

## Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features three pages of news.

### Pharmacy graffiti

A NEW South Wales man has been charged with painting a Nazi symbol on a Hamilton pharmacy, the ABC reports.

The Central Coast man is accused of painting swastikas on the wall of the pharmacy last week.

The Wadalba man appeared in front of a magistrate earlier this week, but refused to answer questions.

Newcastle MP Tim Crakanthorp said anti-Semitic behaviour will not be tolerated, describing the actions as "appalling".

Crakanthorp said the government and the police must crack down on anti-Semitic behaviour very quickly.

## MedsAware Week 2025

THE upcoming MedsAware Deprescribing Action Week will help address the urgent need to broaden understanding around deprescribing, according to Kristin Michaels, CEO of Advanced Pharmacy Australia (AdPha).

Taking place from 10-16 Mar, the campaign aims to encourage conversations around the risks associated with polypharmacy and the benefits of deprescribing.

"In Australia, 250,000 people are admitted to hospital each year due to medicated-related issues," Michaels pointed out.

"Numerous studies show that much of this can be attributed to polypharmacy and inappropriate use of medicines."

This year, MedsAware Week will focus on the safe and sustainable use of medicines, with the aim of highlighting ways to reduce the impact of medicines on the natural environment - particularly given Australia's health systems account for 7% of the country's total



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greenhouse gas emissions.

"As health professionals we have a responsibility to be thinking about sustainability in everything we do," Michaels said.

"By taking small, conscious steps, beginning with a simple conversation between patient and health provider, we can all help reduce the environmental impact of medicines."

Since its launch in 2023, MedsAware Week has reached a cumulative Australian audience of more than 11 million, expanded its social media footprint by 30%, and enlisted seven partners representing medical, pharmacy and aged care stakeholder.

Michaels added, "Our hope for MedsAware 2025 is to show that deprescribing affords us the opportunity to not only improve medicines safety and patient care directly, but to contribute to a more sustainable and healthier planet".

Learn more about MedsAware Week **HERE**. JM

## Two weeks left for APP2025 discount

WITH earlybird registration closing 31 Jan, there are just 2 weeks left to book using the discounted rate to save up to \$120 on full registration.

Bringing together some of the brightest minds and most inspiring leaders in pharmacy, health care and beyond, Australia's largest pharmacy conference features a dynamic lineup of keynote speakers, panel discussions and thought-provoking sessions.

This year's conference is a must-attend event for anyone looking to elevate their career and gain fresh perspectives.

APP2025 will take place on the Gold Coast from 20-22 Mar, bringing together more than 7,000 attendees, 250 exhibitors and 120 speakers in an education, information and networking program.

To register click **HERE**.

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## New ministers in health space

WITH the imminent departure of National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Minister Bill Shorten, three federal ministers will gain expanded roles to manage the NDIS and run government services in a pre-election cabinet mini-reshuffle.

Finance Minister Katy Gallagher will gain responsibility for government services, including Services Australia, the agency that delivers services, payments and programs for health professionals, practice staff, aged care providers, health workers and pharmacy staff.

Social Services Minister Amanda Rishworth will oversee the NDIS in addition to her existing portfolio, while Anne Aly, the Minister for Early Childhood Education, will be in charge of disability services as minister assisting Rishworth on the NDIS.

Meanwhile, Aged Care and Sports Minister Anika Wells, who played a key role overseeing the Aged Care Act 2024, has been promoted into cabinet in her current portfolio, a move welcomed by the Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN).

"Minister Wells' promotion acknowledges her significant achievements in a short space of time and it also gives aged care a designated seat at the table," OPAN's Craig Gear said.

## Faux sunscreen warning

**POPULAR** cosmetic products that appear to offer sun protection may be misleading consumers, experts have warned.

Product such as "sun drops", "sun wax", "sun sticks" and "sun balms" are not regulated by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) but rather as cosmetic and consumer goods.

As such, they are not subject to the same regulatory requirements as regular sunscreen, and may or may not provide UV protection.

Some cosmetic products such as foundation and BB creams do provide UV protection, and may have an SPF of 30 or more, but other products with little or no UV protection may be causing harm by creating false reassurance.

Speaking to the *ABC*, registered nurse and Bond University researcher Dr Jessica Stokes-Parish said it is a problem that had become more prevalent in summer.

