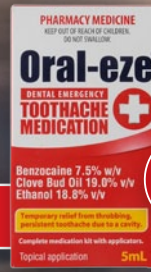


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- Dispense Assist
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Dispensary help

DISPENSE Assist is a low-cost staffing solution with dispensary technicians available 24/7, at rates from as low as \$7.43 per hour, for services that include compounding, DAAs and any other required tasks - see **p3**.

Glucojel glucojoy

GLUCOJEL is running a major campaign for a \$10,000 giveaway, so stock your shelves with the popular product to attract more customers in-store - more details **page four**.

ACCC gives I'rom acquisition tick

THE ACCC will not oppose the proposed acquisition of I'rom Group Co Limited by Blackstone Group (HK) Limited after accepting a court-enforceable undertaking requiring the divestment of CMAX Clinical Research.

Nucleus Network, which is indirectly owned by Blackstone, and CMAX, which is owned by I'rom, are the two largest suppliers of phase 1 clinical trial services to pharmaceutical companies in Australia, providing safety and tolerability testing of medicine.

"Without the divestiture, the proposed acquisition would bring together the two largest suppliers of phase 1 clinical trials services in Australia," ACCC Commissioner Dr Philip Williams said.

This could have resulted in increased cost and reduced service quality of testing, as well as diminishing competition.

AMA calls for more STI action

THE Australian Medical Association (AMA) has welcomed the development of a national strategy on sexually transmissible infections, but says not enough is being done to tackle rising rates of sexually transmissible infections in vulnerable communities or to help eliminate congenital syphilis.

AMA President Dr Danielle McMullen said the strategy will help combat stigma associated with sexually transmissible infections across Australia, but the current rise in congenital syphilis cases, disproportionately affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, was of "grave concern", with stillbirths and infant deaths occurring as a result of infection.

Congenital syphilis - where the syphilis infection is passed from mother to child during pregnancy - is entirely preventable if women have ongoing access to antenatal care, said Dr McMullen, adding that prevention could be further enhanced by a community-wide STI awareness, prevention and treatment campaign.

The draft of the *Fifth National Sexually Transmissible Infections Strategy 2024-2030* is currently available for consultation.

The strategy features pharmacists in its key areas for action relating to workforce development, with pharmacies also being highlighted among settings that provide opportunities for STI prevention and awareness.

Proposed measures include involving community pharmacies to increase STI screening, vaccination and access to treatment, and to embed sexual health, STI information and awareness of stigma in pharmacist education and training programs.

Pharmacies are also key among the primary and tertiary care settings in which people affected by STIs may access healthcare, and are critical entry ways for priority



groups to receive adequate care.

The AMA has also urged the government to recognise and support the sexual health needs of older Australians, including those in aged care, through policies and programs that include targeted sexual and reproductive health education, health promotion, and prevention strategies.

"Older Australians are often overlooked when it comes to sexual and reproductive health policies and research, but the prevalence of STIs among older Australian women is also increasing," Dr McMullen pointed out.

"Programs to address STI rates in older people need to be underpinned by ongoing research and the provision of information and education to health and aged care service providers.

"This must include strategies to promote the sexual health of older people and ensure services are inclusive." **KB**

Xmas shutdown

PHARMACY Daily is taking a break over the holidays, with today our last issue for 2024.

We will return after the Christmas break on Mon 06 Jan.

We wish all of our readers a happy and healthy holiday season - see you next year!

Fluoride in water does not harm brain

AUSTRALIAN research has found that water fluoridation is not linked with brain impairment in children, dispelling claims that fluoride has negative effects on cognition.

Researchers at the University of Queensland compared the IQ scores of hundreds of people aged 16 to 26 years old who had been exposed to fluoridated water as a young child with those who had not.

"We found those who'd consistently been drinking fluoridated water had an IQ score 1.07 points higher on average than those with no exposure," said study lead Professor Loc Do from UQ's School of Dentistry.

"We also found people who had dental fluorosis - a reliable biomarker related to excessive fluoride intake in early childhood - had IQ scores 0.28 points higher on average than those without," he added.

Socioeconomic status and other potential confounding factors were taken into account.



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Dispensary Corner

THEY say that no good deed goes unpunished, and that's certainly the case for one UK pharmacist, who has found himself facing a 12-month suspension after trying to ease suffering in Africa.

