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Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features five pages of news, including our **Beauty & Wellness** feature, plus full pages from:

- Chemsave
- Fend

Consider savings

WHETHER it's catalogue pre-order rebates, dispensary assistance subscriptions or bonus stock, aligning with Chemsave delivers bottom line benefits - learn more about a special offer on **page six**.

Fends off insects

FEND Insect Repellent range offers deet-free protection from mosquitoes and sandflies for pharmacy customers. It is hypoallergenic and can be used on infants from two months up - see more on **p7**.

ACCC clears big Sigma CW merger

THE Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) has announced it will not oppose the proposed merger between Sigma Healthcare Limited and Chemist Warehouse Group, contingent upon a court-enforceable undertaking provided by Sigma (**PD** breaking news).

"The ACCC found that, with the undertaking, the proposed merger is unlikely to substantially lessen competition," said ACCC Chair Gina Cass-Gottlieb.

"There is and will continue to be effective competition at all levels of the pharmacy supply chain, capable of constraining a combined Sigma Chemist Warehouse."

Cass-Gottlieb added that the ACCC's review indicated that other pharmacies and non-pharmacy retailers will continue competing as they do now, maintaining options for consumers through Sigma and Chemist Warehouse's distinct formats.

Sigma offers smaller, personalised

pharmacy services, while Chemist Warehouse is known for its larger, discount-oriented stores.

Sigma CEO Vikesh Ramsunder welcomed the decision, stating, "the ACCC decision marks a critical milestone for the proposed transaction and provides us with the conviction to progress with the next steps in the process".

He added, "the proposed transaction has the potential to create a leading ASX-listed healthcare company through the combination of the complementary strengths of Sigma's state-of-the-art pharmaceutical distribution infrastructure with Chemist Warehouse Group's retailing know-how".

The court-enforceable undertaking, submitted last month (**PD** 01 Oct), mandates that Sigma continues as a participating wholesaler in the Commonwealth Government's Community Service Obligation for five years.

Sigma also agreed to allow existing franchisees, wholesale, and buying group customers to terminate their agreements without interference within three years, subject to specific terms, and implement data protection measures to ensure compliance.

Chemist Warehouse CEO Mario Verrocchi expressed optimism about the merger, noting, "Chemist Warehouse has a history of driving innovation and competition, based on a high volume, low prices model."

Verrocchi emphasised that the combined strengths in distribution, logistics, retail, and marketing will "drive competition within the industry" and bring "greater value to customers, employees, franchisees, and shareholders".

Sigma stated it is well-advanced in preparing documentation for shareholders to vote on for the proposed merger, which will be reviewed by regulators before being sent to its shareholders. *JG*



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Supporting Independence

Medicare Champion

LAURA Stewart, a pharmacist from Pharmacy 777 in WA, has been recognised as one of Australia's top 20 Medicare Champions in the Stronger Medicare Awards.

Held in Canberra to mark Medicare's 40th anniversary, the awards honoured exceptional health professionals and primary care teams dedicated to innovation and patient care across the country.

Stewart, the PSA WA Pharmacist of the Year in 2023 (*PD* 28 Apr), works in the Pilbara and Gascoyne regions, known to have significant health workforce shortages.

To help create developmental pathways and attract interns and students, Stewart had invested heavily in accommodation for them.

Over 140 nominations were received for the Stronger Medicare Awards, which recognised 11 primary care teams.

APC aligns to scope report

THE Australian Pharmacy Council (APC) has welcomed the release of the *Unleashing the Potential of our Health Workforce - Scope of Practice Review* final report, emphasising its workforce development recommendations.

The study identifies key issues that limit primary care professionals, including pharmacists, from working to their full potential, despite their skills and training (*PD* 06 Nov).

For pharmacists, the report highlights workforce development and education needs that align with APC's accreditation role.

APC CEO Bronwyn Clark supports the report's call for reducing restrictions on pharmacists' roles.

