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## Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features three pages of news plus the July MIMS update.

## ACT issues digital RX warning

HEALTH authorities in the ACT are warning pharmacists not to dispense medicines when provided with emailed image-based prescriptions.

The Health Protection Service (HPS) noted that medical practices can provide faxed scripts, but original copies must be sent to the pharmacy within seven days.

The HPS said the pharmacists who continue to dispense digital image prescriptions, including emailed scripts, may be subject to further regulatory action, with the emergency measure having ceased on 01 Apr.

# Workforce issues must be addressed

**COORDINATED** action at professional and industrial levels may be required to force a change in hospital pharmacy staffing levels, the Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) believes.

The SHPA's Pharmacy Forecast Australia 2022 found that hospital pharmacists were pessimistic that the increased visibility of pharmacy benefits would result in legislated clinical pharmacy staffing ratios being implemented.

"Unlike other health professions, pharmacy professional practice staffing recommendations do not determine local resourcing, permitting potentially significant variation in the range and quality of care, as well as working conditions for pharmacy staff between justifications," the SHPA said.

"A recent survey (2021) completed by 38% of NSW public hospital pharmacy departments reported clinical pharmacists working at 2.0–2.8 times the

recommended bed ratios.

"Furthermore, the absence of regular workforce census data to describe the nature (and changes) of the hospital pharmacy workforce risks undermining future workforce planning and the development of appropriate actions to meet emerging demands.

"Given the growing public recognition of the role public health plays in pandemic responses, as well as an ageing population, it is more important than ever to understand the supply, turnover and sufficiency of health workers.

"Advocacy by groups including SHPA has highlighted current activities and further potential for hospital pharmacists to reduce medication-related harm, optimise medication use, decrease hospital length of stay and reduce readmissions and their associated Medicare costs.

"This has included calling for a strong and sustainable workforce of



pharmacists and technicians.

"However, without coordinated action at a professional and industrial level it remains unlikely that minimum pharmacy staff to activity ratios will be implemented in a consistent manner in the short to medium term.

"This underlines the need for a national pharmacy workforce strategy, perhaps aligned to a nursing approach with pharmacist-to-patient ratios and informed by regular census data."

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## Scottish antiviral model one to follow

**AUTHORISING** community pharmacists to initiate COVID-19 antiviral medications will be key to improving timely access to the medications, Pharmaceutical Society (PSA) of Australia National President, Dr Fei Sim, believes.

With Australia facing a third wave of the Omicron variant, Sim called on State, Territory and Federal governments to take a pragmatic approach to ensuring high-risk patients are able to get antivirals when they need them.

"We cannot sit and wait for infections and hospitalisations to rise further - governments must act now," she said.

"Timely access to antivirals is critical to reduce the severity of COVID-19 infection and limiting complications.

"Governments must develop a process to triage high-risk patients, refer them to a prescriber, and ensure rapid supply.

"What is clear is that early access to antivirals leads to far better patient outcomes."

Sim noted that Scottish pharmacists have been able to provide antivirals, including Legavrio (molnupiravir), to high-risk patients since the start of the year.

"Scotland's utilisation of the pharmacist workforce to provide timely access to antivirals has had very positive impact on the health of patients who are at risk of hospitalisation or death due to COVID-19.

"It is incumbent upon the Federal Government to raise awareness with the general public of the importance of seeking antiviral treatment early."

Sim also urged the Federal Government to reintroduce funding for the COVID-19 Home Medicine Service, to support pharmacies to cover the costs of getting medicines to patients who are isolating.

"With rising petrol prices and supply costs, pharmacies cannot afford to continue providing these services for free," she said.

"Restoring this funding would allow pharmacies to deliver



antivirals to COVID-19 positive patients safely and quickly."

**MEANWHILE**, the PSA President has called for the expansion of the COVID-19 vaccination booster program to make pharmacists and other frontline health workers eligible for a fourth dose.

"As some of the first to be vaccinated, health workers are more exposed than many to waning protection over time," Sim said.

"Expanding the booster program to include pharmacists and other healthcare workers is the next necessary step."

