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## Today's issue of PD

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

- BioCeuticals
- Nova Pharmaceuticals

## Immune health

**BIOCEUTICALS** ArmaForce Daily Protect is a practitioner-only vitamin supplement designed to stimulate a healthy immune response.

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Learn more on **page three**.

## Get better sleep

**RESTIN** 2mg melatonin modified-release tablets help offer a better quality sleep.

Nova Pharmaceuticals has a special deal for pharmacists - see details on **page four**.

## PBS nasal antidepressant

**FROM** 01 May, Spravato nasal spray (esketamine) will be available through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) for adults with depression that has not responded adequately to at least two different antidepressants.

This is the first new type of medicine for major depression to be funded by the government in three decades, and was recommended for PBS listing by the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC) in the Dec intracycle meeting last year (**PD** 04 Feb).

Up to 30,000 Australians are expected to receive the medication through the PBS at a cost of \$7.70 (pensioner or concession card) or \$31.60 (general patients) for each dose of the medicine, compared to around \$800 prior to PBS listing.

Spravato is a glutamate receptor modulator and works by increasing glutamate levels in the brain to stimulate and restore message transmission within the brain.

Spravato treatment is only available through specialised centres under clinical supervision, and must be used in conjunction with a newly-initiated oral antidepressant.

The most common side effects include dissociation, dizziness, nausea, sedation, reduced sense of touch and sensation, anxiety and increased blood pressure.

Psychiatry professor Ian Hickie of the Brain and Mind Centre, University of Sydney, welcomed the reimbursement of Spravato noting that "for the first time, we have a government funded medicine specifically for people trapped in an acute depressive episode despite treatment with multiple antidepressants".

"People with treatment-resistant depression have complex and often urgent mental healthcare needs," Professor Hickie said.

"Affordable access to treatment is essential if we are to help them out of what is often a dark, deep and dangerous hole," he concluded. *KB*

## New pharmacy VAD resource

**ADVANCED** Pharmacy Australia (AdPha) has released an update for pharmacist practitioners across the country to assist in conversations around voluntary assisted dying (VAD).

The VAD Pharmacy Practice Update includes the latest information, tools and resources to ensure conversations with patients at or approaching end-of-life are handled sensitively, respectfully, legally and in a supportive manner.

"As voluntary assisted dying is now legal in most parts of Australia, we have a responsibility to ensure pharmacists are adequately equipped to support patients with compassion and competence," said AdPha President Tom Simpson.

The resource is **HERE**.

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<sup>1</sup>The recommended dose is a loading dose of 400 mg then 200 mg once or twice daily, as required for up to 5 days.

References: 1. CELEBREX RELIEF® (celecoxib) Product Information. 2. Ekman EF et al. Am J Orthop 2002; 31(8):445-451. 3. Petri M et al. J Rheumatol 2004; 31(8):1614-1620. 4. Ralha LV et al. Revista Brasileira de Medicina 2008; 65(11):378-387. 5. Bertin P et al. J Int Med Res 2003; 31(2):102-112. 6. Cheung R et al. Clin Ther 2007; 29:2498-2510.

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### Dispensary Corner

**DOCTORS** and public health boffins have been puzzled by the concerning rise of bowel cancer cases in people under 50.

Now researchers think they may have an answer.

Lettuce.

Yes, it seems that lettuce and certain other leafy greens are susceptible to contamination by a rare strain of *E. Coli* that has been linked with colon cancer.

A DNA analysis of colon cancer tumours in people under 40 has found traces of a cancer-linked toxin produced by the bacteria.

Watering lettuce with contaminated water allows it to rest on the leaf, and a combination of the leaf's texture, which makes it difficult to wash off, the fact that people often don't wash it anyway, and that it's eaten raw, has led to an increase in infections with the bacteria in recent years.

Experts also warn that warm, wet weather, on the increase due to climate change, can create an ideal breeding ground for the bug to spread.

## Vale Prof Gabrielle Cooper

**PROFESSOR** Gabrielle Cooper, one of Australia's most esteemed pharmacists, has passed away after a short illness on 23 Apr.

She demonstrated a relentless and career-long commitment to the pharmacy profession over many decades, with a career spanning a wide variety of practice settings, leadership roles and academia.

After graduating from the University of Tasmania, she started her career as a clinical pharmacist in Hobart before taking roles in Canberra, Sydney and London.

An interest in drug overdose led her to undertake a PhD in clinical toxicology, with her seminal work being widely cited and leading to changes in clinical practice.

Following a critical shortage of pharmacists in Canberra and the surrounding region, Prof. Cooper established the Discipline of Pharmacy at the University of Canberra, where she remained the Head of Pharmacy and was elevated to Full Professor in 2010.

Professor Cooper served on PSA's ACT Branch Committee from 2009-2016 and was also on the ACT Pharmacy Board.

In 2017, Prof Cooper was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for "service to the pharmacy



sector and to tertiary education".

PSA National President Associate Professor Fei Sim paid tribute to Professor Cooper and her substantial contribution to the practice of pharmacy in Australia.

"All of us at PSA are deeply saddened to learn of Gabrielle's passing," she said.

"A visionary ahead of her time, Gabrielle leaves a substantial legacy, which ranges from forging new practice pathways for pharmacists in general practice, to establishing the Discipline of Pharmacy at the University of Canberra and to research that altered clinical guidelines for activated charcoal in drug overdose."

"I extend my sincere condolences to Gabrielle's family, friends and colleagues who are grieving the loss of such an inspirational and special woman," A/Prof Sim concluded. KB

## Xofluza halts flu virus spread

A single dose of the antiviral drug baloxavir (Xofluza) can help reduce the spread of flu to close contacts, according to international research.

The prescription antiviral drug is used to treat flu symptoms, but this new study has shown it can also help reduce virus transmission.

The drug rapidly reduces influenza virus shedding, which suggested to researchers that it may reduce transmission.

The study included almost 1,500 patients aged 5-64 who received either baloxavir or placebo within 48 hours after flu symptom onset.

They then looked at whether household contacts caught the flu over the next five days.

The rate of transmission of the flu virus in those who took baloxavir was 9.5% compared to 13.4% with placebo - a 29% reduction in flu transmission.

The authors said that while vaccination will remain the main way to control flu, an antiviral drug with effects on both illness and transmission is a "welcome addition" to the overall strategy for flu control.

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