"Pharmacists are ready and willing to take on more expanded roles, and our work as the accreditation authority for pharmacy education is preparing them to be safe and competent in these roles," Clark said.

"This includes our recent



development of accreditation standards for pharmacist prescriber education programs," she added.

Additionally, APC's focus on interprofessional education (IPE) aligns with the review's recommendations to improve cohesion across health professions.

APC will spotlight this commitment at the IPE Colloquium 2025, themed 'Breaking Boundaries: Education as an Enabler of Trust in Healthcare', where IPE's role in supporting teamwork and patient-centred care will take centre stage.

Through these initiatives, APC aims to foster a collaborative healthcare environment that empowers professionals, and improves patient outcomes. JG

Workforce event

THE inaugural Pharmacy Innovation Assembly is set to launch in Melbourne on 30 Nov, celebrating its cutting-edge solutions in pharmacy workforce management.

The event, spearheaded by pharmacy expert and Loomago CEO Ann Coe, will highlight the success of her previous International Pharmacist Program, designed to support and transform community pharmacy through specific workforce solutions.

To be held at the Amora Hotel in Richmond from 6:30-11pm, the Assembly will also introduce the International Pharmacist Award, honouring exceptional contributions to global pharmacy innovation.

Nominations for this award close on 10 Nov at 11:59pm.

To attend the pharmacy workforce event or to nominate a candidate for the award, [CLICK HERE](#).



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TWC, IFA vax partnership



In adults, only one in five is up-to-date with vaccinations, a decline attributed to misinformation and vaccine fatigue following COVID-19.

As of this month, Australia has seen over 40,000 reported cases of whooping cough - an increase of nearly 38,000 compared to last year, according to the National Communicable Disease Surveillance Dashboard.

This spike underscores the need for expanded awareness and vaccination efforts to curb the disease's spread.

"This partnership reflects our mission to keep communities healthy, leveraging our extensive network and educational platforms to drive vaccine awareness," TWC Chief Pharmacist Brenton Hart said.

Catherine Hughes, founder of Light for Riley, also shared her perspective on the partnership.

"Whooping cough can affect anyone, and with TWC, we're amplifying its severity to a broader audience," Hughes said.

"This collaboration helps ensure that vulnerable community members receive crucial information on staying protected."

Hart added, "With Catherine Hughes and the IFA, we're better equipping our pharmacists to understand the impact of these diseases, and we look forward to deepening this work in the years to come."

The partnership between TWC and IFA represents a crucial step towards improving vaccination rates and ensuring community health - to book a vaccination, [CLICK HERE](#).

AHEAD of Whooping Cough Day tomorrow, TerryWhite Chemmart (TWC) has announced a five-year partnership with the Immunisation Foundation of Australia (IFA) to boost awareness on essential vaccines, with a particular emphasis on whooping cough (pertussis), as well as RSV, MMR, and influenza.

The partnership aims to educate Australians on the importance of timely vaccinations to protect children and vulnerable groups.

The IFA in 2023 launched Whooping Cough Day to spotlight the dangers of the highly contagious disease.

This year, TWC's nationwide network will participate, distributing critical information on whooping cough and promoting preventive steps, including vaccination.

Recent data highlights the urgency of this partnership.

Despite high vaccination rates among infants, there is a significant drop among adolescents and adults, leading to continued whooping cough transmission.

According to the Australian Immunisation Register, only 73.9% of adolescents received their booster in 2023, with rates even lower for Indigenous adolescents.

Iron drug worse for Alzheimer's patients



A DRUG commonly used to treat iron overload may speed up brain function decline in Alzheimer's patients, according to Australian researchers.

Initially, scientists hypothesised that deferiprone, a medication that reduces iron levels in patients who need frequent blood transfusions, could slow Alzheimer's progression due to the observed link between high brain iron levels and cognitive decline in patients.

The study, conducted at nine Australian sites from 2018 to 2023, involved 81 participants with mild cognitive impairment or early Alzheimer's.

Participants, aged over 54, were randomly assigned to receive either deferiprone or a placebo twice daily for one year.

