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## PSA's 'deadly' program

TO MARK the launch of NAIDOC Week this week, the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) is urging all pharmacists practising in Australia to undertake the Deadly Pharmacists Foundation Training Program.

Co-developed with the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, the program works to grow the cultural knowledge and understanding that underpins quality healthcare.

The PSA encourages all pharmacists to interact with patients by making a commitment to undertake the free training this NAIDOC Week, and gain a better understanding of the health needs of First Nations people.

Additionally, pharmacists who are looking to gain the new MMR credential can upload their certificate of completion of the Deadly Pharmacists Foundation Training program as evidence of



APC Performance Outcome 1.1.

The training demonstrates the profession's learning to promote, maintain and advocate for cultural safety, respect and responsiveness in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

PSA National President Fei Sim commented, "our longstanding commitment to culturally safe healthcare continues to grow, and we continue to advocate for permanent funding for the integration of pharmacists into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander primary health services". JG

## Vapes stocked

DESPITE pharmacy chains and many independent stores declaring they won't stock vapes, Federal Health Minister Mark Butler said on radio yesterday that pharmacies have historically offered vapes on prescription.

"Many, many pharmacies stock vapes, as stated in previous paragraph, as it is a useful product for particularly many hardened smokers," commented Butler.

"So this is not new, they've been stocking them for a considerable amount of time."

Pharmacies have clear clinical guidelines for discussing smoking cessation options with patients, including traditional nicotine replacement therapies, e-cigarettes and vapes, he said.

Ultimately, Butler noted, it is up to individual businesses to decide whether to stock vapes.



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## Grow your base

FOR business growth with differentiation, consider joining WholeLife Pharmacy and Healthfoods, as it has strategies to increase foot traffic for your business. See more on [page five](#).

## Today's issue of PD

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

- Pointrs
- WholeLife Pharmacy



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## ECS gets new funding



**AUSTRALIAN** medicinal cannabis cultivator and manufacturer, ECS Botanics, has received a Victoria Government manufacturing grant of \$118k.

ECS has also secured an extension of its asset finance facility with National Australia Bank (NAB), increasing its funding arrangements by an additional \$3.4 million.

The company will use the funding as part of its expansion into production of live rosin cartridges for both its own-brand and white label products.

The asset finance facility provides ECS with greater flexibility to expand its growing and production facilities without equity dilution, and to boost cannabis production and drive increased sales.

The facility is in addition to the existing \$2 million working capital loan from NAB which the company said remains undrawn.

ECS Managing Director Nan-Maree Schoerie, said, "the Victoria Government, grant together with the NAB financing, will help ECS expand our product range into manufacturing and supplying rosin cartridges as well as funding other growth initiatives".

Schoerie explained that in more mature markets, vaping medicinal cannabis cartridges have become increasingly popular.

"Cartridges can reduce the exposure to harmful toxins, have less odour, are less irritating to the throat and are more discreet when compared to inhaling dried flower," Schoerie commented.

"As a result, vape cartridge, as opposed to dried flower, are more convenient, healthier and socially acceptable for patients seeking immediate therapeutic benefits."

The production of live rosin cartridges continues the company's expansion into selected opportunities within the downstream medicinal cannabis sector, Schoerie concluded. *JG*

## Harper elected as NAPSA President



**THE** National Australian Pharmacy Students' Association (NAPSA) elected over the weekend Sebastian Harper (pictured) as President, along with the body's executive, to serve for the 2024/25 term (*PD* breaking news).

The new executive team includes McKinley Nolan, Shylee Pagliari, Benjamin Scott, Erin Fawcett, Mia Avram, Megan Potter and Aaliah Nelson.

Outgoing President Bano Serhan will step down to pursue further studies in pharmacy.

PSA National President A/Prof Fei Sim congratulated the incoming Board.

"Sebastian has been fantastic

as the NAPSA Treasurer, and we look forward to continuing to working with him in his new role as President, and his team of next leaders," Sim said.

"We proudly support NAPSA through our joint Memorandum of Understanding, strengthening the partnership between PSA and pharmacy students.

"I also wish to congratulate outgoing President Bano Serhan for her commitment and service to the NAPSA Board and students over the past year," Sim added.

"We wish her the best for her studies and look forward to continuing to support her throughout her career as a pharmacist," Sim concluded.

## Ozempic linked to risk of vision loss

**DIABETES** and weight loss drug, Semaglutide, has been linked to an increased risk of vision loss, according to new research from the Harvard (T.H. Chan) School of Public Health.

Sold under the brand name Ozempic, the prescription drug may be associated with higher risk of Non-Arteritic Anterior Ischemic Optic Neuropathy (NAION), a condition that typically causes sudden vision loss in one eye due to a loss of blood flow to the optic nerve.

The study, which included 16,827 patients, compared those who were prescribed semaglutide compared with patients who were prescribed non-glucagon-like peptide receptor agonist medications for diabetes or obesity.



