

4 ways to help build strong bones



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Today's issue of PD

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

Budget dollars

ALONGSIDE the 60-day dispensing measure, the Federal Budget funding includes \$114.1m over four years for pharmacists to administer vaccines under the National Immunisation Program (limited by state-based legislation).

There is \$377.3m over the same period to reform Opioid Dependence Treatment access, and \$79.5m to double the Regional Pharmacy Maintenance Allowance.

Another \$111.8m is provided for electronic-prescription delivery infrastructure and services, including mandating the use of e-prescribing for high risk and high-cost meds.

Revenue decline impact

WITH the 60-day dispensing measure confirmed in last night's Budget, pharmacy is faced with a real concern about its viability and patient safety, confirmed RSM Australia's National Director, Pharmacy, Kian Ghahramani.

The Guild has predicted that on average each pharmacy will be \$177,000 worse off per annum.

The equivalent average new revenue a pharmacy needs to recoup lost dispensing fees is \$505k to \$590k, Ghahramani shared.

"No easy feat," he commented, adding the other side of this change is the opportunity cost of further revenue.

"With reduced foot traffic, it is not unreasonable to expect a revenue decline from the pharmacy's remaining categories.

"Reduced script dispensing also decreases the pharmacist's ability to provide services such as MedsChecks.

"The potential revenue loss will add further pressure to an already stretched industry experiencing

high wage costs, due to pharmacist shortages and stressful working conditions.

"It may create upwards pressure on service charges across the board."

Some free services may well need to now attract a fee, or there could be cuts in services and opening hours, Ghahramani explained.

RSM has seen some benchmarking that puts the impact at 3-4% of revenue coming off the bottom line.

This will reduce pharmacy profitability by well over 30% if these trends are correct, Ghahramani estimated.

As this change rolls out, he says owners should focus on the "financial hygiene" of their pharmacy to minimise its impact.

Key considerations include inventory, which represents tied-up working capital.

Ask yourselves, he says, if you are carrying the right stock and what more will you need to order to meet 60-day scripts? Can you even procure the inventory you want? Can you drop any nonperforming inventory?

"Revenue per square metre will decline so ensuring you have the right lease and space is more critical than ever," Ghahramani said.

Can you bring your landlord to the table to negotiate the rent now?

"Work with your financial advisor and banker to begin a financial assessment and the policy's impact on your covenants and bottom line."

Lastly, focus on maximising alternative income from the 7CPA, Ghahramani concluded.

Key differences

WHOLELIFE Pharmacy and Healthfoods has five key differences on how their brand operates such as stocking local products which has led to an increase in basket sizes.

See more on the [back page](#).

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Review hours and services on offer

PHARMACY Guild President Trent Twomey has stressed that the Govt's \$3.5b cut through the 60-day dispensing measure "will, unfortunately, mean pharmacists will need to make tough decisions that will see some shut their doors and others shut on weekends, opening later in the morning or closing early in the evening and it will mean patients miss out on vital medicines and health services.

"These are unprecedented changes that will fundamentally change the way patients get medicine and access support," Twomey said.

"We welcome moves by the Govt to reform the health system but at the same time they are asking 6,000 pharmacies to support more patients while cutting 50% of their funding, it doesn't add up."

Sep deadline looming

IN HIS Budget handed down last night, Treasurer Jim Chalmers confirmed the increase of maximum dispensing quantity to 60 days for more than 300 PBS-listed medicines, will be phased in from 01 Sep for stable, chronic health conditions, "cutting the number of visits to a pharmacy and GP each year and saving \$1.6b in out-of-pocket costs over four years" (*PD* breaking news).

The change will save general patients up to \$160 a year per medicine if prescribed for 60 days, and concession card holders up to \$43.80 per year per medicine, with the move coming on top of the \$12.50 decrease in the PBS co-payment for general scripts which became effective on 01 Jan.

A doubling of the Regional Pharmacy Maintenance Allowance involves an investment of \$79.5m over four years to support the continued operation of around 1,093 pharmacies in regional and rural Australia.

As previously announced, Chalmers also confirmed pharmacies would be funded to deliver vaccines to eligible patients under the National Immunisation Program, with an investment of \$114.1m over four years.

In other measures, \$3.5b has been allocated towards a tripling of bulk billing incentives for GPs, aiming to encourage doctors to provide free consultations for children, pensioners and concession card holders.

Doctors will also benefit from increases to Medicare rebates and a boost to the Workforce Incentive Payment, as well as a new Medicare item for consultations lasting more than 60 minutes.