Cognitive function was measured at baseline, six months, and 12 months.

While deferiprone successfully

reduced iron levels in the brain, particularly in the hippocampus, patients who took it showed faster cognitive decline compared to the placebo group.

This deterioration was especially pronounced in executive function tests.

Additionally, MRI scans showed increased brain volume loss in certain frontal areas among the deferiprone group.

Safety concerns also emerged, with a higher-than-expected incidence of neutropenia, a potentially serious side effect.

Researchers concluded that although deferiprone effectively lowers brain iron, it may worsen Alzheimer's symptoms, indicating that iron reduction might be detrimental for these patients.

Further studies are needed to better understand the role of iron in Alzheimer's and develop safer approaches for treatment.

To learn more, [CLICK HERE](#).

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Editor's Choice: Weleda Skin Food feeds the skin all over

ICONIC Weleda Skin Food (\$28.95 for 75ml) is the ultimate thick, rich cream ideal for very dry and rough skin, suitable for the face and body, from rough patches on heels and elbows to hard-working hands.

The nourishing blend of plant oils, lanolin and beeswax help to soothe skin, while extracts of pansy, chamomile and calendula help to calm affected areas.

Skin Food is also known for its unique scent of sweet orange, aromatic lavender and warm vanilla notes from benzoin resin.

Weleda also offers a wide range of body and face products, from moisturisers and oils to cleansers, eye creams, serums and more.



Much loved by both consumers and beauty aficionados all over the world, Weleda is an expert in sustainable, natural products combined with science.

First launched by Rudolf Steiner in a small shed in

Switzerland in 1921 with its very own medicinal plant garden, Weleda is a manufacturer of holistic natural skincare as well as pharmaceuticals for anthroposophical therapy. For more information, [CLICK HERE](#).

Beauty tools for all



BRUSH experts Real Techniques has just released its limited-edition Pastel Pop Collection at Priceline.

The 100% cruelty-free and vegan brand offers high-quality products at accessible prices for everyone.

The collection features four different products, including the dual-textured Miracle 2-in-1 Powder Puff (RRP: \$19.99).

One side features fibres to help pick up and apply powders, the other uses Real Techniques' Miracle Complexion Sponge, ideal for blending liquids and creams.

Meanwhile, the Miracle Complexion Sponge Duo (RRP: \$31.99) features two sponges, designed to offer light to medium coverage and a dewy, light finish.

Featured within the Pastel Pop Plumped Up Base Set (RRP: \$59.99) are a Small Conceal Brush; the Expert Edge Brush; Soft Accent Brush; and Makeup Spatula.

Lastly, the Pastel Pop Frosted Lids Eye Set (RRP: \$59.99) features a Silicone Glitter Brush; Fine Liner Brush; Smudge Brush; Pointed Crease Brush; Soft Shadow Brush; Brow Spoolie Brush; and Mini Eyelash Curler.

Brighten and protect

SKIN Physics' Vitamin C range brightens, hydrates and protects skin, thanks to Oxygen-C, which harnesses the efficacy of native Kakadu Plum.

The range addresses dull skin, uneven skin tone, pigmentation and early signs of ageing.

Products include: 15% Vitamin C + Ferulic acid serum (RRP: \$39.95); Brightening Foaming Cleanser (RRP: \$19.95); Brightening Daily Moisturiser (RRP: \$29.95); Brightening Serum (RRP: \$19.95) and more.



Hydralyte's latest summer offerings



HYDRALYTE has launched Watermelon Flavoured Electrolyte Ice Blocks (16 for RRP: \$17.50), and Pineapple Breeze Flavoured

Effervescent Electrolyte Tablets (RRP: \$11.49 for 20, exclusive at Chemist Warehouse) just in time for the summer season.

Both products help to relieve symptoms of dehydration due to vomiting and diarrhoea, heat, travel, vigorous exercise, heavy sweating, pregnancy and even occasional hangovers.

