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Today's issue of PD

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For a special deal see **p5**.

PSA urges vaccination

WITH World Immunisation Week marked from 24-30 Apr 2025, the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) is reminding Australians about the importance of staying up to date with vaccinations.

Record numbers of influenza cases have been reported across Australia this year, while measles cases are surging globally and in parts of Australia.

PSA National President Associate Professor Fei Sim said vaccination remains one of the most important and effective health interventions to protect against severe vaccine-preventable illnesses and death, and thanked pharmacists for stepping up to deliver life-saving vaccinations.

"When it comes to reducing mortality from vaccine-preventable diseases and improving health outcomes, vaccination is second only to clean drinking water," A/Prof Sim said.

With thousands of pharmacists around the country providing



vaccination services, it has never been easier to ensure people are fully protected and up to date with vaccines, she added.

Pointing out that pharmacists across Australia are available to check vaccination records, provide advice, and administer vaccines, A/Prof Sim urged the community to make sure they are protected, to speak to a pharmacist and get up to date on vaccines as soon as possible. **KB**

Webinar: VAD conversations

THE Advanced Pharmacy Australia (AdPha) WA Branch will be hosting an event on voluntary assisted dying (VAD) tonight from 5.30-7.00pm WST, in-person and online, for pharmacy practitioners.

'VAD: Getting Comfortable with Uncomfortable Conversations' will provide attendees with considerations and talking points for conversations with people considering VAD, and give an update on the role of an Authorised Disposer and how this may impact practice.

It will be presented by senior pharmacist Tracey Muemann and pharmacy technician Kirtida Shah - more details **HERE**.

AdPha yesterday released a resource (**PD** 28 Apr) for pharmacist practitioners across the country to assist in conversations around VAD.

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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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VIATRIS



ApoB test better for CVD risk

FOR almost 60 years, measuring cholesterol levels in the blood has been the best way to identify individuals at high risk of heart disease.

However, a new study has shown comprehensively that a combination of two lipoprotein markers, measured in a simple blood test, can give more accurate information about individual risk of cardiovascular disease (CVD) than the current blood cholesterol test.

The researchers analysed data from more than 200,000 people within the UK Biobank, who had no prior history of CVD.

They measured the number and size of different cholesterol-carrying lipoproteins in the blood, focusing specifically on lipoproteins that carry a protein called apolipoprotein B (apoB) into arterial walls and is the primary driver of atherosclerosis.

By following participants for up to 15 years, it was found that apoB is the best marker when testing for risk of CVD.

"That does not mean conventional tests are ineffective; they generally perform well," said study lead Dr Jakub Morze.

"However, in about one in 12 patients, standard cholesterol tests may underestimate CVD risk, which is important to consider, since 20-40% of all first-time occurrences of CVD are fatal.

"By switching to apoB testing, we can improve that accuracy and potentially save lives," he said.

Read the full paper [HERE](#).

Booster vax side matters

AUSTRALIAN researchers have revealed why receiving a booster vaccine in the same arm as the first dose can generate a more effective immune response more quickly.

The study, led by the Garvan Institute of Medical Research and the Kirby Institute at UNSW, and published in *Cell*, offers new insight that could help improve future vaccination strategies.

Until only recently, it was thought that when giving booster shots it did not matter which arm was used - that is, whether it was the same arm as the initial shot or the opposite arm.

However, German research published in 2023 found that when using the same arm for the booster, the immune response was greater than when given in the other arm.

The authors of that study speculated that the differences in immunogenicity could be due to action in the nearby lymph nodes, with limited involvement of lymph nodes on the other side.

That theory was borne out by the Australian researchers, who found that when a vaccine is administered, specialised immune cells called macrophages became 'primed' inside lymph nodes.

These macrophages then direct the positioning of memory B cells - immune cells that have a "memory" of specific antigens they encountered during a previous infection or vaccination - to more effectively respond to the booster when given in the same arm.

The findings, made in mice and validated in human participants, provide evidence to refine vaccination approaches and offer a promising new approach for enhancing vaccine effectiveness.

"This is a fundamental discovery in how the immune system



organises itself to respond better to external threats - nature has come up with this brilliant system and we're just now beginning to understand it," said Professor Tri Phan, Director of the Precision Immunology Program at Garvan and co-senior author.

The researchers conducted a clinical study with 30 volunteers receiving the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID vaccine.

Twenty participants received their booster dose in the same arm as their first dose, while 10 had their second shot in the opposite arm.

Those who received both doses in the same arm produced neutralising antibodies against COVID significantly faster - within the first week after the second dose.

The antibodies from the same arm group were also more effective against COVID variants like Delta and Omicron.

