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## Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features four pages of news including a photo page from Wizard Pharmacy.

## Listings expanded

**AUSTRALIANS** with small cell lung cancer (SCLC), biliary tract cancer (BTC), juvenile idiopathic arthritis (JIA) and Crohn's disease will now have access to new treatment options through the PBS.

Keytruda (pembrolizumab) will be expanded on the PBS to treat early-stage triple-negative breast cancer.

Imfinzi (durvalumab) will be expanded for patients with extensive stage SCLC and advanced BTC.

Xeljanz (tofacitinib) will be expanded to provide an oral treatment for JIA, and Rinvoq (upadacitinib) will be expanded to treat patients with Crohn's disease.

# College to run intern training program

**THE** Pharmacy Guild of Australia has announced that the Australasian College of Pharmacy will manage and deliver the Guild Intern Training Program from this month onwards, which will also be known as the College Intern Training Program.

Guild National President Trent Twomey confirmed that this was a united outcome between the Guild and the College.

"The transfer of the Intern Training Program from the Guild to the College better aligns with the strategic direction and purpose of each entity.

"As the 8th Community Pharmacy Agreement approaches and the role of the community pharmacist continues to change, the Guild's focus is on advocating for community pharmacy as an integral primary healthcare destination for Australians," Twomey said.

College CEO Melanie Hunt (pictured), supported the transfer of the intern training program.



"As the national education provider for the Australian pharmacy industry, we are excited to start delivering the College Intern Training Program.

"The College's focus is on skills advancement for the pharmacy workforce, and supporting the industry with contemporary and proactive education as pharmacists' scope of practice continues to expand," Hunt commented.

"The intern training program sets interns up for a lifelong pharmacy career, and provides a solid foundation to start their journey to practise to their full scope.

"I want to reassure current

interns, their preceptors, and interested pharmacy students that the structure and delivery of the existing intern training program will not change.

"Current and future interns can still expect the same high-quality, engaging content, program flexibility, supportive clinical tutors, bonus extras and affordable value."

Interested pharmacy students can enrol in the College Intern Training Program via the website for the early 2024 cohort intake. *JG*

## Step up to care

**INDIGENOUS** leader Andrea Kelly has been appointed as the Interim First Nations Aged Care Commissioner, starting in Jan 2024, with the Commissioner's appointment to be made in 2025.

Kelly's role is a first step to ensure culturally safe, tailored and flexible aged care services for First Nations people.

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## Banned for a year

THE Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal has banned a pharmacist from working for a year after he allegedly swapped a female patient's narcolepsy medicine for vitamin D without her knowledge and then told her doctor it was an "experiment".

The patient's prescriptions were sent to Mina Tawadros so he could prepare her seven-day webster packs.

The Mornington Peninsula pharmacist correctly packed the 28 modafinil 100mg tabs for the first two weeks, but at the third dispense swapped the modafinil for cholecalciferol (vitamin D), which resulted in the patient suddenly falling asleep while driving the following day.

She recovered just in time but this caused her concern about her medication.

Tawadros had sought out her doctor to say he had decided to "experiment" with her meds because he did not believe she should be taking sedatives with narcolepsy medication.

Tawadros' lawyer told the tribunal that his client believed he was acting in the patient's best interests.

He also claimed he had told the patient's son about swapping her medication for vitamin D, which he said proved he had no intention of deceiving her, but the tribunal found the claim that he was "experimenting" with her medication showed otherwise.

## End open-ended scripts

**PLANT-BASED** speciality pharmacy and clinic, MediGreen's proprietor Angelica Rostov says she has witnessed unethical behaviour in the medicinal cannabis industry going unchecked for too long.

She has spoken out against what she terms as "clinics, doctors and pharmacists who regard medicinal cannabis as a money-grabbing exercise, putting profits, instead of patients, first".

"As a health professional, it is very distressing to see this happening."

She explained that open prescriptions have been a point of discussion for a long time, with bodies such as the TGA emphasising they are not valid prescriptions.

Yet, "we still have doctors writing things like 'Rx Indica flower THC 25% to 33% 10gm, with repeats,'" Rostov remarked.

