

Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features two pages of news.

Vanguard buys in

VANGUARD Group, manager of various mutual funds, has become an initial substantial holder in Sigma Healthcare, post the announcement of the pharma company's proposed merger with Chemist Warehouse Group (CWG).

The Vanguard Group now holds over 82k of shares and 5.025% of the voting power.

The proposed Sigma and Chemist Warehouse merger, if it goes ahead, would take place via a scheme of arrangement in exchange for Sigma shares and \$700m cash consideration.

CWG shareholders would hold 85.75% and Sigma shareholders 14.25% of the merged group upon completion of the proposed merger (*PD* 11 Dec).

Naloxone claiming rules updated: PPA

THE Dept of Health and Aged Care has updated the Take Home Naloxone (THN) Program to clarify entitlements for the payment of fees consistent with the requirements of the National Health THN Special Arrangement 2019.

The dept has identified that since the commencement of the program, service providers have been reimbursed one dispensing fee per pack of naloxone supplied.

The affected service providers include section 90-approved community pharmacies, section 92-approved medical practitioners, and section 94-approved hospital pharmacies (private).

In accordance with the THN Special Arrangement, affected pharmacies are entitled to a single dispensing fee for each supply of a pharmaceutical benefit, which could be up to two packs of the same naloxone products.

If an affected pharmacy is supplying one pack of naloxone, the pharmacy is entitled to

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Arrangement, which is expected to be updated by Mar 2024.

To maintain compliance with claiming the appropriate entitlement, pharmacies are strongly encouraged by the PPA to supply and claim one unit of naloxone (not two of the same product) until the claiming portal has been updated.

Alternatively, two packs of the same naloxone product can continue to be supplied but cannot be claimed until the portal has been updated, PPA explained.

Where two packs of the same naloxone product have previously been provided to consumers and not yet claimed, these should also be held and submitted once the claiming portal has been updated.

Claiming on the PPA Portal has resumed after it was suspended from 20-22 Dec last year, and pharmacies are entitled to reimbursement for naloxone supplied throughout the suspension period, PPA stated. *JG*

one dispensing fee and one Administration, Handling and Infrastructure (AHI) fee.

When two packs of the same naloxone product are supplied, the pharmacy is entitled to one dispensing fee and two AHI fees.

For two packs of different naloxone formulations, the pharmacy is entitled to two dispensing fees and two AHI fees.

The dept is working with the Pharmacy Programs Administrator (PPA) to update the claiming portal to ensure that the portal functionality meets the requirements of the THN Special

Time to rethink your dispensary set-up?

The latest in pharmacy robotic automation

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Dispensary Corner

FALLING asleep with the TV switched on may actually shorten your life and can negatively affect health. Here's why, explained US physician Dr Joe Whittington before referring to a 2022 study conducted by researchers at Chicago's Northwestern University School of Medicine. The study of more than 550 participants, aged between 63 and 84, had them wear watches to bed so experts could measure the amount of ambient light exposure at night, and its subsequent impact on their health conditions.

"The study found those that slept with even the slightest amount of ambient lighting in the room were more likely to suffer diabetes, obesity and hypertension," Whittington remarked, confirming what's seen daily within the four walls of any pharmacy.

"What they found was people who slept with dim lighting, such as from a TV or even a smartphone, the next morning had higher levels of insulin resistance, thereby affecting people's ability to regulate glucose levels," he explained.

"The differences in obesity and diabetes in participants was quite staggering."

To "give yourself the best chance of a long and happy life", Whittington advised that pharmacy customers should "black out the lights, put on some white noise and live forever...or maybe just longer".

"Don't fall asleep with the TV on," he urged.

APC to fast track overseas professionals

THE findings of the Govt's final Kruk Report, an independent review of health practitioner regulatory settings, have highlighted the need for streamlined processes for overseas-trained pharmacists to reduce workforce shortages.

The Australian Pharmacy Council (APC) stated late last year, that it is meeting the growing demand of overseas-trained pharmacists seeking opportunities in Australia by "proactively changing operations to support the demand", including implementing a Candidate Relationship Team to help them throughout their journey.

Bronwyn Clark, APC CEO, said the Council's commitment to maintaining high standards while having an efficient assessment process had set them apart from other health professions.

"We have managed to keep up with the demand to complete eligibility checks and offer exams to the vast majority of eligible candidates, which is a testament to the dedication of our team and the adaptability of APC," added Clark.

APC stated it has processed over



a 100% increase in applications in FY23 compared to the previous year, however, it is currently processing applications in real-time.

The Council has also engaged in more than 45,000 interactions with candidates through phone calls and emails in FY23, to support prompt and efficient communication, with over 85% of queries being addressed within a day and 80% of calls answered in real-time, Clark explained.

APC is also exploring the inclusion of additional countries in its Competency Stream and scoping what a fast-track route could look like for them.

"Through our international connections, we see some great opportunities through a review of our Competency Stream routes.

"Opposed to our Knowledge Stream, this stream does not include the requirement to complete a full internship in Australia, making for a fast-tracked process," added Clark.

She also said collaborating with organisations such as the Pharmacy Guild of Australia and the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia which offer job-ready courses post-KAPS exam, will help overseas-trained pharmacists to integrate into the workforce.

"With Australia's growing attractiveness as a destination for pharmacists, we will continue to be proactive in gearing up to meet the increasing demands of candidates and supporting them into the workforce," Clark commented.

"The APC has positioned itself well in this field, showing a good ability to evolve and adapt to the ever-changing landscape of healthcare in Australia, and the need for an increased pharmacist-trained workforce." JG

AI tool to detect COVID in chest X-rays

AUSTRALIAN researchers have developed an AI system that can rapidly detect COVID-19 from chest X-rays with more than 98% accuracy.

The study results have just been published in *Nature Scientific Reports*, where corresponding author Prof Amir H Gandomi, from the University of Technology Sydney's Data Science Institute, said, "the most widely used COVID-19 test, real time polymerase chain reaction, can be slow and costly, and

produce false-negatives".

To confirm a diagnosis, radiologists need to manually examine CT scans or X-rays, which can be time consuming and prone to error, he explained.

"The new AI system could be particularly beneficial in countries experiencing high levels of COVID-19 where there is a shortage of radiologists.

"Chest X-rays are portable, widely available and provide lower exposure to ionising radiation than CT scans," he said.

Sport safeguards

THE Federal Govt is aiming to bolster the safety of sport in the country, investing more than \$36.3m from 2023-24 to 2027-28 to tackle abuse, bullying, discrimination and sexual misconduct.

Minister for Sport Anika Wells said, "this funding initiative provides Sport Integrity Australia with the capability to address issues such as abuse, discrimination and mistreatment across all levels of Australian sport".