The modernisation program for the My Health Record system received a big boost in the Federal Budget, receiving \$429m over two years to build a new national repository platform and investment to improve the sharing of pathology and diagnostic imaging data.

Confidence dips

ANZ Roy Morgan Consumer Confidence was down 2.1pts to 77.7 this week and has now spent 10 straight weeks below the mark of 80.


The last time Consumer Confidence spent at least 10 weeks under 80 was during the 1990-91 recession.

Consumer Confidence is now 12.8pts below the same week a year ago (02-08 May 2022, 90.5) and 2.9pts below the 2023 weekly average of 80.6.

As usual, Consumer Confidence was mixed around the States with decreases in Vic, WA and SA, but up slightly in NSW and Qld.

The driver of this week's decrease was growing concern about the Australian economy's performance, and less confidence that now is a 'good time to buy' major household items following the RBA's latest interest rate increase, up 0.25% to 3.85%.

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▼ This vaccine 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.

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References: 1. Spikevax Bivalent Original/Omicron BA.4-5 Product Information, February 2023. 2. Chalkias S *et al*. A bivalent Omicron-containing booster vaccine against COVID-19. Available at: <https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2022.06.24.22276703v1>. Accessed April 2023. 3. Andersson NW, *et al*. Comparative effectiveness of the bivalent BA.4-5 and BA.1 mRNA-booster vaccines in the Nordic countries. *medRxiv*. Published online 2023:2023-01. 4. Link-Gelles R *et al*. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 2022;71:1526-30.

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Clomiphene Rx

THE NSW Branch of the Guild is reminding pharmacists that legal requirements exist for prescriptions for clomiphene (due to the risk of causing multiple ovulation).

Only an authorised doctor may issue a prescription for these substances.

A script for clomiphene can be dispensed only if the prescriber has written their qualifications as FRCOG/ FRANZCOG (or FRACP practising endocrinology in a specialist endocrinology unit) with the disclaimer 'issued under clause 37 of the Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Regulation 2008', or the prescriber has been authorised in writing by the NSW Ministry of Health to prescribe the drug and has written on the prescription its authority number (e.g.CL...).

Other substances with similar requirements are acitretin, cyclofenil, dinoprost, dinoprostone, etretinate, follitropin beta, isotretinoin, luteinising hormone, tretinoin and urofollitrophin.

Gilbert heads Signature

GLENN Gilbert has been appointed as CEO and Managing Director of Signature Oncology Pty Ltd effective 09 Jun.

Founded last year, Signature is a cancer diagnostics platform company focused on the development of unique gene signature assays to empower clinician decision-making to advance patient care.

Commencing yesterday, Gilbert will act as an exclusive consultant to Signature while the company completes a capital raise to fund the next development phase of its proprietary gene signature melanoma diagnostic.

Following the completion of the capital raise, Gilbert will then assume his new role.

Gilbert explained that "40-50% of advanced melanoma patients are unresponsive to checkpoint inhibitors, otherwise known as immunotherapy drugs.

"There is a significant market opportunity for our proprietary diagnostic test to guide clinician decision-making, reduce healthcare costs and prevent patient exposure to unnecessary and unpleasant side-effects.



"In addition, those pharmaceutical companies with novel checkpoint inhibitors looking to select responders in clinical trials and become a standard treatment in the emerging neoadjuvant melanoma setting could also benefit from our novel diagnostic."

Gilbert has over 18 years of experience in the healthcare sector (including pharmaceutical, medical device (Rx and OTC) and IVD industries) across domestic and international markets.

He was the former CEO and Managing Director at Rhythm Biosciences, and during his tenure, grew the market capitalisation from circa \$3m in Mar 2020 to a peak of circa \$400m.

Before Rhythm, Gilbert held leadership roles at CSL and Medical Developments International, and has extensive business experience across the UK, Europe, Asia, and North and South America.

Pay the ransom!

THE Federal Govt is considering banning ransom payments as part of its cybersecurity strategy overhaul, however, business leaders and the insurance industry have cautioned against that, arguing payments may be justified in cases where the data breach could put peoples' lives at risk, or threaten critical infrastructure.

A survey of 125 Aussie tech executives by Rubrik Zero Labs found that 64% said they would be likely to pay a ransom to recover their data in the wake of a cyber-attack.

It also found that 72% have previously paid a ransom to recover data or to prevent an attack.



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NSW Guild event

THE NSW Branch of the Pharmacy Guild is inviting its members to attend a social networking reception held on 17 May in the Newcastle/ Hunter region.