"By four weeks, both groups had similar antibody levels, but that early protection could be crucial during an outbreak," said Dr Mee Ling Munier, co-senior author from the Kirby Institute, adding that when viruses are rapidly mutating, those first few weeks of protection "can make an important difference at a population level".

Read the paper [HERE](#). KB

Aussie data backs shingles vax benefit

AUSTRALIAN data has confirmed Welsh research (PD 03 Apr) finding that the herpes zoster (HZ) vaccine can reduce the risk of developing dementia.

In a similar study scenario, Australians who turned 80 after 01 Nov 2016 were eligible for free shingles vaccination, whereas those who turned 80 before this date were not, allowing researchers to compare two groups of people of similar age - one with access to the free vaccines, and the other without.

The study found that having access to the free vaccine decreased the likelihood of receiving a new dementia diagnosis during 7.4 years of follow-up by 1.8%.

The authors also looked at 15 other common conditions, including cardiovascular diseases, musculoskeletal conditions and diabetes, and found the vaccine made no significant difference.

Similarly, they found no difference between the two groups in uptake of other preventative health services (vaccinations and screening).

"In conjunction with findings from a similar quasi-experiment in Wales, the results of our study suggest that HZ vaccination is a low-cost, high-reward intervention to reduce the burden of dementia," wrote the authors.

They called for investment into further research in this area, including clinical trials, replication in other settings, populations and health systems, and mechanistic research - see the paper [HERE](#).

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Dispensary Corner

THAT trendy oat milk latte might not be as healthy as TikTok has led you to believe.

In recent years, alternative non-dairy milks have gained popularity - particularly among Gen Z - as they are believed to be healthier than cow's milk.

However, an expert in cardiovascular nutrition has warned that one of those popular alternatives, oat milk, may not actually be any better for you than cow's milk.

The milk alternative is highly processed and made up mainly of water, Professor Sarah Berry from King's College London explained, resulting in the removal of some of its cholesterol-lowering fibre and health benefits.

In order for oat milk to lower cholesterol, a person would need to consume around 750ml per day - far more than the splash or two that most people use in their coffee.

"The exception is where people make their own oat milks at home, which can be healthy," Professor Berry told the *Daily Mail*.

Additionally, Victoria Taylor of the British Heart Foundation, has insisted that there is no nutritional reason to stop drinking cow's milk.



Hospital pharmacy: Built for the future

HOSPITAL pharmacy opens doors to a growing number of specialties, dynamic career paths, and a future contributing to team-based, multidisciplinary care - the direction of modern health care.

Speaking ahead of the 2025 Pharmacy Careers Summit, President of Advanced Pharmacy Australia (AdPha), Tom Simpson (pictured), reflected on his career in hospital pharmacy and the evolution of the practice.

"When I started in hospital pharmacy - more years ago than I care to admit - it looked very different," Simpson told *Pharmacy Daily*.

"Clinical pharmacy services were still evolving, specialty practice existed without training pathways, and scope was clear, but constrained.

"Today, things change quickly: pharmacist-led innovations are improving patient care in every state and territory, we're more connected than ever and new specialty roles are created everyday as scope of practice expands."

Simpson said there is an agility to hospital pharmacy that will present "untold opportunity" to today's pharmacy students.

When the Society of Hospital Pharmacists Australia changed its trading name to Advanced Pharmacy Australia (AdPha) last year (*PD* 28 Aug 2024), Simpson explained it was a nod to an evolving reality today, as well as tomorrow.

"The practice we have known as 'hospital pharmacy' is no longer constrained by the physical walls of hospital buildings," he said.

"We work, innovate, and deliver safer and more effective care to Australians, at their most unwell, in and around our hospitals.

"Our medicines expertise is woven into the patient journey at every step, navigating complex clinical situations, working with clinicians from every discipline, and making decisions that change patient outcomes for the better."

Most medicines start being used in hospitals, before their use ripples outwards to the community, and advanced therapeutics will change the way pharmacists practice over the next decade, as well as changing patients' lives.

"Being a part of this revolution in medicines, and in care provision, is exciting - it's cutting-edge practice, and pharmacists are expanding the boundaries of it all the time," enthused Simpson.

"The hospital setting is often one half of the transitions of care 'handshake'.

"As patients move between care settings, hospital pharmacists are essential to optimising medication safety, patient education and empowerment, and communication between care teams."



Simpson said he is looking forward to spotlighting at PCS25 how students can plan a deeply rewarding career through the connection, inspiration and recognition of the AdPha community.

This includes the Australian and New Zealand College of Advanced Pharmacy (ANZCAP), pharmacist resident and registrar training programs, specialty practice groups, Australia's pre-eminent pharmacy education program and AdPha's scientific pharmacy conference.

"We're building for the future - a future that is yours," he concluded.

Learn more about PCS25 [HERE](#). KB

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