## Lapsed PI cover

**PHARMACISTS** are being to ensure they have secured appropriate professional indemnity (PI) insurance, by Pharmaceutical Defence Limited (PDL).

In a practice alert released yesterday, PDL noted that "in busy working life, the renewal of PI insurance can easily be missed".

"[However], the risk that arises from working without PI insurance is something that cannot be under-estimated," PDL reported.

"The knowledge that appropriate insurance arrangements have lapsed is a trigger for notification of a 'relevant event' to the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) which must be done within seven days; failure to comply may be a cause for disciplinary action."

**CLICK HERE** to read the practice alert.

## Police investigate pharmacy break-ins

**WESTERN** Australian police are hunting thieves who smashed their way into two pharmacies Perth last night.

The first raid occurred at around 10pm at a pharmacy in Kelmscott, with policing being alerted to a second break-in at a Canning Vale store 45 minutes later.

In both incidents, police reported that a vehicle appeared to have been used to gain access to the premises.

"A significant amount of damage was caused within the [Kelmscott] pharmacy, with an unknown amount of medication stolen,"



police said.

Medicines were also taken from the Canning Vale pharmacy.

Investigators have asked members of the public who were in the vicinity of the pharmacies around the time of the raids to share any dash-cam footage they have, to help identify the suspects.

## Locum app delivers saving for stores

**ONLINE** recruitment platform for pharmacies and locums, Locumate, is helping cut spending on agency fees.

The business, which launched in Melbourne late last year (*PD* 13 Oct 2021), reported that pharmacy groups have saved up to \$250,000 over the last three months.

The app allows locums to browse for work opportunities, set their rates, view their schedules and submit their invoices, all from one easy-to-use app.

With Award rates set to rise this



month, Locumate Co-founder, Surge Singh, said the app was giving pharmacies "more freedom and flexibility in how they choose to spend their money, affording them many more hours of locum resources, without compromising on locum wages".



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## Berocca deal

**BAYER** Australia's Berocca Sport brand has entered a new partnership with NSW Rugby Union's Waratah's Women's team.

Having fallen short of landing the 2022 Super W title, the NSW Rugby Union said, "Berocca Sport will take the Waratahs Women's hydration to the next level with Electrolytes and B Vitamins".

Berocca Sport is available through selected retailers including community pharmacies, and major supermarkets.

## Sigma mourns passing of Chairman

**PHARMACEUTICAL** wholesaler, Sigma Healthcare, has advised the Australian Securities Exchange (ASX) of the sudden death of its Chairman, Ray Gunston.

The 64-year-old, who also served as a consultant to the Australian Football League (AFL), passed away after suffering a heart attack yesterday morning.

Gunston joined Sigma's Board in Jul 2010, and served as the Chair of the group's Risk Management and Audit Committee, before being appointed as Group Chair in 2020.

"Ray always acted in the best interests of shareholders and provided exceptional leadership

to the Board and Sigma management," the company said.

"He was renowned for his incredible work ethic, strategic thinking, financial acumen, and made a significant contribution to Sigma and the broader community.

"Above all, Ray will always be remembered as a gentleman, renowned for his honesty, integrity and genuine care, love and support for others."

Gunston also served as interim CEO of the Essendon Football Club, in the wake of its high profile supplements scandal in 2013.

Essendon President, Paul Brasher, lauded Gunston's influence "during a dark period" in the club's history.

"He brought a calming leadership style and expertise to the organisation when it was needed most," Brasher said.

"He will be remembered at our club for the sound stability and direction he provided during this period."

Sigma has named its Non-Executive Director, Michael Sammells, as interim Chair.

Sammells joined the Board in Feb 2020, and has previously served as Chief Financial Officer of both Healthscope Limited and Medibank Private.

In addition to his role with Sigma, Sammells is currently a Non-Executive Director at financial service firm AMP.



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## Get key updates at Pharmacy Connect

**PHARMACISTS** looking to keep on top of the key issues facing community pharmacy are being urged to register for Pharmacy Connect.

The Pharmacy Guild of Australia's Sydney-based event will include updates from the organisation's National President, Trent Twomey, and its Health Economics and Policy Committee Chair, Anthony Tassone.