Pharmacist Sylvester Emmanuel Vinkabb Jr was found to have ordered and removed hundreds of containers of Xanax, diazepam, codeine linctus and Phenergan elixir from the pharmacy he worked at in order to send the medications to African community Sierra Leone.

He told investigators that he would buy the drug at cost price before they were "hidden in a barrel with clothes and shoes" and sent "to his mother in Sierra Leone, for collection by a doctor...to benefit patients".

"It was always upsetting to me when I went back to Sierra Leone and saw how difficult it was for the community hospital, the staff and the patients with such acute shortages of medicines that are commonly available, and regularly thrown away, in the UK," he said.

So around 2022, Vinkabb "started to take some medicines out of the patient returns bin in the pharmacy to send back... and put them in a separate box, which was known as the 'Africa box' in the branch".

In handing down the 12-month suspension, the committee acknowledged the "mitigating circumstances of this case" but ultimately said "even the best of intentions" should never be an excuse for "very serious" misconduct.

Leading care of period pain

WITH new research finding that menstrual issues are often normalised or trivialised and undermanaged in young people, the study's lead author says pharmacists are ideally placed to advise on pain management.

The research team from the Murdoch Children's Research Institute in Melbourne worked directly with adolescents and their parents to better measure the impact of menstruation and identify ways to reduce stigma and ignorance among medical professionals and the wider public.

One of the major themes to emerge was around pain and pain management, and another related to the physical and psychological impact of pain and bleeding.

Many of the participants reported unsympathetic GPs, inexperienced in providing appropriate strong pain relief to young people, while parents described difficulties getting appointments with gynaecologists.

Lead author Dr Courtney Munro (pictured) has previously worked as a hospital and consultant pharmacist, including spending time in community pharmacy, and spoke to **Pharmacy Daily** about the role pharmacists can play in menstrual pain management.

Dr Munro said previous research with 1,800 12-18 year-olds found that 85% reported painful periods, but only half took medication, and half of those took paracetamol.

"People will often come into a pharmacy looking for a medication, maybe on the advice of the doctor or maybe independently.

"And while paracetamol is good for most things, for primary dysmenorrhoea, or period pain, which is inflammation based, your first call is really an anti-inflammatory - and I'm not sure



that message is clear at the community level," Dr Munro told **Pharmacy Daily**.

"Obviously there are cases where you wouldn't use an NSAID, but for most people who don't have precautions or contraindications, this is the best option," she said.

"The other thing with NSAIDs is that they reduce bleeding, perhaps by 30% if people have heavy bleeding," she added.

Dr Munro also stressed the importance of early and adequate dosing, pointing out that the pain is worse the day before the period starts and for the first few days.

"And a single daily dose is not enough for those with severe dysmenorrhoea - they should be taking whatever the package says is the maximum daily dose if it's over the counter."

Dr Munro says no one NSAID is better than another, whether ibuprofen, mefenamic acid or naproxen sodium, as long as the dosing is appropriate.

"And if they've got heavy bleeding, they should really be having a chat with the GP because there are other things that we can do to treat it, such as tranexamic acid or oral contraceptives, which will need a prescription."

Read the research paper **HERE**. KB

Music festival pill testing for NSW

MUSIC festivalgoers in NSW will be able to benefit from free and anonymous pill testing, thanks to a 12-month trial set to begin in early 2025.

Run by NSW Health, the service will focus on festivals with a history of drug overdoses.

It will allow festivalgoers to test a small sample of substances they intend to take by health staff for purity, potency and adulterants.

The NSW government said while drug possession will remain illegal, the trial will grant amnesty to people wanting to check drugs for their own personal use.

People seeking to supply drugs to others will not be allowed to take part in the trial.

Health Minister Ryan Park said the pill testing trial will not eliminate the risk of consuming drugs.

"We don't think this is a silver bullet and we reiterate we don't think this is going to solve every harm that drugs can cause," Park said.

Critics have pointed out that with the trial slated to start in Feb 2025, it will miss many of this summer's large festivals, which take place in late Dec and early Jan.

Victoria will also offer pill testing at 10 music festivals over the summer 2024-25 festival season, courtesy of an 18-month trial commencing New Year's Eve.

A 2023 evaluation of the ACT drug-checking service, Australia's first such trial, revealed only 53% of substances tested matched the expected drug.

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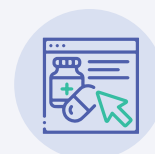
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