

## Today's issue of PD

*Pharmacy Daily* today features three pages of the latest news, plus a full page from **Dispense Assist**.

## Low-cost solution

**DISPENSE Assist** is a low-cost staffing solution with dispensary technicians available 24/7 at rates as low as \$6.37 per hour, for a range of services.

See more on **page four**.

## Medtronic fined

**THE** Federal Court of Australia has ordered Medtronic Australasia Pty Ltd to pay \$22 million in penalties for unlawfully supplying 16,267 units of the Infuse Bone Graft Kit between Sep 2015 and Jan 2020 (*PD* breaking news).

The court also mandated Medtronic to pay \$1 million towards the TGA's legal costs.

The penalty, the largest ever under the *Therapeutic Goods Act 1989*, follows proceedings initiated by the TGA in 2021.

Medtronic was found to have supplied the Infuse Bone Graft Kit without the required spinal cage, despite its listing in the ARTG only allowing it to be supplied with the cage.

TGA head Prof Anthony Lawler reinforced the importance of compliance to ensure Australians receive safe and effective medical products.

"This significant penalty serves as a reminder to sponsors and others in the therapeutic goods industry to take their obligations seriously," said Lawler.

## Visa innovation arrives

**EXCLUSIVE**

**RAVEN'S** Recruitment has launched an innovative visa program aimed at addressing the ongoing pharmacist workforce shortage across the country.

The program targets international pharmacy graduates who have completed the Knowledge Assessment of Pharmaceutical Sciences (KAPS) exam, offering them a streamlined path to complete their internships in Australia.

Raven's Recruitment Director Alan Sutton highlighted the program's potential to connect qualified international healthcare professionals with underserved communities in Australia.

"These professionals are qualified and eager to contribute; they just need an opportunity," Sutton told *PD*.

The program provides pharmacy owners with a "turnkey solution" by handling the visa process, allowing them to sponsor and employ KAPS-qualified pharmacists with ease.

Through the Subclass 407 Training Visa, interns can complete their training and, if successful, transition to the Subclass 482 Temporary Skill Shortage Visa for extended employment.

Key benefits include the ability for overseas pharmacists to complete their internships in any Australian location, not just rural or remote areas, and the flexibility of paying interns a local rate rather than the higher salary required under other visa types.

"While it's not possible to be definitive, provided both the owner and intern lodge their paperwork promptly, a 407 Training visa can be obtained in around three to four months," said Sutton.

The initiative is seen as a cost-



effective approach, with total visa fees in the vicinity of \$4,000 for pharmacy owners.

Sutton acknowledged the risks of interns leaving employers after their internships but emphasised that such risks are present in any internship program.

He expressed optimism that the program will alleviate staffing shortages especially in rural areas.

"This visa program aims to provide a sustainable solution, allowing international professionals to build long-term careers in Australian pharmacies while helping communities in need of healthcare support," Sutton said.

Earlier this year, Raven's organised the Pharmacy Careers Summit 2024, supported by media partner *Pharmacy Daily*. JG

## Working together

**FOR** this week's World Patient Safety Day, Advanced Pharmacy Australia (AdPha) has unveiled its third annual education series highlighting the role of collaboration in medication safety.

This year's series includes contributions on various aspects of collaboration, including interactions between pharmacists and nurses, virtual collaborations, and partnerships with pharmacy technicians and various procurement teams.

Toni Howell, Chair of the Medication Safety Leadership Committee, emphasised that effective medication safety requires teamwork with consumers and healthcare professionals in Australia.

"Collaboration with consumers is vital for improving medication safety and achieving better outcomes," Howell said.

"This series celebrates the benefits of working together."

AdPha President Tom Simpson FANZCAP also added that collaboration is key to advancing pharmacy practice.

