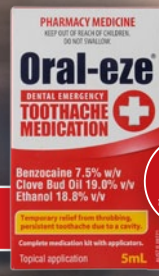


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WA's free flu jabs

WESTERN Australia has rolled out a free influenza vaccine program for all residents, joining Qld as the second state to implement such an initiative for 2024.

Announced by Premier Roger Cook and Health Minister Amber-Jade Sanderson, the program aims to boost immunisation rates ahead of the flu season.

PSA WA President Kristian Ray praised the move, highlighting its potential to increase vaccine uptake by eliminating cost barriers.

With 32% Western Australians vaccinated in 2023, Ray urged people to consult with their pharmacists about the suitability of the vaccine, which will be available from May.

Meds list slashed as measure expires

FOLLOWING the expiration of the National Health (Continued Dispensing – Emergency Measure) Determination 2023 on Sun, the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia, (PSA) has again voiced significant concerns over the reduced access to medication for emergency dispensing.

The number of medicines available for this purpose has plummeted from 450 to just 150.

PSA President A/Prof Fei Sim has expressed disappointment over the measure lapsing, emphasising the importance of having robust initiatives in place to ensure the uninterrupted use of medicines.

“Not all emergencies are natural disasters that can be responded to nationally,” Sim explained to *Pharmacy Daily*.

“Whether it be bereavement,



domestic violence, a house fire or car crash or any other personal emergency, the reality is that Australians can be suddenly separated from their medicine on any given day,” Sim said.

“It is crucial that our health system supports continuous access to essential medications, no matter the circumstances.”

She further stressed the need for a permanent expansion of continued dispensing to include all PBS medicines, to provide Australians with peace of mind regarding their medication needs.

With the conclusion of the emergency dispensing measure, PSA Chief Executive Officer, Adj A/Prof Steve Morris (pictured), highlighted the immediate risks to patients who might now find themselves unable to access their medication in a timely manner.

“Continued dispensing has been a safety net, ensuring continuity of care when patients cannot consult their GP,” Morris explained.

“The restriction to just 150 medicines significantly narrows the scope of this vital service.”

“The PSA is actively urging the Federal Government to collaborate with state and territory governments to reinstate and make permanent these critical measures, to safeguard emergency access to a broad range of medicines for all Australians,” he said. JG

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CHEMSAVE is highlighting its limited-time special offer, which offers great value for a low monthly membership fee.

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Today's issue of PD

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

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FREE MARKET OPINION

Fake vials bypassing TGA

THE TGA has issued a warning after testing a weight loss product, revealing significant discrepancies in its composition.

Marketed as 'Semaglutide 2.64mg/mL, L-carnitine 100mg/mL B12 .05mg/mL solution for SC injection 3', the vials contained 10 times the labelled amount of vitamin B12 (cyanocobalamin) and significantly less L-carnitine than advertised, with estimates ranging from 0.5-0.7mg/ml compared to the labelled 100mg/ml.

Semaglutide, a medication that requires a script, was allegedly compounded and distributed in blue-capped vials with a distinctive red solution, differing from its expected appearance.

TGA stated that this product was mailed directly to patients, bypassing pharmacies, which is not the standard practice for prescription medicine distribution.

The administration's investigation was prompted by a serious adverse event where a patient

was hospitalised with peripheral neuropathy after a subcutaneous injection of this compounded semaglutide-like product.

The product in question has not undergone assessments for quality, safety or efficacy and is not listed on the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods.

The origin of the product's manufacture remains unidentified.

Compounded fake semaglutide-like products can cause serious health risks, warned the TGA, particularly those created without professional oversight in potentially unsterile conditions.

The body has released compounding safety information specifically for semaglutide-like products to educate consumers and healthcare professionals.

Moreover, the regulatory body is urging community pharmacists to advise their customers to be extremely cautious when purchasing medicines from unknown online sources. *JG*

Low-carb push on to defeat diabetes

DIABETES Australia has launched a partnership with the Defeat Diabetes program, to bolster support for individuals living with or at risk of the disease with pharmacists an integral part of the initiative.

