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Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features three pages of news, plus a full page from BioCeuticals.

200,000 dispensed

A SENATE estimates hearing recently revealed that 200,000 60-day scripts had been issued in the policy's first month.

The hearings were also told that between 01 May and 30 Sep, there were 48 applications for new pharmacy approvals, of which 18 have already been approved.

There were also four applications for pharmacy licences to be cancelled.

Move with ease

BIOCEUTICALS Ultra Muscleze has a blend of highly bioavailable magnesium amino acid chelates to relieve spasms. See more on **page four**.

Triple boost to bulk billing

SIGNIFICANT increases to Medicare bulk billing incentives came into effect today, where GPs will receive triple the incentive to bulk bill vulnerable patients for most standard consultations.

In metro areas, the incentive for a standard consultation will rise from \$6.85 to \$20.65 and in very remote areas it will rise from \$13.15 to \$39.65, the Federal Govt has announced.

It will deliver an additional estimated \$3.5 billion over five years to support affordable access to GP care for a range of patients including concession card holders, pensioners and children under 16, a statement explained.

Royal Australian College of General Practitioners President Dr Nicole Higgins welcomed the bulk billing increases.

"These changes are essential targeted relief for patients who need it most, but this significant investment follows decades of underfunding," said Higgins.



"It's very clear there is a long way to go in strengthening Medicare, but this is an important first step and a major investment for families and our most vulnerable patients."

Earlier this year, the Govt cut pharmacy's remuneration with the introduction of 60-Day Dispensing with the Pharmacy Guild President Trent Twomey stating "you don't know what you've got 'til it's gone".

"60-Day Dispensing will rip \$4.5 billion out of the front line healthcare sector...and you will see more of these cuts and closures from Sep when the policy is in place." (PD 12 Jul) JG

Sign of progress

FEDERAL Health Minister Mark Butler will be a guest of honour at the Pharmacy Guild of Australia's Annual Parliamentary Dinner on 14 Nov at Parliament House.

Pharmacy Guild National President Trent Twomey said he was delighted Butler will address the Dinner.

"This is a sign of our improving relationship with the Federal Govt as we negotiate the 8th Community Pharmacy Agreement.

"Negotiations are constructive, and real progress is being made.

"I thank Minister Butler for accepting our invitation to address Guild members, for the first time since APP in Mar."

The Dinner will see community pharmacists, industry leaders, MPs and Senators from all sides of politics get together at the end of the parliamentary year.

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1. Waring, M. et al. An investigation of the effect of six emollients on skin characteristics. Journal of the Dermatology Nurses' Association. 2014 6:1
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Better absorption

BOD Science has released the results of its second pharmacokinetic study for Aqua Phase, the technology that acts as a drug delivery system that can make water-hating (or lipophilic) drugs, such as cannabinoids (CBD) water-soluble.

The most recent study, which completes Bod Science's research and development work, demonstrated that Aqua Phase delivers six times greater bioavailability in comparison to CBD in oil, as well as triple the maximum concentration levels.

It also showed that Aqua Phase is faster-acting, reaching its maximum concentration in two and a half hours versus six hours for CBD in oil.

"In particular, the enhanced tolerability of Aqua Phase has the potential to improve the experience of patients who can't tolerate the oils used in most CBD products.

"Excessive oil consumption can cause various digestive symptoms such as nausea and indigestion," said Janet Wilson, Head of R&D at Bod.

NSW's single health record



THE NSW Government has announced that work is underway on a new single digital patient record (SDPR) system, stating that the current system for noting health data is 'complex, cumbersome and outdated'.

Currently, there are nine systems used for electronic medical records, 10 patient administration systems and five pathology laboratory information management systems in use across NSW Health.

The department is now working on a single streamlined system to record patient files and to replace and consolidate current systems.

NSW Health Minister Ryan Park said the SDPR system will "deliver healthcare workers and their patients with consistent, timely and secure health information".

"A consolidated and centralised record-keeping system will provide a holistic and integrated view of the care a patient receives right across the NSW public health system," Park explained.

The current systems are not connected statewide, and data is often unable to be shared or integrated in real-time, creating duplicate data collection and information gaps in decision-making, resulting in patients having to repeat medical information.

The new system is hoped to improve patient experience through better continuity of care and provide patients with secure access to relevant medical data to help them make informed care choices and self-manage their own health and wellbeing. *JG*

Sleep loss risky

AS LITTLE as 1% reduction in deep sleep per year for people over 60 years of age translates into a 27% increased risk of dementia, according to a Monash study.

Research suggests that enhancing or maintaining deep sleep, also known as slow-wave sleep, in older years could stave off dementia.

The study, led by A/Prof Matthew Pase, and published yesterday in *JAMA Neurology*, looked at 346 participants, over 60 years of age, enrolled in the Framingham Heart Study who completed two overnight sleep studies in the time periods 1995 to 1998 and 2001 to 2003, with five years between the two studies.

These participants were then carefully followed for dementia from the time of the second sleep study through to 2018.

The researchers found that the amount of deep sleep on average declined between the two studies, indicating slow-wave sleep loss with ageing.

Over the next 17 years of follow-up, there were 52 cases of dementia.

Even adjusting for age, sex, cohort, genetic factors, smoking status, sleeping medication use, antidepressant use, and anxiolytic use, each percentage decrease in deep sleep each year was associated with a 27% increase in the risk of dementia.

