

## Today's issue of PD

*Pharmacy Daily* today features four pages of news, plus a full page from **Pharmacy Own**.

## Fighting to stay on

**THE** 15c electronic prescription fee paid to pharmacies through the 7th Community Pharmacy Agreement ceased last month. FredIT eRx Script Exchange is now the national Prescription Exchange Service (**PD 11** May) after winning the Health contract, pushing out its main competitor, MediSecure, who will no longer be providing these services to PBS Approved Suppliers after 31 Oct this year. However, the prescription delivery service, MediSecure, has vowed to remain in the market by offering itself as a private prescription service with online medication fulfilment and delivery options.

# EBOS pharmacy revenue jumps 13.5%

**EBOS** Healthcare this morning released its results for the 12 months to 30 Jun, with overall revenue of \$12.2 billion and a 25% increase in net profit after tax which increased to \$253.4 million.

The company said the results were underpinned by organic growth as well as substantial contributions from prior year acquisitions, reflecting the “defensive and diversified nature of Group earnings”.

The Healthcare segment had strong contributions from the Community Pharmacy, TerryWhite Chemmart, Institutional Healthcare and Contract Logistics divisions and businesses, EBOS said.

Community Pharmacy revenue increased by \$870 million (13.5%), driven by customer growth, strong performances from retail brands including TerryWhite Chemmart, above-market growth in ethical sales to major wholesale customers, and sales growth of high-value specialty medicines and



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OTC products, EBOS has reported.

The result also benefited from COVID-19-related product sales including antiviral medications and cold and flu OTC products.

“Our TWC franchise continues its robust growth, with an additional 40 new pharmacies joining the network during the year,” EBOS said.

“This builds on growth in prior years and further strengthens TWC’s position as Australia’s largest

health-advice-oriented community pharmacy network with over 550 trading stores,” the company added, with TWC network sales growing to over \$2 billion.

EBOS noted the pending impact of the 60-day dispensing policy, but said the Australian Government had indicated it will increase the Community Service Obligation funding pool and introduce other initiatives in support of the Community Pharmacy sector “which will largely offset the earnings impact of this policy change”.

The company also noted the non-renewal of its massive Chemist Warehouse contract from 30 Jun 2024 (**PD 06** Jun), but noted that between FY20 and FY23 overall earnings excluding Chemist Warehouse grew 20% annually, “reflecting strong alternative sources of growth”.

The company declared a 57c per share dividend, and stated it expects “another year of profitable growth in FY24”.



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## Keytruda listing for TNBC on the cards

**BREAST** Cancer Network Australia (BCNA) has welcomed a decision to recommend a crucial drug to treat early-stage triple-negative breast cancer (TNBC) for the Federal Government subsidy.

The Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC) announced on Fri that Keytruda (pembrolizumab) will be recommended for subsidy on the PBS for early-stage TNBC.

Keytruda is a type of immunotherapy called an immune checkpoint inhibitor.

The medicine blocks proteins that stop the immune system from attacking the cancer cells, reducing the risk of the cancer coming back.

BCNA stated that Keytruda is one of the first immunotherapies that is shown to be effective for early-stage TNBC.

When combined with chemotherapy following surgery, it can significantly reduce the risk of cancer recurrence when compared to chemotherapy alone.



Around, 15% of breast cancer diagnoses are triple negative.

In Australia, that equates to approximately 3,000 new cases each year, the network reported.

BCNA Director Policy, Advocacy and Support Services, Vicki Durston said, "PBAC's decision to also recommend the medicine, Keytruda, for high-risk early-stage breast cancer is good news".

"Triple-negative breast cancer is typically more aggressive, has fewer treatment options, and disproportionately affects younger

women," Durston explained.

"We know that as many as 40% of those with triple-negative breast cancer will have a recurrence.

"New treatments like Keytruda that reduce this risk are vital for improving outcomes for those who have one of the rarer forms of breast cancer," Durston added.

BCNA Consumer Representative Dr Na'ama Carlin was recommended Keytruda as a treatment regime last year but at a substantial personal expense.