Conference Convenor, and former Guild National President,



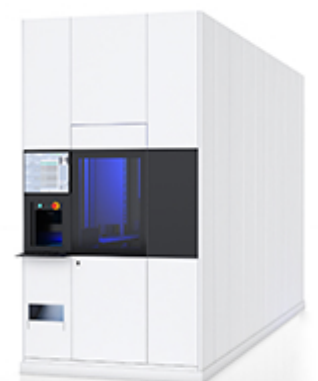
Kos Sclavos, said the event will provide a strategic overview "of how the Guild is helping to shape viable and satisfying career pathway pharmacists."

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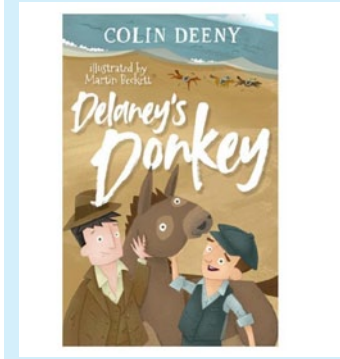
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### Dispensary Corner

**IRISH** pharmacy boss, Colin Deeny, is developing a side-hustle as a children's author, self-publishing his fifth book. Deeny's latest tale, *Delaney's Donkey*, is based on a song of the same name that he loved as a child, the *Derry Journal* reported. The book tells the story of Delaney, his stubborn donkey, their friend, Riley, and a money-making scheme. "The song about the donkey stuck in my head and I've always remembered it," Deeny said. "The song itself has one story and I tried to involve another story in the process as well. "We have these two fellas and one of them is a bit lazy." Deeny has eschewed traditional bookshops, instead selling the book at Inish Pharmacy in Inishowen, Donegal, where he is Managing Director. The book can also be purchased through the pharmacy's website, where it has yet to be listed as a 'best seller' alongside products such as Viagra Connect.



## Guild calls for extension of free RATs

**SURGING** numbers of COVID-19 infections is prompting the Pharmacy Guild of Australia to seek an extension of the Commonwealth Government's concessional rapid antigen test (RAT) program.

With the scheme set to end this month, Guild Acting National President, Nick Panayiaris, said the organisation is seeking confirmation as to whether or not it will be extended.

"The Guild would welcome and support any extension of the scheme, the need for which has been highlighted by the recent surge in COVID-19 cases, and the further increases projected in the near future," he said.

"Access to the RAT concessional program is an effective method of identifying and isolating cases to help prevent further spread,

particularly among vulnerable populations.

"Community pharmacy has demonstrated its effectiveness in making sure the most vulnerable have timely and uniform access to these important testing devices and we will continue to work with the Government to ensure any extension of the scheme is effective and meets patient needs."

Panayiaris's call for an extension of the free RATs for concession cardholders followed similar calls from pharmacy owners on social media.

In a post on the Rural Pharmacy Network Australia's Facebook page, one pharmacist noted that "current list prices for RATs at wholesalers will put the retail price out of reach for many, and may hamper the early detection of infections in



vulnerable groups".

"Access to free RATs must continue in remote and isolated communities to ensure timely treatment," the pharmacist said.

"The efficiency and accessibility of the RAT system would be improved if it were administered via dispensing software rather than Project COVID."

## HEALTH & BEAUTY

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## New Products

- **Amifampridine (Ruzurgi)** is a broad-spectrum potassium channel blocker. The mechanism by which amifampridine exerts its therapeutic effect in Lambert-Eaton myasthenic syndrome (LEMS) patients has not been fully elucidated. *Ruzurgi is indicated for the treatment of LEMS in adults and children aged 6 years and above.* Ruzurgi is contraindicated in patients with a history of seizures, hypersensitivity to another aminopyridine, or who are taking other forms of amifampridine or other aminopyridines. Ruzurgi tablets contain amifampridine 10 mg and are available in a pack size of 100.