Hydralyte has been working to hydrate bodies for nearly 20 years, using their scientific expertise to develop high quality products that rehydrate faster than water alone.

All recipes have been created according to criteria from the World Health Organization.

Hydralyte is suitable for use by the whole family, from newborns and teens to the elderly.

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Beauty & Wellness
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Dispensary Corner

IF YOU are single and feeling depressed and unusually tired, irritable, or struggling with concentration, science might have a solution: marriage.

A study across seven countries found that unmarried people are 80% more likely to experience symptoms like these than their married counterparts. Published in *Nature Human Behaviour*, the research even suggests that higher education can make things worse - highly educated unmarried men, in particular, reported more frequent depressive symptoms.

Researchers followed over 100,000 people from the US, UK, South Korea, and beyond, finding a strong link between unmarried status and increased risk of symptoms like low energy, sadness, and sleep issues.

They found that unmarried status is associated with a 79% higher risk of depressive symptoms compared to those who are married.

Unmarried participants in Western countries (including the US, UK and Ireland) had a higher risk of depression than their counterparts in Eastern countries (including South Korea, China and Indonesia).

The study's lead researcher Kefeng Li explained that married folks likely benefit from mutual support, shared finances, and someone to remind them to relax.

But, if you're single, don't despair - supportive friendships, pets, yoga, or even keeping a houseplant healthy could help keep those symptoms at bay.

New science head in PNG

PROFESSOR Teatulohi (Lohi) Matainaho, a leading researcher in traditional medicine and drug discovery, has been officially elected the inaugural President of the newly launched Pacific Academy of Sciences.

Announced by Samoan Prime Minister Fiame Naomi Mata'afa, the Academy aims to foster scientific collaboration in the Pacific Islands, integrating natural and social sciences, indigenous knowledge, and technology.

Prof Matainaho (**pictured**), currently Vice Chancellor at the Pacific Adventist University, was selected from 12 Foundation Fellows, all notable Pacific scholars.

His work spans malaria, cancer, HIV, tuberculosis, and Papua New Guinea's biodiversity, alongside contributions to science policy.

Global science leaders welcomed his appointment including Australian Academy of Science President, Professor Chennupati Jagadish, who said, "he is not only a globally respected researcher, he is passionate about the powerful role science, traditional knowledge and empowering young scientists have to play in making the lives of Pacific Islands communities and, indeed,



the world, a better place".

Reflecting on his appointment, Matainaho expressed commitment to building a vibrant institution.

"The Academy will connect Pacific scholars and support young people's career development," he said, emphasising a goal of tackling global challenges through science.

Born a twin in Papua New Guinea at a time when twins were taboo, Matainaho and his brother narrowly escaped death through their grandfather's protection.

Defying cultural customs around twin births, both survived and went on to earn PhDs - Matainaho in pharmacology and his twin in engineering. *JG*

Pain prodrug study

RESEARCHERS from the University of Adelaide and international collaborators have developed a new targeted prodrug for chronic pain relief.

Led by Prof Andrew Abell and including Dr Thomas Avery and Dion Turner, the team designed a prodrug that activates only at pain sites, reducing side effects.

With findings published in *Nature Biotechnology*, the compound uses a unique chemical reaction with reactive oxygen species like hydrogen peroxide - found in high levels at pain sites - to activate the drug, providing localised relief for various conditions such as sciatic nerve injuries, osteoarthritis, and chemo-induced neuropathy.

"We believe we were the first people to come up with the idea of using this particular chemical reaction in a biological sense, and we already see potential for its use in other settings," Abell said.

In preclinical trials, the prodrug showed pain relief without inducing tolerance, unlike traditional opioids.

"Our compound addresses an underlying cause of pain, rather than simply blocking pain signals," said co-researcher A/Prof Peter Grace from the University of Texas.

The project, funded by the NIH HEAL Initiative, now advances to further preclinical trials.

Immunologic, a company formed by team members, is raising funds to develop the prodrug for human trials, offering an alternative to addictive opioids.

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