"Being diagnosed with cancer during my pregnancy, I would have done anything to help my chances of survival," said Carlin.

"I would not have been able to afford Keytruda without crowdfunding.

"We know that Keytruda can increase the survival rates of triple-negative breast cancer patients.

"We need to ensure that every person can afford to access this lifesaving and life-extending medication," Carlin concluded.

## Opening doors

**THE** Pinnacle Foundation is encouraging any eligible LGBTQIA+ young people to apply for its 2024 scholarships to study pharmacy.

Applications are open until 31 Aug, and people typically underrepresented, such as First Nations LGBTQIA+ young people and those in rural, regional and remote Australia are urged to apply, [HERE](#).

This opportunity comes off the back of a study by the Pinnacle Foundation to understand what barriers are faced by young LGBTQIA+ Australians.

Prevailing stereotypes uncovered were that 42% surveyed thought some industries are 'straight'.

More than half believe that access to education is easier in the cities than in rural areas, while a third believe that in corporate Australia there is a lack of visible LGBTQIA+ role models and diversity.

## Treat More Than Heat Mood and Cognition in Menopause

Join Naturopath Sandra Vilella as she shares her insights treating mood and cognitive challenges in menopausal patients

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## Redefine research

A NEW type of digital care pathway for patients with tinnitus is being tested through a research collaboration between Flinders University, South Australia, and healthcare company The Clinician.

The pathway will enable individuals to digitally report their experiences with specific hearing interventions.

Patients can report tinnitus severity, which will help evaluate the effectiveness of treatment for them.

Flinders University's lead for this research, Prof Raj Shekhawat, said the research collaboration with the ZEDOC tech platform will enable an improved tinnitus care pathway due to the efficiency of the digital technology.

"The platform is known to be very efficient, intuitive and has a productive way to collect, visualise and manage research data across different collaborators," he explained.

The Clinician's Business and Research Development Manager Natasha Tan said the testing process will provide effective digital tools that help streamline research processes.

"By joining forces this collaboration holds the potential to revolutionise research practices, enhance patient outcomes and foster innovative treatment developments within the audiology space," Tan added.

Learn more [HERE](#).

## Drug shortage continues



THE pharmaceutical company Boehringer Ingelheim (BI) has notified the TGA that the shortage of its thrombolytic product, tenecteplase, is set to continue.

The shortage was due to manufacturing capacity constraints following increases in global demand and was expected to last until the end of 2023 (PD 25 Aug 2022).

BI has now informed the TGA that the shortage of tenecteplase will continue until 31 Dec 2024.

The TGA stated that the conservation strategies for medicines currently employed nationwide will continue to apply.

BI has said it will continue to work closely with states and territories to allocate stock of tenecteplase and facilitate equitable access to all Australians who may need it.

The company told the TGA it was confident the supply of stock throughout 2024 would meet the demand established in 2023.

BI said it is also working to

expedite the approval of new manufacturing sites to increase the supply of stock, but there remains a strong global demand for these critical medicines.

The tenecteplase (Metalyse) injection is used to dissolve blood clots in the immediate period following a heart attack.

The TGA explained that given the importance of the medicine in critical care settings, it has worked with the company to facilitate ongoing access and equitable supply throughout the shortage.

This includes publishing a joint statement for clinicians, and outlining new clinical advice for the use of tenecteplase in critical care situations, the TGA stated.

In addition, the TGA has extended the shelf life of some batches of tenecteplase to reduce wastage and maximise access, and approved the supply of overseas-registered equivalent products under sect. 19A of the Therapeutic Goods Act 1989.

## Reinterpreting tax

THE Royal Australian College of GPs (RACGP) is urging the NSW Government to support an Opposition amendment to save GP practices at risk of closure due to a new application of payroll tax.

The Opposition said it will move an amendment in Parliament this week to provide an immediate amnesty from payroll tax on payments to GPs and other health practitioners, to ensure that essential medical clinics, especially in regional NSW, are not forced to close.