**Chlormethine (hydrochloride) (Ledaga)** is a bifunctional alkylating agent that reacts with DNA to form cross-links, inducing the death of rapidly proliferating cells. *Ledaga is indicated for the topical treatment of mycosis fungoides-type cutaneous T-cell lymphoma (MF-type CTCL) in adult patients.* Ledaga gel contains 160 mcg/g chlormethine and is available in a pack size of one 60 g tube.

**Estetrol (monohydrate) and drospirenone (Nextstellis)** is a combined oral contraceptive that prevents pregnancy primarily by suppressing ovulation. Estetrol (E4) displays a high selectivity for estrogen receptors (ERs) and binds to both ER $\alpha$  and ER $\beta$ , with a 4 to 6 times higher affinity for ER $\alpha$  compared to ER $\beta$ . Estrogen agonist activity by E4 was demonstrated in various cell-based assays *in vitro* and animal models *in vivo*. The progestin drospirenone possesses antigonadotropic, antiandrogenic and mild antiminerocorticoid properties and has no estrogenic, glucocorticoid or antiglucocorticoid activity. *Nextstellis is indicated for use by women of reproductive potential to prevent pregnancy.* Nextstellis is contraindicated in the presence or risk of venous thromboembolism (VTE) (current VTE (on anticoagulants) or history of deep venous thrombosis or pulmonary embolism; known hereditary or acquired predisposition for VTE such as APC-resistance (including factor V Leiden), antithrombin-III-deficiency, protein C deficiency, protein S deficiency; major surgery with prolonged immobilization; a high risk of VTE due to the presence of multiple risk factors); in the presence or risk of arterial thromboembolism (ATE) (current ATE or history of ATE (e.g. myocardial infarction or stroke) or prodromal condition (e.g. angina pectoris or transient ischaemic attack (TIA)); known hereditary or acquired predisposition for ATE, such as hyperhomocysteinaemia and antiphospholipid-antibodies (e.g. anticardiolipin antibodies, lupus anticoagulant); history of migraine with focal neurological symptoms; a high risk of ATE due to the presence of multiple combined risk factors such as heavy cigarette smoking (around 15 or more per day), positive family history (ATE in a sibling or parent especially at relatively early age e.g. below 50) and over 35 years of age; a high risk of ATE due to the presence of one serious risk factor such as diabetes with vascular symptoms, severe hypertension and severe dyslipoproteinaemia); pancreatitis, or a history thereof if associated with severe hypertriglyceridemia; presence or history of severe hepatic disease as long as liver function values have not returned to normal; severe renal insufficiency or acute renal failure; presence or history of liver tumours (benign or malignant); adrenal insufficiency; known or suspected sex steroid-influenced malignancies (e.g. of the genital organs or the breasts); undiagnosed vaginal bleeding; and known or suspected pregnancy. Nextstellis tablets contain estetrol 14.2 mg and drospirenone 3 mg in each active tablet and are available in 1, 3 or 6 packs of 28 tablets (24 pink active tablets + 4 white inactive tablets).

**Gilteritinib (fumarate) (Xospata)** is an FMS-like tyrosine kinase 3 (FLT3) and AXL (as well as other kinases) inhibitor. Gilteritinib inhibits FLT3 receptor signalling and proliferation in cells expressing FLT3 including FLT3-ITD, FLT3-D835Y, and FLT3-ITD-D835Y, and it induces apoptosis in leukaemic cells expressing FLT3-ITD. *Xospata is indicated for the treatment of adult patients who have relapsed or refractory acute myeloid leukaemia (AML) with an FLT3 mutation.* Xospata tablets contain gilteritinib 40 mg and are available in a pack size of 84.

**Meningococcal polysaccharide conjugate A, C, Y and W-135 vaccine (MenQuadfi)** induces the production of bactericidal antibodies specific to the capsular polysaccharides of *N. meningitidis* serogroups A, C, W, and Y. The presence of bactericidal anti-capsular meningococcal antibodies has been associated with protection from invasive meningococcal disease. *MenQuadfi is indicated for active immunisation for the prevention of invasive meningococcal disease caused by Neisseria meningitidis serogroups A, C, W and Y. Primary vaccination: individuals 12 months of age and older receive a single dose. Booster vaccination: MenQuadfi may be given as a single booster dose to adolescents and adults who have previously been primed with meningococcal vaccine at least 4 years prior.* MenQuadfi contains 40 mcg/0.5 mL meningococcal (groups A, C, Y, W) polysaccharide tetanus toxoid conjugate vaccine and is available in a pack size of 1 vial.