The collaboration seeks to empower people to manage their weight and blood glucose levels, potentially leading to the remission of type 2 diabetes, through a low-carb diet.

Diabetes Australia Acting Group CEO Taryn Black said weight loss and improved blood glucose levels and remission of the condition can be "life changing".

"We support options for attempting weight loss including very low energy or low and very low carbohydrate diets, based on individual needs and the advice of their health professionals such as pharmacists," added Black.

In a strategic move to further its research capabilities, Diabetes Australia announced Prof Grant

Brinkworth as the inaugural Director of Research.

Brinkworth, a prominent researcher in low-carbohydrate diets for diabetes management, is expected to significantly contribute to the organisation's efforts in supporting diabetes remission strategies.

He underlined the role of pharmacists and told *Pharmacy Daily* that the profession can promote the importance of lifestyle changes, in addition to pharmacotherapy, in managing blood glucose levels.

"In consultation with their customer's healthcare team, pharmacists can help people explore evidence-based, professionally supported lifestyle programs to help them manage their condition," said Brinkworth.

"They can also assist by encouraging anyone considering a low-carb diet to talk to their GP about the impact diet change could have on medication needs."

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Dispensary Corner

IF MILK makes you dash to the loo, it might just be your shield against diabetes type 2, suggests a recent study from *Nature Metabolism*.

This lactose-intolerant twist on health news uncovered that adults who lack the enzyme lactase, and therefore might not have the easiest relationship with dairy, could lower risk of developing diabetes type 2 with increased milk intake.

Yes, for those who have sworn off milk after too many uncomfortable encounters, it might be time to reconsider your dairy dilemma.

The study reads like a culinary mystery, involving over 12,000 participants whose dietary habits, gut bacteria, and blood chemistry were analysed to see how they reacted to dairy.

The surprising discovery showed an approximate 30% decrease in diabetes type 2 risk when people bravely embraced milk, in spite of their bodies' initial reservations.

Spearheading this dairy paradox was Dr Qibin Qi and team, who found that indulging in milk could be akin to hosting a bacterial "rave" in the gut, where beneficial bacteria like bifidobacterium are the life of the party.

However, this phenomenon was exclusive to the lactose-intolerant club, so perhaps reaching for some cheese is ok.

Milk guzzlers with the power to digest lactose without a hitch (the lactase-persistent folks) suprisingly didn't enjoy the same protective benefits.

Drug listed to beat bad cholesterol

NOVARTIS Australia has announced Leqvio (inclisiran) is now available on the PBS for adults with two types of high cholesterol.

The medication is suitable for those patients diagnosed with heterozygous familial hypercholesterolaemia and non-familial hypercholesterolaemia with atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease, and who can't hit their cholesterol targets with just statins and ezetimibe.

Dr Karam Kostner, A/Prof of Medicine at the University of Queensland and Director of Cardiology at Mater Hospital, Brisbane, pointed out the serious impact of heart disease in Australia and that one in three live with high cholesterol levels.

"The availability of a first-of-its-kind siRNA therapy that only



requires twice-yearly dosing provides patients with another highly effective treatment option to help them control their low-density lipoprotein cholesterol (LDL-C) levels," said Kostner.

"This is a fantastic and welcome development in an area of high unmet need."

Tanya Hall from Hearts4Heart believes Leqvio is an exciting addition for patients.

"The introduction of a new treatment option is wonderful news for Australian patients.

"Continued innovation in the area of hypercholesterolaemia and atherosclerotic cardiovascular

disease and timely access to the right treatment is essential for people living with these conditions," Hall commented.

Novartis Australia Country President ANZ Matt Zeller emphasised that with Leqvio on the PBS, the profession can further help improve lives.

"Given the increased burden on our healthcare system and the inequalities often faced by rural and regional patients, we believe that pharmacists can also play a key role in helping patients administer and manage the therapy," said Zeller.

Leqvio's PBS listing is backed by significant research.

The drug's phase three trial found that twice-yearly, Leqvio, in addition to statin therapy, provides consistent LDL-C reduction beyond six years of treatment. JG

PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT

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