The results show that patients who received semaglutide had a greater risk of NAION after three years (6.7% versus 0.8%).

Researchers say that further investigation is needed to assess causality - to read the full study, which is published online at *JAMA Ophthalmol*, [CLICK HERE](#). *JM*

## Ready to take your business to the next level?

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### Dispensary Corner

**YOUR** GP or pharmacist is often the first step toward a resolution to whatever ailment you need addressing.

But every industry also has its share of odd professions that might make you scratch your head - unless of course the pharmacist said not to.

Make no mistake though, these more obscure, but very much real jobs are no less important and play a critical role in the health spectrum.

Take one London-based occupational therapist, whose job partly involves taking people with eating disorders out to dinner at restaurants as part of their treatment.

There are also physios who specialises in dizziness and vertigo by conducting physical exercises and massage on a person's ear, a key part of the condition due to its role controlling balance.

## BP cuffs need recalibration

**AN EMERITUS** Professor in electrical engineering and telecommunications has identified what he says could be wide-ranging inaccurate blood pressure readings due to calibration in brachial cuffs.

According to a small-scale study published in the *Journal of Hypertension*, UNSW Professor Branko Celler claims misreadings of Korotkoff sounds or misdetections may lead to significant doubts in the reliability of the dominant tool used in blood pressure readings.

"We've actually known for 100 years or more that we systemically underestimate systolic blood pressure, but we've never had an answer to it," Prof Celler said.

"This is a fundamental and important problem that's been identified, the implication of this study is really quite profound and I acknowledge the fact it's hugely disruptive to current accepted practices," he added.

Prof Celler said his study featured only 40 people - 35 men and five



women with an average age of 64 - and saw tests conducted using both an invasive catheter and the non-invasive brachial cuff.

He said the disruption comes from an accepted norm that effectively, every blood pressure machine worldwide is calibrated using Korotkoff sounds and may, therefore, be in error.

"What we are suggesting is that improvements need to be made to eliminate the sources of error we have identified."

High blood pressure and hypertension affects more than 1.1 billion people worldwide. *ML*

### Guild Update

## Concerns over vaping voiced

**COMMUNITY** pharmacies, banner and industry groups have voiced strong opinion against the new legislation which allows the OTC sale of vaping products in stores.

They claim it undermines their role in ensuring access to safe, therapeutic smoking cessation products.

National Pharmacies Chief Pharmacist Bec Rogers commented, "these vaping products are unregulated, untested, unproven".

"We basically don't have the evidence to show that they're safe and effective."

Chemist Warehouse's Mario Tascone questioned future liability, "what if we end up finding, like cigarettes, in 30 years time that people have cancers, who then is liable?"

Pharmacy 777's spokesperson added, "[Selling vapes] undermines the professional role of pharmacists".

Emmanuel Vavoulas of Blooms The Chemist highlighted the health risks, "vapes are potentially harmful products...which goes against our purpose".

Catherine Bronger of the Pharmacy Guild of Australia summed it up, "we're not policemen - we're pharmacists and we should not have to police these items within our community pharmacies".

Learn more **CLICK HERE**.

## AFT's China move

**AFT** Pharmaceuticals today announced an agreement with Hainan Haiyao Co Ltd to distribute Crystaderm cream in China.

Crystaderm cream is a proprietary product that treats skin infections by the slow release of hydrogen peroxide onto the skin as an alternative to topical antibiotics, which if misused risk development of drug resistant bacteria.

AFT's Managing Director Dr Hartley Atkinson said, "we anticipate the launch will occur during this calendar year, and believe that there is a significant potential for this product in such a large population base".

## Avoid a vax error and check cut-off dates

**THE** Victorian Department of Health is emphasising this week that vaccine errors are preventable, and healthcare providers must adhere to strict protocols to ensure the safe administration of vaccines such as Rotarix for children.

Prior to administering the vaccine, it is essential to verify the patient's identity by checking their full name and date of birth as upper age limits with **cut-off dates** apply.

Identifying any contraindications and precautions specific to Rotarix is crucial, along with performing a thorough pre-vaccination screening checklist.



Additionally, providers should review existing immunisation records, such as the Australian Immunisation Register, Learning and Development book (Green book), and medical notes, before proceeding with vaccination.