There will be an important update on the Federal Government's proposed 60-day dispensing reforms.

Join fellow members, colleagues and special guests to also celebrate the achievements of recent years and discuss current issues.

This is your chance to meet Guild leaders for informal discussions in a relaxed social setting, with canapes and drinks provided or nominate a pharmacist-in-charge to attend if members are unable to do so. Register for the event **HERE**.

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Dispensary Corner

A CANADIAN activist has opened what is believed to be the world's first bricks and mortar shop selling illicit substances.

With the very appropriate name of The Drugs Store, the outlet is located in Vancouver and sells a range of products including heroin, cocaine, MDMA and methamphetamine.

51-year-old Jerry Martin is hoping to leverage off British Columbia's progressive stance on drugs, including a three-year decriminalisation trial scheme for possession of small amounts of the illegal items.

It's still completely illegal to sell the drugs, but Martin hopes to spark a constitutional challenge by opening the store to highlight the need for addicts to be able to access drugs that have been tested and are free from adulterants.

"People are dying," he said. "Especially now, they've allowed the entire province to do these drugs...but they've provided no clean, safe supply. "They're getting it from the same supply that everybody's overdosing from," he said.

Martin said he would sell a maximum of 2.5g of each drug to clients - the amount that can be carried under the pilot program without facing criminal charges, according to *Vice News*.

The report said he'd had some difficulty getting the project off the ground, partly because of a previous criminal conviction for drug trafficking which had impacted his credit rating and ability to rent premises.

Diet cycling can impact our cognition

A **UNSW** Sydney study in rats, published in *Molecular Nutrition and Food Research*, shows that cycling between a healthy and unhealthy diet impacts a person's spatial memory.

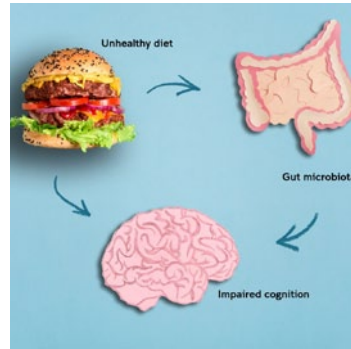
The research was undertaken by Dr Mike Kendig and Prof Margaret Morris, Head of Pharmacology at UNSW Medicine & Health.

This research recognises that junk foods are a central part of modern diets, but most of us don't eat them 100% of the time.

People often take part in 'diet cycling', alternating between healthy and unhealthy eating.

A common pattern is adopting a poorer quality diet on weekends.

Previous research shows that high-fat, high-sugar diets are associated with poorer cognition in humans and rats.



However, the effects of diet cycling are not well understood.

"Mike and I wanted to know whether the same total amount of unhealthy food, but in different-sized chunks, would have the same impact," said Morris.

So why did the unhealthy diet impact the rats' memory? It's likely that several factors are at play - one

being the gut microbiome.

"Our analyses indicated that the levels of two bacteria correlated with the extent of the memory impairment.

"This suggests a link between the effects of diet cycling on cognition and the microbiota," explained Kendig.

Morris added, "we know the gut is very connected to our brain.

"Changes to the microbiome in response to our diet might impact our brain and behaviour."

Another reason could be that an unhealthy diet contributes to inflammation in the body.

Morris stated that the key takeaway is that even subtle shifts in dietary habits can impact our thinking and memory.

Regular, long stretches of healthy eating are important for cognition.

PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT

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For the pharmacy owner considering *different* brand approaches, there are five key differences between WholeLife and traditional pharmacy-only models.

1



MORE CARE, MORE VISITS

WholeLife pharmacists and staff put a strong emphasis on customer service – addressing the ‘whole person’, getting to know their needs and offering trusted advice – which increases customer loyalty.

2



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Because WholeLife offers a complete range of prescription services, alternative and natural health products, a wide range of affordable health foods and local products, customers spend more per visit.

3



ONE-STOP HEALTH DESTINATION

Customers can be confident they will get balanced advice on new natural health regimes and preventative treatments – backed by knowledge, research and a professional understanding of contra-indications and combinations to avoid.

4



A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Stocking local products and foodstuffs, providing learning events and linking with allied health professionals brings people together – making your pharmacy a community wellness destination.

5



SCOPE FOR GROWTH

As your WholeLife pharmacy establishes its reputation, there is scope to add new revenue from products and services where your customers and community expect to find them – from wellness books and mindfulness hobbies to tasting events and advice on sustainable living.



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