It comes after the RACGP called on NSW Premier Chris Minns to step in, with evidence that GP practices in the state are being targeted for retrospective tax collection.

Evidence now shows that at least six practices in regional NSW and Sydney have received retrospective payroll tax notices, including one for \$450,000, said RACGP.

Practices already pay payroll tax on employees such as receptionists, GPs in training and nurses, but it hasn't applied to GPs because most doctors are not employees.

The doctors lease rooms from a practice owner and are under independent work agreements.

South Australia and Queensland have announced amnesty periods, while Western Australia does not intend to change its existing payroll tax provisions.

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## Dispensary Corner



A RUSSIAN social media influencer who advocated a vegan diet of raw tropical fruit - with no salt, oil or protein whatsoever - has sadly died due to what doctors have described as malnutrition.

Zhanna Samsonova, who lived and worked in Southeast Asia, regularly posted about her extreme eating program on TikTok and Instagram, claiming not to have drunk water for more than six years, in favour of vegetable and fruit juices.

"I eat simple food, although I have a lot of experience as a raw food chef," she posted.

"I love creating my own recipes and inspiring people to eat healthier," she added.

Samsonova also claimed to have overcome COVID-19 simply by a regimen of "dry fasting" where she consumed nothing at all, not even water.

She proudly boasted that people were always surprised to find that despite her youthful looks she was actually approaching her 40th birthday.

Unfortunately, she never made it, with more recent posts showing her increasingly gaunt until one Russian news outlet described her as looking like a "walking skeleton".

A recent trip home to Russia was particularly difficult because the only acceptable thing she found to consume was pineapple juice, according to an entry on her personal blog.

In the end, a lack of nutrients was blamed for her demise, cascading into exhaustion and multiple infections.

## Stigma a real pain in accessing care

THE National Pain Survey 2023 findings have revealed a concerning correlation between chronic pain and mental health challenges, including an increased prevalence of suicidal ideation.

The ChronicPain Australia survey showed that from 2022 to 2023, stigma continues to be a major concern for respondents, with similar findings correlating to experiences from pharmacists, GPs, other health professionals, people in the community, family, friends, work colleagues and employers.

The increase in respondents identifying as male from 13% in 2022 to 20% in 2023 allowed a broader understanding of the challenges men who live with chronic pain are facing.

Breaking down the stigma which prevents men from seeking help

and treatment for their chronic pain remains a top issue and is vital to reducing the hardship that the chronic pain community experiences, the survey found.

Meanwhile, women continue to report that they are not believed by healthcare practitioners, who minimise or dismiss their experiences of pain.

The LGBTQIA+ community had a higher likelihood of mental health and suicidal ideation.

The coexistence of chronic pain and suicidal ideation underscores the profound psychological burden faced by individuals enduring persistent pain on a daily basis.

The constant physical discomfort, limitations in daily activities, and the emotional toll of managing pain can lead to feelings of hopelessness, despair, and

isolation, the survey confirmed.

Moreover, limited access to healthcare resources can exacerbate these distressing daily emotions.

The National Pain Survey 2023 has seen an increase in respondents leveraging technology to bridge the gap between healthcare providers, with 73.8% citing they like using telehealth for chronic pain appointments, up from 44% in 2022.

Cost was found to be another barrier to treatment, with chronic pain sufferers reporting skipping essential treatments, deprioritising other primary care check-ups, and forgoing necessary essentials due to the rising cost of living.

This indicates the significant strain of the cost of healthcare services on those struggling to live, let alone paying for their medical bills, the survey revealed.

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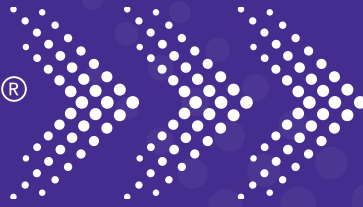
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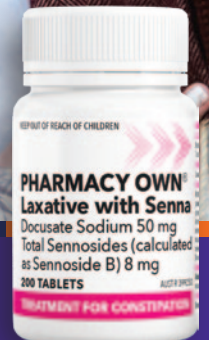
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