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Politicians failing health system: GP

MOVES to expand pharmacists' scope of practice to include prescribing roles shows a failure by politicians to understand "the health ecosystem", pharmacist-turned-GP, Dr Peter Cheng, believes.

In a letter to the *Sydney Morning Herald*, responding to former Commonwealth Deputy Chief Health Officer, Dr Nick Coatsworth's support for pharmacist prescribing trials (**PD 25 Nov**), Cheng urged politicians to retain the status quo.

"As a former pharmacist and now a working GP, the oversimplification of the health ecosystem by our politicians never fails to astound me," he said.

"Their misunderstanding of the respective roles of all healthcare practitioners to form a well functioning, multidisciplinary team and their attempt to further fragment the already fractured

medical system is dangerous and ethically very concerning.

"What I knew as a pharmacist of clinical medicine in a total of five years of tertiary education was the equivalent of learning a semester of clinical medicine in medical school.

"Yes, our roles intersect, but the roles are drastically different.

"The training is completely different.

"The mentality is entirely different.

"The whole separation of the medical and pharmacy system was to ensure that the public is protected, both from the potential errors in diagnosis and prescribing without the last line of defence.

"The entire medical code is based upon this fundamental fact.

"We are hearing from politicians, with zero clinical experience, taking action to blur this boundary.

"They say access is a problem – but creating more 'noctors' [not doctors, in GP speak] – is not the solution."

Cheng argued that with more registered doctors in Australia than pharmacists, authorising medical professionals to dispense medications would be more effective in improving access to healthcare services.



"If each doctor had their own respective dispensary, and was able to provide efficient, adequate and safe access to medicines, this would efficiently save the taxpayer costs on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme," he said.

"And it would not cost the Medicare Benefits Schedule any more than it currently does.

"As the Seventh Community Pharmacy Agreement is ending in 2025, perhaps politicians should rather focus on improving the entire health economy, rather than lining the pockets of their corporate donors.

"As professional groups, we each have vital roles in healthcare.

"But we need to stick to our own lanes to ensure ethical care for patients."

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Click here to learn more.



Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features three pages of news, plus full pages from:

- Molnlycke
- Sigma Healthcare
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Dispensary Corner

CHANGES to the Punjab State Pharmacy Council's process for verifying the basic qualifications of new pharmacists could see thousands of fake practitioners become registered, *The Tribune* reports.

Paramedical and Health Employees Front convener, Swaranjeet Singh, reported that despite concerns being raised over the qualifications of 5,000 pharmacists, the council had done little to remove unqualified pharmacists from the profession.

"Rather it has been working overtime to save them," he said.

"The decision [to change the verification process] is against the norms... the accountability of the state drug controller, government analyst and registrar of the council must be fixed."

The Tribune reported that up to 40% of pharmacists in Punjab State had qualifications from "dubious and unrecognised boards located outside the state".

FAKE

PSA to discontinue PI insurance plan

THE Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) is winding down its professional indemnity (PI) insurance offering less than two years after launching the product (*PD* 04 Mar 2021).

A PSA spokesperson told *Pharmacy Daily* that the organisation is in the process of contacting all policy holders, stressing they will remain insured until the end of their current policy.

"As a membership organisation, PSA is 100% owned by our members," the spokesperson said.

"We have a responsibility to deliver products and services that serve our members and provide the best value for money to support their practice.

"We regularly scope the market to ensure that we can offer the best available product to support our members."

The decision follows a recent

announcement that the PSA and PI insurer, Pharmaceutical Defence Limited (PDL) had formed a partnership to explore new medicines safety initiatives (*PD* 24 Nov), including the establishment of a Practice Support Liaison Group to provide support for pharmacists and scope of practice across all areas of pharmacy practice.

The PSA spokesperson dismissed reports that PSA PI policy holders would be transitioned to PDL's cover.

"PSA's PI insurance program will be not rolled into PDL's insurance offering," the spokesperson said.