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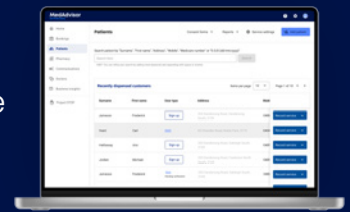


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## Donors needed

**AUSTRALIA** faces a critical shortage of registered stem cell donors, and the solution rests with younger Australians.

On World Marrow Donor Day tomorrow, the Leukaemia Foundation and Australian Bone Marrow Donor Registry (ABMDR) are urging those aged 18-35 to sign up as stem cell donors.

Around 1,000 Australians are waiting for a stem cell transplant, with 90% being blood cancer patients.

Leukaemia Foundation CEO Chris Tanti stressed that the shortage of donors is compromising survival chances, with many patients waiting over a year for a match.

ABMDR CEO Lisa Smith emphasised the need for more young, diverse donors to improve patient outcomes, such as for First Nations people.

The ABMDR's Strength to Give initiative simplifies the donor process through cheek swabbing and non-invasive stem cell collection methods.



## Record meds returned



**THE** Return of Unwanted Medicines (RUM) Project has marked another record year, with nearly 826,000 kilograms of unwanted medicines being returned to community pharmacies across Australia.

The RUM Board of Directors expressed gratitude to pharmacies for their role in the success of this program, which is funded by the Australian Government through the Department of Health and Aged Care.

Now in its 25<sup>th</sup> year, the RUM Project has safely incinerated 15 million kilograms of expired and unwanted medicines.

In the past financial year, 195,610 RUM bins were manufactured and returned for disposal, highlighting the dedication of community pharmacies to safe and responsible medicine disposal.

As the program continues to grow, pharmacists are reminded to ensure the RUM bin lids are securely locked before returning the unwanted medicines to where they were acquired from.

A spokesperson for RUM said, "it

is also important to not forget that the red seal needs to be removed from the base of the RUM bin and stored carefully until you seal your bin prior to returning it to the wholesaler for disposal".

"If you misplace the red seal, you will not be able to return the full RUM bin to the wholesaler."

Most medicines can be placed in RUM bins, but pharmacists must adhere to state and territory legislation, including the destruction of Schedule 8 medicines before disposal.

Small volumes of liquid medicines should be poured onto kitty litter to prevent leaks, and sharps must be disposed of in a sharps bin, not a RUM bin, said the spokesperson.

Reports of unpleasant odours from RUM bins have prompted a reminder to ensure all items placed in the bins are odourless.

The project, exclusive to community pharmacies, is not extended to medical clinics, residential facilities or hospitals.

For queries, pharmacists can call the RUM office on 1300 650 835 or email [info@returnedmed.com.au](mailto:info@returnedmed.com.au). JG

## Sleeping pill study

**RESEARCHERS** from Canada's Dalhousie University, in collaboration with Monash University, have developed a direct-to-patient intervention aimed at reducing long-term sleeping pill use in older adults with insomnia.

Published in *JAMA Psychiatry*, the study involved 1,295 participants, divided into three groups, with two interventions: 'Sleepwell' and 'EMPOWER'.

The Sleepwell group saw the highest reduction in sleeping pill use, with 46.6% discontinuing or reducing their dose after six months, compared to 34.8% in the EMPOWER group.

The Sleepwell approach incorporated cognitive behavioural therapy for insomnia through booklets and a website.

Lead author Prof David Gardner noted that most previous efforts targeted healthcare professionals, but this study focused on patients directly.

While co-author Dr Justin Turner emphasised the need for more evidence-based interventions to reduce sleeping pill use, given the serious risks associated with benzodiazepines in older adults.



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## Dispensary Corner

**RESEARCHERS** from Utrecht University have crushed the hopes of many, confirming that dehydration isn't the main villain behind the misery of hangovers, according to *New York Post*.

In a study comparing partygoers who hydrated before bed with those who heroically passed out without a sip, both groups woke up equally doomed.

Sure, the water drinkers weren't as thirsty, but their pounding heads and queasy stomachs were in full force, much like their dry-mouthed friends.