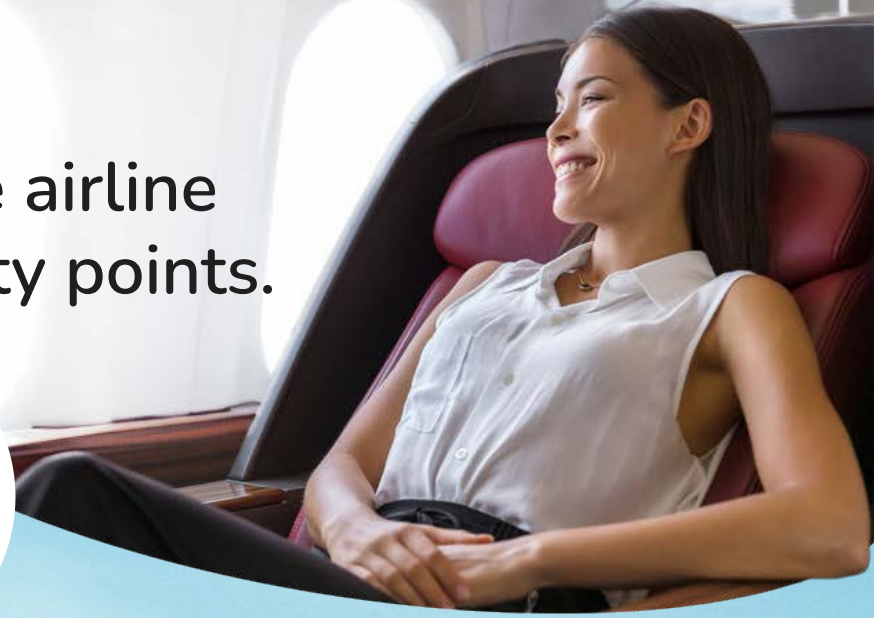
Any vaccine errors must be reported to SAFEVIC for assessment and clinical advice, stated the govt department.

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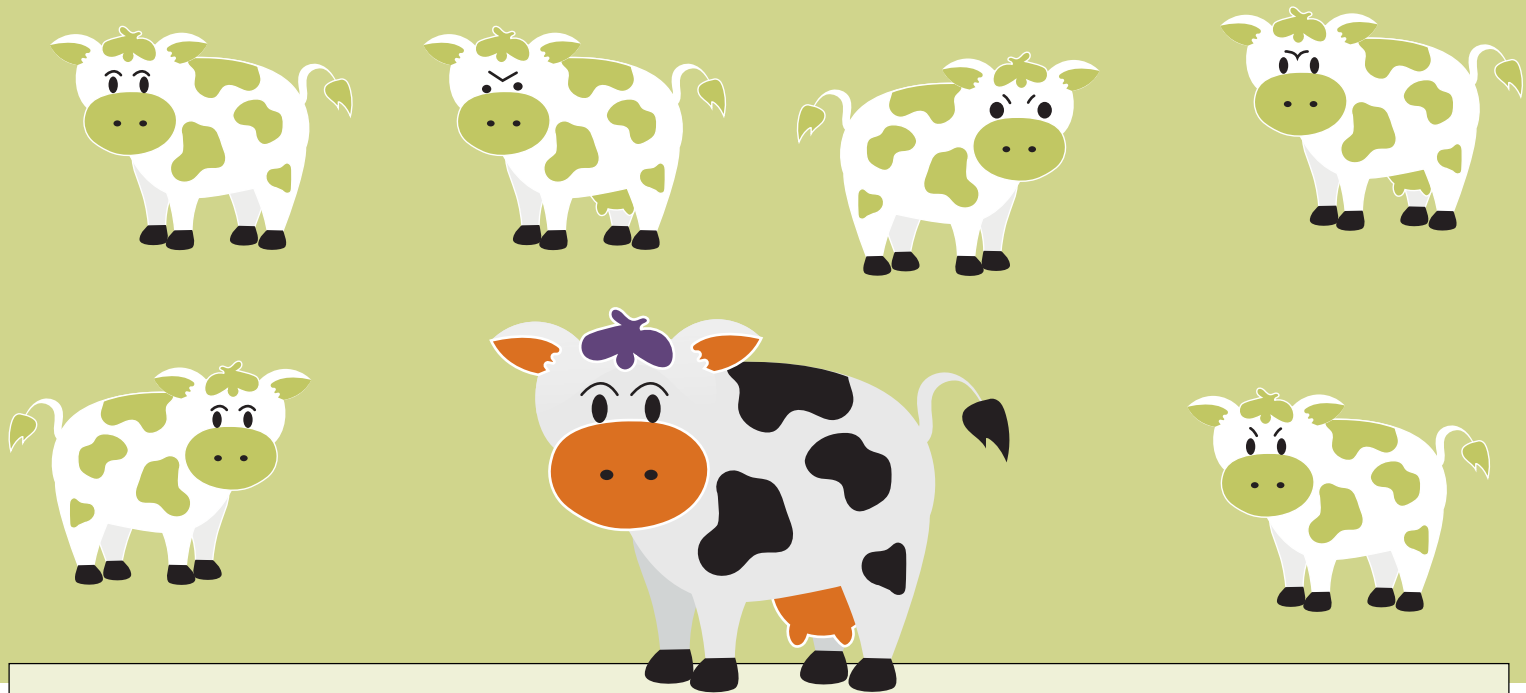
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