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Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features four pages of news.

Pharm Connect

THE Pharmacy Guild of Australia has revealed the program for the upcoming Pharmacy Connect 2022.

The event is scheduled to take place on 01 to 03 Sep at Hilton Sydney, and will focus on "building better connections with patients".

Enhancement to e-health and using digital tech to better connect with patients are among the main topics.

Pharmacy Connect Convenor and former Guild National President, Kos Sclavos, said the program was created to help consolidate the "great deal of change over the last couple of years".

CLICK HERE for early bird registrations and the program.

Pharmacist injured in in-store assault

PHARMACY workers are continuing to face aggressive and violent behaviour from patients, with a pharmacist at Chemist Warehouse's Geraldton, WA, store the latest to be assaulted.

Pharmacist, Mahmoud Elshwehk, was injured after being punched by a patient who was angry at being asked to wait for a COVID-19 vaccination, *The West Australian* reported.

WA Police Senior Sergeant, Chris Martin, reported that the suspect had entered the store demanding a COVID-19 shot that he needed for work purposes, but lashed out when told he would need to wait for a pharmacist to become available to administer the jab.

"The suspect had lost his temper, pushing items of the shelf inside the store and created quite a disturbance," he said.

"He was asked to leave, and as he was escorted out of the premises by one of the staff members of the Chemist Warehouse, he has



punched him in the jaw."

A member of staff at the store told *The West Australia* that while they were used to experiencing aggressive behaviour from frustrated patients, the alleged assault was "out of the ordinary".

The incident came six months after Elshwehk rejected a bribe from a woman who offered an "unspecified" sum if he would falsify her vaccination record to

record that she had received the shot (*PD* 11 Nov 2021).

Since the start of the pandemic several pharmacy employees across the country have been assaulted by customers, including a 17-year-old pharmacy assistant, who was verbally abused by a 54-year-old man at a Pharmacy4Less store near Newcastle, NSW, last Aug, before he kicked her (*PD* 26 Aug 2021).

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Counselling critical for COVID drugs

PHARMACISTS are being urged to pay particular attention to potential drug-drug interactions when dispensing COVID-19 antivirals, Lagevrio (molnupiravir) and Paxlovid (nirmatrelvir and ritonavir).

Speaking during a Commonwealth Department of Health webinar last week, Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) National President, Associate Professor Chris Freeman, said pharmacists will have a critical role in educating patients and identifying risks when presented with prescriptions of the medications.

“What I would encourage pharmacists to do as patients are presenting with prescriptions for either antiviral, but more importantly with Paxlovid, is to make sure that you have a formal consultation with them in relation particularly to interactions with other medications,” he said.

“Paxlovid has some very critical

clinically serious drug-drug interactions, and at every occasion I would encourage pharmacists to make sure you’re not just using the drug interaction checker provided in the dispensing software, but use a second source.

“Obviously patients may not only be seeing the one prescriber, and I think pharmacists have probably got the best broad sense of what patients are taking... so it’s really important as a safety net that pharmacists are using these drug interaction checkers.”

Freeman added that pharmacists should discuss the use of over-the-counter and complementary medicines, noting that products such as St John’s Wort have “significant interactions” with Paxlovid.

He noted that both antivirals are well tolerated, but flagged “an increase in taste disturbance” as a side effect for Paxlovid that should be discussed with patients.

“There are also specific



recommendations around the use of contraception with both of these agents,” he said.

“With molnupiravir, particularly for male patients they need to use effective contraception for three months after using that antiviral, so make sure that’s part of the counselling process when dispensing.”

Diabetes doubles COVID death risk

PATIENTS with diabetes are twice as likely to die and three times as likely to be severely ill if they contract COVID-19, compared to people who don’t have diabetes, a study from the University of Aberdeen reveals.

The research also concluded that COVID patients with diabetes had a significantly increased risk factor of needing intensive care, supplementary oxygen and admission with a critical condition.

The findings, taken from 158 studies with over 270,000 participants, showed a decline in these risks when blood sugar levels were controlled.

Compared to patients in Europe and the US, patients in China, Korea and the Middle East were found to be at higher risk of death due to differences in healthcare resources.

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▼ This vaccine is provisionally approved and is subject to additional monitoring in Australia. This will allow quick identification of new safety information. Healthcare professionals are asked to report any suspected adverse events at www.tga.gov.au/reporting-problems.

References: 1. Moderna Data on File. 2. Spikevax Product Information, 18 February 2022.