"Slow-wave sleep supports the ageing brain in many ways, and we know that sleep augments the clearance of metabolic waste from the brain, including facilitating the clearance of proteins that aggregate in Alzheimer's disease," Pase said.

"However, to date, we have been unsure of the role of slow-wave sleep in the development of dementia.

"Our findings suggest that slow-wave sleep loss may be a modifiable dementia risk factor," he added.

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Register for NMS

WITH barely a week to go, the National Medicines Symposium (NMS) is an annual, cross-disciplinary event bringing together leading organisations, experts, clinicians, consumers and policymakers to discuss and debate key issues around quality use of medicines.

This year's theme 'The future of medicines: good for people, good for the planet' champions sustainability from overseas and in Australia, sharing ideas, challenges, and solutions for medicine sustainability and appropriate care of patients.

The free, virtual symposium is to be held on 08 Nov and pharmacists can register **HERE** and see the full program **HERE**.

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Dispensary Corner

SHAMANS at a Sri Lankan temple known for helping pilgrims place curses on their enemies went on strike last week after appeals to the lord of destruction failed to resolve a pay dispute, *AFP* has reported.

Seenigama Devale, a shrine on a small islet off Sri Lanka's southern coast, hosts daily ceremonies in which celebrants guide the grinding of fiery peppers over a millstone.

The ritual offering is made to Devol, a deity whose duties involve comforting the faithful and unleashing great suffering on their enemies.

But DM Kumara, the temple's chief shaman, said he and his nine colleagues had halted the ceremonies to protest new rules that sharply cut their earnings.

Administrators decreed that Kumara and his colleagues could now only take 30% of the cash, gems and jewellery offerings made to Devol, down from the total share they took earlier.

All 10 shamans had appealed to the deity to intervene on their behalf, Kumara explained, adding that the strike was necessary in the interim.

"We have taken our grievance to god Devol, but we are taking direct action because we have not seen immediate results," he commented.

"Divine influence will take a little time to work."

The temple's interim administrator SD Handi added the strike was unnecessary because celebrants would still be earning 10 times the average salary of a new govt employee.

SHPA RAP pledges change

THE Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) has formally released the organisation's first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), capping a year of advocacy and activity aimed at improving healthcare equity and outcomes for Australia's first peoples.

SHPA Chief Executive Kristin Michaels said the RAP marks an important moment of accountability.

"We pledge to listen, learn and act as we respectfully and collaboratively strengthen our organisation's reconciliation journey.

"And we plan to go on this journey in stages, beginning with our staff group based in Naarm.

"This frame is important, to ensure change is embedded at the heart of our organisation, first."

SHPA President Tom Simpson said



the Reflect RAP continues a history of speaking up to improve the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

"As a progressive organisation, SHPA is committed to being a positive force for change.

"We will continue to advocate for culturally safe practice in pharmacy, lead advocacy to expand the Closing the Gap PBS Co-Payment Measure to include public hospitals and support our SHPA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Specialty Practice Group, which is unique in Australian pharmacy." *JG*

Metcalf winners

RESEARCHERS working with stem cells to find treatments for osteoarthritis and stomach cancer are the two winners of the 2023 Metcalf Prizes for Stem Cell Research, awarded by the National Stem Cell Foundation of Australia.

Dr Jiao Jiao Li plans to use stem cells as biofactories to make drugs to reduce inflammation and encourage repair in osteoarthritic joints.

Dr Dustin Flanagan wants to boost the survival rate of late-stage stomach cancer by understanding why some deviant stomach stem cells turn cancerous.

This knowledge will help in the development of drugs to bring these misbehaving cells back to normal function, he explained.

PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT

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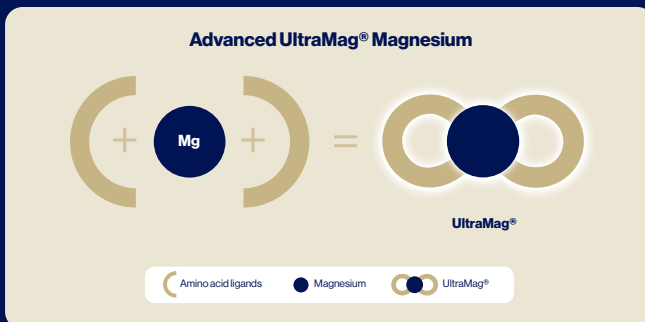


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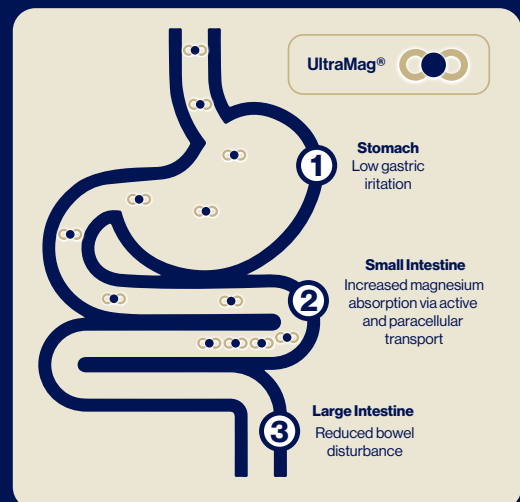
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