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## Today's issue of PD

*Pharmacy Daily* today features three pages of pharmacy news, plus a full page from **Chemsave**.

## Enjoy savings

**CHEMSAVE** is highlighting its limited-time special offer, which offers great value on its membership fees.

See more on the **back page**.

## Royal Assent given

**THE** Royal Assent has been given to Queensland's Pharmacy Business Ownership Bill (**PD 25 Mar**), which means it is now law that will help regulate ownership, control and operation of pharmacy businesses in the state.

The Act repeals the previous *Pharmacy Business Ownership Act 2001*.

## Legal action for Montu

**MONTU** Group, its subsidiary Alternaleaf Pty Ltd, and their common director Christopher Strauch are facing legal action by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) in the Federal Court of Australia for alleged unlawful advertising on the effectiveness of their medicinal cannabis products.

The TGA claims that the companies used terms like "medical cannabis" and "plant medicine" to promote the Alternaleaf online clinic, where patients could obtain prescription-only medicines after an online consultation process.

During Medicinal Cannabis Awareness Week 2023, Montu Group is alleged to have operated a website advertising medicinal cannabis to the public, promoting its use for treating serious diseases and conditions.

Such representations are prohibited by the TGA unless specific approval is granted.

The advertisements also

allegedly implied TGA approval, portrayed medicinal cannabis as "safe, magical or miraculous", and featured endorsements from other health professionals.

The regulatory authority further alleged that Strauch, associated with the companies, facilitated these violations and despite warnings, the companies have continued advertising.

The peak body has sought declarations, pecuniary penalties, and injunctions against Montu, Alternaleaf, and Strauch.

Direct-to-consumer advertising of prescription medicines can lead to inappropriate demand and harmful prescribing, the TGA stated, emphasising the importance of professional consultation in treatment decisions.

The TGA reminded businesses that unlawful advertising of medicinal cannabis carries serious penalties under the law, and it vows to vigorously enforce regulations to deter such practices. *JG*

## PA2024 rates open

**EARLY** bird registration is now open for the Pharmacy Assistant National Conference (PA2024), scheduled to be held from 5-7 Sep at Hyatt Regency in Sydney.

Lucy Walker, Guild events committee member and past Pharmacy of the Year winner, encouraged pharmacies to take advantage of this opportunity to invest in their staff's education and development.

Walker highlighted the Pharmacy Assistant of the Year Award as a source of inspiration for pharmacy assistants, showcasing exemplary customer service skills and leadership.

Early bird registration ends on 30 Jun, with the full program out in late May, featuring industry and product updates, personal and professional development and a three-hour refresher training workshop - see more **HERE**.

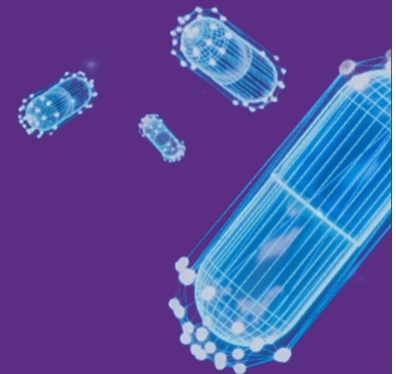


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## Call to unblock wait times

AUSTRALIA'S public hospitals are facing their lengthiest wait times on record for planned surgeries, with emergency departments struggling under access blockages, according to the latest annual *Public Hospital Report Card* by the Australian Medical Association (AMA).

AMA President Prof Steve Robson emphasised the urgency of the situation, calling for immediate action from Australian government health ministers.

Despite previous funding boosts and reforms to the National Hospital Funding Agreement, Robson stressed the need for further investment and collaboration among health ministers.

The report revealed a concerning trend: Australians now wait nearly twice as long for planned surgeries compared to two decades ago, with the proportion of individuals receiving timely category two surgeries, hitting a record low.

Prof Robson highlighted the seriousness of these delays, noting that such surgeries are essential



and urgent for patients, and not elective or cosmetic.

In response to the findings, Prof Robson proposed a \$4.12 billion plan to address the surgery backlog, to be shared between the federal government and states and territories.

Meanwhile, emergency departments are grappling with access blockages, with only 56% of patients completing their presentations within four hours, the lowest figure since 2011.

The AMA's report underscores the pressing need for immediate action to alleviate pressure on Australia's public healthcare system and ensure timely access to essential medical services. *JG*

## Rare kidney disease trial

A TRIAL investigating how children are treated for a rare kidney disease called nephrotic syndrome is currently underway.

The OPEN (Optimising Prednisolone dosE in childhood Nephrotic syndrome) trial is being led by a team at Flinders University and backed by grant funding of almost \$2 million from the Australian Government's Medical Research Future Fund.

Nephrotic syndrome is a potentially life-threatening kidney condition that affects one in 50,000 children a year.

The syndrome has been treated with the same medication since the 1960s - oral prednisolone, a high-dose steroid treatment.

