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Pharmacy flu vax ready

QUEENSLAND-BASED pharmacists would welcome the opportunity to play a role in the distribution of free influenza vaccines, a spokesperson for the Pharmacy Guild of Australia says.

Commenting on Queensland Health Minister, Yvette D'Ath's call for the Federal Government to expand access to National Immunisation Program (NIP) flu shots for all Australians, to combat the rapid spread of the virus this winter (**PD** 19 May), the Guild spokesperson told **Pharmacy Daily** that authorising pharmacists to participate in an expanded scheme would be a logical step.

"Pharmacists are the most accessible, safe and convenient immunisers in our primary health care system, it makes sense to utilise them further," the spokesperson said.

"The Guild welcomes the Queensland Government NIP Pilot, if the Commonwealth opens up access to further flu vaccinations, we'd expect to play a role."

With Queensland reporting a significant increase in confirmed flu cases this week, D'Ath said that she wanted to ensure barriers to accessing the vaccine, including



cost, are removed.

MEANWHILE, the latest *Influenza Report Card* from vaccine manufacturer, Sanofi, reported that as of 08 May, there had been 10,599 confirmed cases of flu nationwide, with 153 hospitalisations.

The report also revealed that 13% of the population aged five to 64 years, who are not currently eligible for flu jabs through the NIP, have received a shot this year (as of 16 May) compared to 26% in 2021, while half of the over 65 age group, and 8% of those aged six months to five years, have accessed free flu vaccines to date.

Of the 5,045,235 flu jabs administered up to 16 May, 13% have been given through the community pharmacy sector.

Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features two pages of news.

PDL vax alert

PROFESSIONAL indemnity insurer, Pharmaceutical Defence Limited (PDL) is urging pharmacist immunisers to take steps to ensure they administer the correct vaccine when administering influenza and COVID-19 vaccines.

In a practice alert issued to members today, PDL has advised pharmacists to consult with the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) and ask patients "what vaccine are you expecting today?" before administering a shot.

The alert noted that pharmacists in WA, SA, Queensland and Victoria, can administer flu shots to children aged five years and older, while the minimum age limit for pharmacist-administered flu vaccinations is 10 years in all other jurisdictions, however, that limit is expected to be lowered in the future.

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Dispensary Corner

AUSTRALIAN pharmacists and sports fanatics, Stuart Giles and Cathie Reid, are supporting efforts to launch a professional Twenty20 cricket competition in the US.

The co-founders of the ICON Group, have joined a group of investors, featuring Microsoft CEO, Satya Nadella, and the son of former US Presidential candidate, Ross Perot, Ross Perot Jr, in contributing to Major League Cricket's (MLC's) US\$44 million fundraising campaign.

MLC reported that a further US\$76 million has been committed over the next 12 months, to support the launch of a professional event in the US.

MLC co-founders, Vijay Srinivasan and Sameer Mehta, said the successful fundraising efforts would pave the way for the development of "first-class facilities and accelerate the sport's development" in the US, "bringing world-class professional cricket to the world's largest sports market".

"This investor group comprises leading business executives and successful tech entrepreneurs who have led some of the world's most prominent companies," Srinivasan and Mehta said.

"They bring tremendous experience and expertise in support of MLC's plans to launch a transformative Twenty20 league and establish America as one of the world's leading homes for international cricket events."

PM makes 8CPA election pledge

PRIME Minister, Scott Morrison, will aim to secure a deal on an Eighth Community Pharmacy Agreement (8CPA) by Jan 2025, if the Coalition retains power after tomorrow's Federal election.

The move to secure an early agreement would contrast with the process of signing the 7CPA, which was signed less than a month before the 6CPA was due to expire (**PD** 15 Jun 2020).

"A re-elected Morrison Government will continue to work in partnership with the Pharmacy Guild to deliver the 7CPA and continue to pursue reforms to pharmacy programs that will maintain and improve access to community pharmacy services for patients whilst not negatively impacting the viability of community pharmacies," Morrison said in a letter to Pharmacy Guild of Australia National President, Trent Twomey.

"We will continue to deliver a strong economy which will support community pharmacies and

other small business owners and operators to create jobs and invest significantly in our economy.

"The Coalition Government remains committed to the community pharmacy model and the legislated Pharmacy Location Rules and will work with the Pharmacy Guild with the goal to negotiate an 8CPA by no later than Jan 2025."

Commenting on the Coalition's plan to cut the general co-payment from \$42.50 to \$32.50, Morrison said if re-elected his Government "will work with the Guild to explore further opportunities to lower medicines prices in a budget-neutral way that do not adversely affect the viability of community pharmacies".

He added that "all scripts currently counting towards a patients' safety-net will continue to do so".

Meanwhile, in another letter to Twomey, Shadow Health Minister, Mark Butler, matched the Prime Minister's 8CPA deadline pledge and



reiterated Labor's promise to cut the PBS general co-payment to \$30 from 01 Jan 2023, if elected, while working with the Guild to ensure "no patient is made worse off".

"Labor has a long history of support and cooperation with the community pharmacy sector ... including the first CPA with the Guild in 1990," Butler said.

"Labor's approach has not changed.

"Labor remains committed to the central place that community pharmacy plays in the primary healthcare sector."

Victoria lowers pharmacy flu jab age

PHARMACIST immunisers in Victoria can now administer influenza vaccines to children aged five years and older, under measures announced by the State Government this morning.

The Pharmacy Guild of Australia Victorian Branch President, Anthony Tassone, welcomed the decision, which brings the minimum age for the flu jab into line with COVID-19 vaccinations.

"Being able to deliver flu vaccinations to children from five years of age in Victoria is another way community pharmacy can support families to get

vaccinated," he said.

"The change is a sensible next step authorising highly skilled and trained pharmacists to administer flu vaccines to children aged five and over."

Under the changes announced by the Government, Victorian pharmacists will be the first in the country to be authorised to administer the Japanese Encephalitis vaccine to eligible patients.

MEANWHILE, a decision to lower the age limit for pharmacist-administered flu vaccinations is expected in the coming weeks.

Pay rise push

UNION group, Professionals Australia, which represents employee pharmacists, is calling for a 5.5% increase in the minimum wage in this year's Annual Wage Review.

The union has called on the winner of tomorrow's Federal Election to make a submission to the Review to boost wages, with real wages declining by 2.5% in the last 12 months.

"Only a 5.5% increase will give workers a pay rise in real terms, relieving the pressures of the massive rise in cost of living," the union said.