"I would like to ask these prescribers, 'would you write a prescription for oxycodone 5mg to 15mg and leave it up to the patient and their pharmacist to decide what strength should be dispensed for them?'"

"The answer would be a resounding 'No'.

"So why are some prescribers writing open prescriptions for medicinal cannabis?"

"Is it laziness or do they not know what they are doing?" she asked.

The majority of medicinal cannabis products are classified as Schedule 8 (S8) medications and all rules and regulations regarding S8 prescribing and dispensing must be adhered to, she urged.

Professional indemnity insurer, Pharmaceutical Defence Limited



(PDL) confirmed the same and more to its members, "currently, there is a variable understanding of the legal requirements for writing prescriptions, with some prescribing software not being configured to assist with this".

"Be aware of the necessity for prescribers to be explicit about dosage and product substitution. "Be wary of scripts that state a range of dosage strengths.

"Scripts must state exactly the strength of the product to be supplied rather than a range."

As for all S8 medications, PDL strongly recommends the use of Real Time Prescription Monitoring (RTPM) prior to the supply of S8 medical cannabis products.

This is a legal requirement in jurisdictions where RTPM is mandatory, and PDL considers it best practice in those jurisdictions where review of RTPM records is not mandatory.

Rostov also noted that there were "free" clinics and telehealth calls to hand out multiple open scripts to the same patient, without them even needing the product.

Read about PDL's practice alert for medicinal cannabis, [HERE](#). JG

## New phages tool

A NEW bioinformatics software program at Flinders University is paving the way for a rapid expansion of research into bacteriophages, the viruses or phages that play key roles in controlling bacteria.

Experts at the Flinders University College of Science and Engineering have released a computational tool for researchers around the world to find 'bacteriophages' or phages through more accurate genome sequencing.

The new Phables computational tool can identify and characterise 49% more complete phage genomes compared to existing viral identification tools, according to a new article in *Bioinformatics*.

Research into isolating and harnessing bacteriophages paves the way for progress in the emerging field of 'phage therapy', a more natural way to target specific bacteria which pose a constant risk to immune-compromised, young and elderly patients, as well as 'super' bacteria which has become resistant to regular antibiotics, explained the Flinders University researchers.

Phables has almost 9,000 downloads across different software repositories.

Next year, the Flinders University research team aims to use the Phables tool to discover novel phages, and potentially use these isolated phages in therapies.

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# Wizard crowns its winners

**WIZARD** Pharmacy held its annual Wizard Awards, with celebrations at Pagoda Resort and Spa. The event was attended by nominees and special guests who enjoyed a sit-down brunch while CEO Lyndon Dyson and COO Sally Parker announced the winners of 2023. Congratulations to Wizard Pharmacy Cannington for winning the 2023 Pharmacy of the Year award and to Gemma Knight, who was awarded the 2023 Pharmacist of the Year recently.

Special mention goes to the 2023 cohort of Wizard Pharmacy's Step Up to Proprietor program, who received their graduation honours on the day.

Wizard Pharmacy thanked its sponsors API, Arrotex, RAC, and Swisse for making the celebrations possible.



2023 Wizard Award winners.



2023 Step Up to Proprietor graduates.



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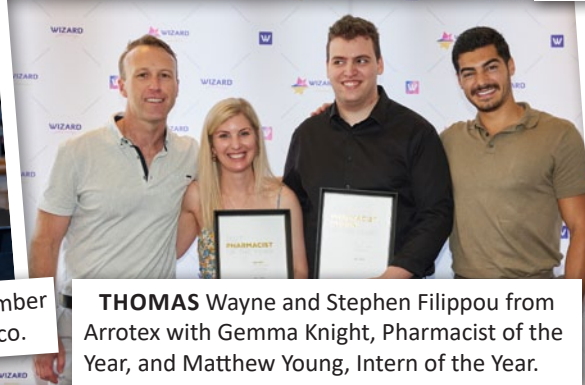
**JANINE** O'Grady from Swisse with Wizard Pharmacy Cannington.



