zealand (USANZ) and the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) criticised the decision that will allow participating pharmacies in Queensland to dispense medications to eligible patients without the need for a prescription, until 30 Jun.

As of 02 Dec 2021, more than 6,300 patients had accessed the service through 819 pharmacies across the state (*PD* 13 Jan).

However, USANZ Vice President, Professor Helen O'Connell, said treatment of patients presenting with symptoms associated

with UTIs, without a medical consultation, could lead to cases of more serious conditions being missed.

"It does not represent best practice for women to simply attend a pharmacist with symptoms which may or may not be bacteria and receive antibiotics, which may not treat the bacteria present due to resistance," she said.

"The symptoms of a UTI are common to a number of serious health issues, including bladder cancer, which is why correct diagnosis of a UTI is necessary to rule out other potential serious health issues.

"An overhaul of the management of UTIs and recurrent UTIs is welcomed by USANZ but this pilot falls well short of meeting those needs and risks harm to women.

"Why should a common condition in women be redirected from medical care without long term



proof of its safety?"

RACGP President, Dr Karen Price, said the move to extend the trial was not backed by evidence.

"The RACGP has deep concerns about moves by the retail pharmacy sector to push through policy changes that put financial gains ahead of patient care and safety," she said.

"One of the main problems here is that this trial is effectively an implementation trial. It's not research on best practice and the results of the trial should be made publicly available."



Dispensary Corner

PHARMACISTS are highly skilled health professionals, and their knowledge extends beyond humans.

That deep understanding of healthcare has proven invaluable for US-based pharmacist/racehorse owner, Chris Pallas.

With his horse, Shifty She, among the favourites for this weekend's Pegasus World Cup Filly and Mare race, his professional insight has been cited as a factor in getting the nag back on track after a tendon injury, which kept her out of action for close to 12 months.

"It's an advantage to understand veterinarians, how our horses get treated, how our horses get therapy... I understand it perfectly well," Pallas told *7 News Miami*.

With big money on the line for the winner at Florida's Gulf Stream racecourse, Pallas said he is confident that Shifty She has what it takes to see off her rivals.

"She's just all business," he said.

Shifty She is among the favourites in the 11-horse field behind Sweet Melania and Regal Glory.



Young takes action against anti-vaxxers

LEGENDARY Canadian musician, Neil Young's, music has been pulled from Spotify after the singer-songwriter voiced concerns about anti-vaccination messaging being propagated by podcaster, Joe Rogan, on the streaming service.

In an open letter to his record label, Warner Music Group, published earlier this week, the 74-year-old asked for his back catalogue to be taken off the service.

The musician, whose hits include *The needle and the damage done*, said "Spotify has become the home of life-threatening COVID misinformation".

"I realised I could not continue to support Spotify's life-threatening misinformation to the music-loving people," he said in a post on his website yesterday.

The service has previously accounted for 60% of the streaming of Young's music around the world, *Reuters* reported.

"The removal is a huge loss for my record company to absorb," he said.

Young's decision to ditch Spotify came after 270 scientists and medical professionals co-signed a letter urging the service to pull the plug on Rogan's controversial podcast.

RAT use update

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has released updated information about COVID-19 rapid antigen tests (RATs) for home use, including a fact sheet outlining how they can be used and what to do when you get a result.

The update also notes that individuals can import RATs for their own personal use under the Personal Importations Scheme (PIS).

Under the PIS tests can be used by immediate family members, but cannot be sold or given away.

CLICK HERE for the latest information.

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