"PSA's decision to discontinue our Member Professional Indemnity Insurance product is a result of a change in insurance market conditions, and advice we received from our insurance provider BMS that they have been unable to place PSA's PI insurance in the coming term.



"All pharmacists currently insured through PSA's Professional Indemnity insurance program with BMS will remain covered until their current policy expires, however PSA has decided not to sign up any new policies.

"PSA is in the process of contacting all insurance holders to advise them of the changes."

Profession mourns Calanna's passing

PHARMACISTS in North Queensland are mourning the passing of industry stalwart, Mario Calanna, following a lengthy battle with cancer.

Paying tribute, Pharmacy Guild of Australia National President, Trent Twomey, noted that Calanna had been a member of the community pharmacy sector for more than half a century.

"I awarded Mario an Honorary Life Membership of the Pharmacy Guild in 2021," he said.

"His name has been synonymous with pharmacy

in North Queensland for generations.

"I know the thoughts and prayers of the whole pharmacy community are with his family during this time."

Over the course of his career, the 72-year-old had built the Calanna Pharmacy Group, which included pharmacies in Cairns, Townsville, Innisfail, Atherton and the Gold Coast.

The Calanna stores transitioned to the TerryWhite Chemmart network earlier this year.

Sigma refinances

PHARMACEUTICAL wholesaler, Sigma Healthcare, has announced the extension of its \$250 million Receivables Purchase Agreement with Westpac Banking Corporation.

The amended and extended agreement will provide increased flexibility with the removal of previous covenants.

Sigma's Chief Financial Officer, Nigel Simonsz, said the agreement will enable the company to pursue its "transformation and growth strategy".

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Cannabis firm fine for security failures

QUEENSLAND-BASED medicinal cannabis licence holder, Tikun Oceania Pty Ltd, has been fined \$13,320, over alleged security and record-keeping failures.

Issuing the infringement notice, the Office of Drug Control reported that the business had not maintained an accurate record of the number of cannabis plants in its possession.

“Tikun Oceania also allegedly failed to maintain a system of security that prevents the illegal and unauthorised removal of cannabis plants from their site of operations,” the Commonwealth agency reported.



“The Office of Drug Control is responsible for ensuring the effective compliance of licence and

permit holders in meeting their obligations under the *Narcotic Drugs Act 1967*.

“Non-compliance may be detected through monitoring activities such as site inspections.

“This infringement notice services as a warning to other medicinal cannabis licence holders to take their compliance seriously.”

The Office of Drug Control called on individuals who suspect non-compliance in relation to medicinal cannabis cultivation or manufacture to report potential illegal or questionable practices to the agency by [email](#).

Pharmacy Guild Update

Pharmacies praised in Canberra at Guild dinner

HEALTH Minister, Mark Butler and Opposition Leader Peter Dutton have praised community pharmacies at the Pharmacy Guild’s annual dinner inside Parliament House on Tuesday night.

Addressing the dinner, Mr Butler highlighted the ‘Affordable Medicines’ campaign, thanking the Guild for taking the lead on the issue at a time when many Australians are doing it tough.

“Low- and middle-income Australians are going to enjoy the first time the PBS has actually seen the prices of medicines reduced,” he told guests at the dinner. In his speech, Mr Dutton noted the campaign drew a bi-partisan response from politicians.

“On reducing the payment and on gaining affordability and accessibility, that was a no brainer for both sides of politics,” he said.

The Guild also brought the concept of community pharmacy to Parliament House with several stands showcasing the services and advice pharmacists offer. Guild National President, Professor Trent Twomey said it was a great way to acknowledge the hard work of pharmacists this past year.

“It was also an opportunity to show federal MPs and Senators what we do and what more we can do into the future,” Professor Twomey said.

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CLICK HERE for a full list of the affected batch numbers.



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“I have always believed, and particularly since the pandemic, that there is strength in numbers, so I’m very excited to join forces with Amcal to build a bigger and better future for my team with even more like-minded pharmacies and pharmacists in our network.”

Lili Cosic, Corrimal Court Amcal



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