3. <https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines/getting-your-vaccination/booster-doses#winter-dose>. Accessed 25 March 2022.

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APC Intern exam rego now open

THE Australian Pharmacy Council (APC) has announced the Intern Written Exam will take place on 20-21 Jun and 10-13 Oct, with registrations open now until 23 May.

The exam can be taken in one of the test centres around Australia, or as an online proctored exam.

Pharmacists who have attained a pharmacy degree in a country outside of Australia, Canada, Ireland, NZ, the UK or the US and have confirmed their eligibility with APC can register for the KAPS exam.

The KAPS exam, which can be taken outside of Australia, is scheduled to be held on 17-19 Jul and 06-08 Nov.

CLICK HERE for more info.

Award boost needed to retain talent

PHARMACY owners will need to support an increase in the Pharmacy Industry Award if they hope to stem the flow of pharmacists out of the profession, an employee advocate believes.

In a post published on the Australian Pharmacy Healthcare Workforce Facebook page, Pardeep Singh voiced concerns about the exploitation of overseas pharmacists coming to Australia to address workforce issues.

"I think we should be fixing the root cause of the problems which are excessive workloads, unethical KPIs, very low wages (which are even lower than cleaners [and] drivers), we should have individual independent provider numbers to get direct funding for direct accountability," he said.

Singh also called for a rethink of current pharmacy ownership

rules, to prevent pharmacists from owning more than one Section 90 store.

"Doing so will keep the already registered pharmacists in the workforce, [and] more pharmacists will have the opportunity to own a pharmacy," he said.

Singh noted that migrant pharmacists "come on these promises of a better life, but have to rely on others and often get exploited", without access to support services including Centrelink.

"Any company that facilitates the import of overseas pharmacists should provide income protection insurance for those overseas pharmacists until they can get social security entitlements in the case of unemployment," he said.

"These employment companies should talk to the Pharmacy Guild



of Australia to increase the Award rate if they really want to help pharmacists stay working in those companies who pay award rates.

"Without doing so, bringing new pharmacists from developing countries is just helping some rich people to exploit human being for many years before the victims can escape from the slavery or get permanent residence."

Herbalist fined over cancer cure claims

GOLD Coast company FuturePro and its Director, Darrell Charles Barnett, have been found guilty by a Queensland court of advertising alternative medicine products that were not on the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods (ARTG).

The company and its director were also found guilty of making numerous unlawful claims in relation to the prevention and treatment of cancer, in addition to importing, exporting, manufacturing and supplying dangerous goods.

Among the dangerous goods was *Sanguinaria canadensis* (bloodroot), which is used to make a corrosive topical paste (black salve) and listed as a Schedule 10 banned substance under the Poisons Standard.

Barnett, who pleaded guilty in Mar (**PD** 10 Mar), was convicted and fined \$25,000.

The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) reminds businesses involved in the supply of therapeutic goods to be aware of their obligations under Australia's regulatory scheme.

US pharmacies facing opioid costs

US-BASED pharmacy groups, CVS, Walgreens and Walmart, could be forced to pay out billions of dollars in restitution over their role in the country's opioid crisis.

The pharmacy giants are the latest businesses to be targeted by prosecutors following criminal convictions being secured against doctors who were leading prescribers of opioids produced by Mallinckrodt Pharmaceuticals.

CVS and Walgreens have previously agreed to pay the



State of Florida "hundreds of millions" to settle claims related to opioid dispensing, *The Guardian* reported.

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Dispensary Corner

DUBLIN-BASED digital marketing student, Michael Fakinle, is facing a potential prison sentence for his involvement in an online scam.

The 21-year-old's bank account was used to collect thousands of euro from unsuspecting victims, including a pharmacist, the *Sunday World* reported.

Dublin Circuit Criminal Court heard that a person the student refused to name, had tricked several individuals and businesses to pay funds into Fakinle's account in 2020, most of which was never recovered.

The scam was uncovered when a shareholder in a water filtration company received an email from the business seeking funds to ease cashflow issues.

The man agreed to provide a loan, and another email came through with bank details.

However, it transpired that the company's email had been hacked and he had been given Fakinle's account details rather than the business's.

Police subsequently discovered the scammer had swindled €3,251 from a pharmacist, and €1,100 from a construction company, which was not recovered.

A pensioner who unwittingly transferred her entire retirement fund (€71,892) into Fakinle's account was fortunately able to retrieve her money.

Fakinle pleaded guilty to five counts of handling property knowing it was the proceeds of criminal conduct, and a separate count of money laundering.

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