**Rabies immunoglobulin (KamRAB)** is infiltrated into the inoculation site (i.e., at the beginning of anti-rabies post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP)) to previously unvaccinated persons, to provide immediate passive rabies virus neutralising antibody protection until the patient's immune system responds to vaccination by actively producing antibodies. *KamRAB is indicated for passive, transient PEP of rabies infection, when given immediately after contact with a rabid or possibly rabid animal. It should be administered concurrently with a full course of rabies vaccine.* Do not administer additional (repeat) doses of KamRAB once vaccine treatment has been initiated, since this may interfere with the immune response to the rabies vaccine. Do not administer to patients with a history of a complete pre-exposure or post-exposure vaccination regimen and confirmed adequate rabies antibody titre. KamRab solution for injection contains rabies immunoglobulin 300 IU/2 mL and is available in a pack of 1 vial.

## New Presentation

**Bortezomib (Bortezomib Ever Pharma)** is the first brand of bortezomib available as a solution for injection. It contains bortezomib 2.5 mg/1 mL or 3.5 mg/1.4 mL and is available in packs of 1 vial.

## New Indications

**Abemaciclib (Verzenio)**, in combination with endocrine therapy, is now indicated for the adjuvant treatment of patients with hormone receptor positive, human epidermal growth factor receptor 2 (HER2) negative, node-positive early breast cancer at high risk of recurrence. In pre- or peri-menopausal women, endocrine therapy should be combined with a luteinising hormone-releasing hormone (LHRH) agonist.

**Agomelatine (Valdoxan)** is now indicated for treatment of generalised anxiety disorder in adults.

**Beclometasone dipropionate and formoterol (eformoterol) fumarate dihydrate and glycopyrronium (bromide) (Trimbow)** is now indicated for the maintenance treatment of asthma, in adults not adequately controlled with a maintenance combination of a long-acting beta2-agonist and medium (Trimbow 100/6/10) or high (Trimbow 200/6/10) dose of inhaled corticosteroid, and who experienced one or more asthma exacerbations in the previous year.

**Pembrolizumab (Keytruda)** in combination with lenvatinib is now indicated for the first-line treatment of adult patients with advanced renal cell carcinoma.

## New Contraindications

**Chlorpromazine hydrochloride (Largactil)** is now contraindicated in children younger than 1 year; and with concomitant dopaminergics except in patients with Parkinson's disease.

**Dexchlorpheniramine maleate (Polaramine)** is now contraindicated in children under 2 years.

**Periciazine (Neulactil)** is now contraindicated with concomitant dopaminergics except in patients with Parkinson's disease.

**Proprantheline bromide (Pro-Banthine)** is now contraindicated in prostatic enlargement.

**Riociguat (Adempas)** coadministration with other soluble guanylate cyclase stimulators is now contraindicated.

**Teriparatide (Forteo)** is now contraindicated in pre-existing hypercalcaemia, severe renal impairment, metabolic bone diseases (including hyperparathyroidism) other than primary osteoporosis or glucocorticoid-induced osteoporosis, unexplained elevations of alkaline phosphatase, prior external beam or implant radiation therapy to the skeleton, patients with skeletal malignancies or bone metastases, pregnancy and breast-feeding.

**Tranexamic acid (Cyklokapron)**. Intrathecal and epidural administration is now contraindicated.

## Safety Related Changes

**Pembrolizumab (Keytruda)** is no longer indicated as monotherapy for the treatment of patients with locally advanced or metastatic urothelial carcinoma who are not eligible for cisplatin-containing therapy and whose tumours express PD-L1 [Combined Positive Score (CPS)  $\geq 10$ ] as determined by a validated test, regardless of PD-L1 status.

*This list is a summary of only some of the changes that have occurred over the last month. Before prescribing, always refer to the full product information.*