Turns out, your last night's hangover is the result of a not-so-delightful mix of alcohol, oxidative stress and inflammation.

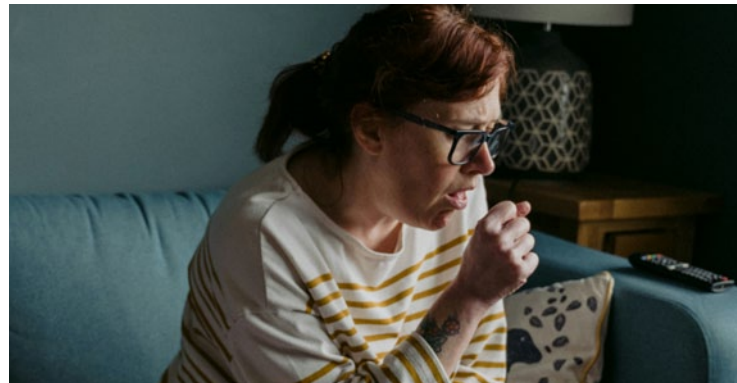
Dehydration is a hangover symptom that occurs either way.

As for ageing, things get worse, the researchers stated.

With less muscle, more alcohol in your bloodstream, and a liver that's seen better days, that hangover is ready to hit harder.

Sadly, no magic cure exists - just a whole lot of regret and maybe a greasy breakfast.

## PMI offloads UK's Vectura



**PHILIP** Morris International (PMI) has sold its UK-based inhaler company, Vectura Group, for £150 million (A\$191.7 million).

The sale comes just three years after PMI purchased Vectura Group in a deal worth over £1 billion (A\$1.94 billion).

PMI has faced widespread criticism since acquiring the company, as Vectura manufactures inhalers used to treat lung conditions like asthma, which many viewed as a conflict of interest for the tobacco giant.

However, PMI defended the venture as part of its strategy to move away from cigarettes and towards "smoke free" businesses like vaping.

Lung Foundation Australia, among other health organisations, welcomed the news of the sale.

The peak organisation's CEO Mark Brooke has been vocal in opposing the alignment between big tobacco and respiratory health medical products.

"We're proud to stand with those who are pushing for healthier, tobacco-free futures," Brooke said.

PMI defended the original purchase of the inhaler company, but ultimately decided to offload Vectura amid what it described as an "unwarranted" backlash from health advocates.

In the *BBC*, PMI's Chief Executive Officer, Jacek Olczak, was quoted as saying the cigarette company remains "committed to driving innovation in this space over the long-term", hinting that the company has not moved on entirely from the inhaler industry. *JG*

## Surgery innovation

**BIOMEDICAL** engineers at UNSW have developed a soft robotic system that operates without electricity or motors to enable more precise and affordable surgeries.

Led by Dr Thanh Nho Do, the research team designed a system using hydraulics to control "artificial muscles" in a flexible robotic arm capable of moving in all directions.

The system, called Soft Fibrous Syringe Architecture, is suited for controlling microcatheters in complex endovascular procedures.

Additionally, its built-in sensors can detect forces and surface textures, improving the ability to identify and operate on abnormal cells, such as tumours.

The research was published in *Advanced Science*, showcasing its potential to revolutionise surgical procedures.



## Check out the latest in Beauty & Wellness

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### ADVERTISING AND MARKETING

**Head of Sales & Marketing** - Sean Harrigan  
**Advertising** - Laura Aghajanian & Dante Muranty  
[advertising@pharmacydaily.com.au](mailto:advertising@pharmacydaily.com.au)

**Head of Operations & Contributing Editor** - Anna Piper

### ACCOUNTS

[accounts@traveldaily.com.au](mailto:accounts@traveldaily.com.au)

Suite 1, Level 2, 64 Talavera Rd  
 Macquarie Park NSW 2113 Australia  
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