Unfortunately, it often comes with significant side effects like weight gain, behavioural changes, infections and impaired growth.

Relapses are also common, leading to patients then requiring multiple doses of steroids, with

gradually increasing side-effects.

"Recent clinical trials have confirmed what we give to children the first time they are diagnosed is the optimal dose, however what we don't know yet is if there is the possibility of treating relapses with half the amount of steroids we currently use," said trial chief investigator Prof Jonathan Craig, kidney researcher and clinician and Vice President and Executive Dean of Flinders University's College of Medicine and Public Health.

"Using a randomised trial, we will compare the efficacy of a lower intensity corticosteroid treatment to the current standard with the hope this still leads to remission, and maintains remission," Craig explained.

"This approach has already shown promise which demonstrates we could potentially halve the cumulative steroid dose and alleviate the associated side effects." *JHM*

## Hear from our Franchise Partners

“Joining a national brand like Priceline Pharmacy, the marketing campaigns are very visible, we find a lot of our customers know what is going on in our stores. Priceline filled the gap in our community and provides a whole comprehensive offer. When opening our second store, our pre-existing experience with Priceline and knowing how supportive they would be was a big factor.”

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### Dispensary Corner

**A TEENAGE** boy from California managed to swallow a quarter, but instead of it taking the express elevator down to his stomach, the coin decided to explore a less travelled route. It took a detour into his airway, apparently mistaking the poor kid's vocal cords for a slot in a vending machine. Published recently in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, the tale unfolds with doctors discovering the wayward quarter lodged in the subglottis - the no-man's-land between the vocal cords and the trachea. Despite the alarming location of this unexpected foreign object, the teen strolled into a hospital's emergency room. His symptoms were mild: just a bit of hoarseness, some trouble swallowing, but, surprisingly, no drooling and comfortable breathing. Doctors performed a high-stakes retrieval operation. Under general anaesthetic they deployed long, optical forceps equipped with a camera, because if you're going to do a coin extraction, you might as well film it. The quarter, perhaps sensing its impending capture, reflected off the camera lens as the forceps plucked it from its snug spot. Post-coin-ectomy, the boy's airway was inspected for damage, sure enough, the quarter had left its mark - ulcerations that mirrored its ribbed edges. Thankfully, after the removal, the boy's symptoms improved and he was discharged home.

## New pelvic pain study

**THE** University of South Australia has released a new study to help healthcare workers better support women with persistent pelvic pain, including symptoms that are suggestive of gynaecological, lower urinary tract, bowel, sexual, and pelvic floor dysfunction.

In Australia, one in two women experience persistent pelvic pain, with one in four reporting that pelvic pain impacts their daily lives, including their ability to work, study, or exercise.

Using interviews with 20 Australian females who suffer from pelvic pain, the study identified four important concepts that the participants said can help with pain management.

One of those points is that a sensitised nervous system can lead to overprotective pain, which provides a biological explanation for pelvic pain and validates that pain is real, and not 'in your head'.

Other key ideas identified by the females as helpful ways to think about their pelvic pain include: "Pain doesn't always mean my pelvis is damaged"; "How I think, feel, and 'see' my pain can make it worse"; and "I can change my pain... slowly".



UniSA researcher and PhD candidate Amelia Mardon said, "while preliminary evidence suggests that pain science education can help women with persistent pelvic pain, there has been little information about what these consumers value learning".

This study addresses the gap by capturing people's experiences of persistent pelvic pain and identifying what knowledge could help others, Mardon explained.

"By putting consumers' voices, experiences, and opinions at the forefront of any intervention, we're ensuring that pain education is relevant and aligned with their needs or priorities." JM

## GSK's vax data

**GSK** has released the final results from its ZOSTER-049 phase III trial of Shingrix (Recombinant Zoster Vaccine or RZV), demonstrating that the vaccine protects against shingles for over a decade in adults aged 50 and older.

The findings will be presented at the ESCMID Global 2024 conference in Barcelona from 27-30 Apr.

The end-of-trial data shows 79.7% efficacy in vaccinated participants aged 50 years and over for six to 11 years.

No safety concerns were identified during the follow-up period, GSK added.

Dr Javier Díez-Domingo, Principal Investigator from FISABIO, highlighted the vaccine's sustained efficacy, stating, "this final data demonstrates continued protection over more than a decade with high efficacy maintained in both the 50+ and 70+ age groups".

Shingles, a risk due to the natural decline in the immune system among older adults, can lead to severe outcomes including post-herpetic neuralgia, a condition causing long-lasting nerve pain.

The disease presents as a painful rash and can significantly disrupt daily activities, with many patients reporting missed work days.

Phil Dormitzer, Senior Vice President and Head of Vaccines R&D at GSK, noted the importance of these results. "This data goes far beyond the typical long-term follow-up period for a trial, tracking the efficacy of vaccination in participants as they age."

## DID YOU KNOW?

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