**WIZARD** Professional Services Team Member of the Year - Lisa Heritage.



**PHARMACY** Team Member of the Year - Teresa Bianco.



**THOMAS** Wayne and Stephen Filippou from Arrotex with Gemma Knight, Pharmacist of the Year, and Matthew Young, Intern of the Year.



**WIZARD** COO Sally Parker.



**PHARMACY** Leader of the Year, Estelle Cronin.



**API'S** Marinka Crouch with Dyson & Parker.



**WIZARD** CEO Lyndon Dyson.

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### Dispensary Corner

**AUSSIERS** are being warned to watch their calorie intake this Christmas season, with the average Aussie indulging in an extra 500 calories each day.

UK-based dietitian Terri-Ann Nunns told *news.com.au* that people typically eat around 6,000 calories on Christmas Day - that's around triple the recommended daily intake.

Before you forgo the Christmas pudding though, you may instead want to be more selective about your beverages.

Nunns pointed out that some cocktails are surprisingly calorie-dense, like the Long Island iced tea cocktail, which can contain up to 770 calories - that's more than a McDonald's Big Mac burger.

The dietician suggested opting for a Bloody Mary instead, which as well as containing far fewer calories, also provides two out of five daily servings of veggies, thanks to the tomato juice and celery.

Other swaps that will help save your waistline include switching dessert wine for sherry, exchanging the gin and tonic for its sugar-free alternative, slimline tonic, and, if we're talking shots, choosing vodka over whiskey.

## Opioid treatment up 33%

**THE** use of medicine for opioid dependence has increased by 33% over the last 10 years, especially in very remote areas, researchers from the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC) at UNSW Sydney have revealed.

The *Trends in use of medicines for opioid agonist treatment in Australia, 2013-2022* research paper also found that buprenorphine now replaces methadone as the most common medicine for opioid dependence.

A new formulation of buprenorphine, a long-acting injectable administered weekly or monthly, was introduced in Sep 2019 (*PD* 26 Aug 2019), and offers an alternative to existing formulations like methadone, which often require daily supervised dosing at a local pharmacy or clinic.

Policy changes during COVID-19 were associated with its increased use, as it allowed clients to continue treatment while reducing social interactions.

The nationwide study, which was recently published in the *International Journal of Drug Policy*, also found there was an uptick in the use of opioid agonist treatment (OAT) in non-community pharmacy settings from early 2020, particularly in drug and alcohol outpatient clinics and prisons.

"With these recent changes, we wanted to conduct a detailed examination of OAT medicines in



Australia and to consider periodic factors that may have affected patterns of utilisation," Dr Chrianna Bharat, the lead researcher of the paper, shared.

"We accessed monthly sales data on all formulations of OAT medicines (methadone, sublingual buprenorphine, and long-acting injectable buprenorphine) between 2013 and 2022.

"Based on daily average doses, we then converted this data into an estimate of the number of clients that could be treated with these medicines each month (or 'client-months')," she explained.

Co-author of the paper, Kendal Chidwick, who is a pharmacist and epidemiologist at NDARC, emphasised that these changes to the pattern of use in Australia meant monitoring changes to outcomes, at a population level, as well as the cost-effectiveness of OAT, will be essential. *JM*

## Sleep may affect dementia risk

**RESEARCHERS** at Monash University have linked irregular sleep patterns to increased risk of dementia.

While the study, published in *Neurology*, didn't prove a causal relationship, it did find that those with highly inconsistent sleep patterns had the highest dementia risk.

Researchers used a sleep regularity index - with those scoring less than 41 deemed as "irregular sleepers" - which they applied to more than 88,000 UK Biobank participants whose average age was 62.

The sleep data was collected using a wrist device, with participants' scores determined by the consistency of periods awake and asleep across seven consecutive days.

Over a mean of 7.2 years follow-up, 480 participants developed dementia, with the most irregular sleepers 54% more likely to develop the illness compared to those in the middle group (scores averaging 60).

The most regular sleepers (scoring around 71) did not have a lower risk of developing dementia than the middle group, showing that moderately-regular sleep was equally beneficial as highly regular sleep.



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