"What I've been seeing is companies that are marketing their product as a sunscreen but they've not gone through the TGA testing processes to have their product listed as a sunscreen," she said.

Dr Stokes-Parish said social media marketing has fuelled consumer confusion, particularly among young women.

"They may be applying a product that has no sun protection whatsoever, increasing their risk of ageing and skin cancer from UV rays," she said.



If a product makes an SPF claim, whether it is cosmetic or therapeutic, it must comply with Australian sunscreen standards.

Any product making such a claim that does not comply can be subject to TGA action.

The *ABC* approached the TGA for comment, and a spokesperson confirmed it had received reports related to "alleged non-compliance of sun protection products" but could not comment on whether any were under investigation or subject to compliance and enforcement action.

Sunscreen products regulated through the TGA include those intended primarily as a sunscreen with SPF 4 or higher, and some secondary sunscreens, such as moisturisers with an SPF greater than 15.

For customers seeking sunscreen products, the easiest way to determine whether it is TGA-regulated is to check the packaging for an AUST L or AUST R number. *KB*

## EMA approvals

**MORE** than 100 new medicines have been recommended for approval by the European Medicines Agency (EMA) this year.

Almost 50 of the 114 new medicines have a new active substance which has never been authorised in the European Union before.

Among the new recommendations are a medicine to treat early-onset Alzheimer's disease; the first needle-free and smaller form of adrenaline to treat allergic reactions; the first treatment for tumours associated with Von Hippel-Lindau disease; and two new antibiotic medicines for the treatment of certain severe infections.

EMA also recommended several new vaccines, including one to protect against Chikungunya, and a new mRNA vaccine against lower respiratory tract disease caused by respiratory syncytial virus (RSV).

The Agency also extended the use of an mpox vaccine to protect adolescents from 12 to 17 years of age.

Cancer was once again the strongest therapeutic area, with 28 recommendations for oncology products.

There were also 28 recommendations for new biosimilar products, covering a wide range of diseases, including several types of cancer, osteoporosis, macular degeneration, and more.



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## Dispensary Corner

**USUALLY** thieves are looking to steal drugs when they break into a pharmacy, but one man in the US was more interested in the fragrance aisle.

A 35-year-old man from Florida was arrested earlier this week after he entered the Navarro Discount Pharmacy in Miami-Dade and allegedly stole various perfume products valued at around US\$3,187.

Surveillance footage shows Teneric Jovan Collins-Jones entering the store around 7:30pm while customers and employees were present, and jumping over the fragrance counter into a restricted employee-only area while carrying a white laundry bucket.

Collins-Jones filled the bucket with perfume products before leaving the store around 10 minutes later, without attempting to pay.

According to officials, a store employee working at the fragrance counter witnessed the brazen theft, and the entire incident was recorded on security cameras.

During questioning at the detention centre, Collins-Jones confessed to the crime, however specific details of his statement were not released.

Detectives linked also linked him to multiple similar thefts at other stores in the community, which they said they are continuing to investigate.

As of Wed, Collins-Jones remains in custody with his bond yet to be determined.

## How Ozempic can change arthritis

AS the poster child of one of the most hyped drug classes of this century, Ozempic (semaglutide) has the potential to change the lives of millions of people living with type 2 diabetes, for which it is primarily indicated, and obesity and its associated metabolic diseases.

But with many rheumatological conditions made worse by obesity, notably osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis and psoriatic arthritis, there is potentially much to gain by patients and their treating physicians from the drug, said Melbourne rheumatologist and Arthritis Australia medical director Dr David Liew.

"Much of the refractory pain and suffering from these conditions might be attributable to obesity, raising questions about how GLP-1 agonists, which also include Mounjaro (tirzepatide), can influence the diseases we treat," Dr Liew explained.

In knee osteoarthritis, which affects around two million Australians, obesity has long been identified as a key factor and effective pharmacotherapeutic approaches are lacking.

A recent clinical trial in osteoarthritis patients comparing semaglutide versus placebo showed meaningful gains in function and pain reduction for those taking semaglutide, with Dr Liew suggesting it might be one of the key interventions leading to benefit in this condition.

"Even with such data, many issues will still arise," he said.

"Apart from neglect of still-effective non-pharmacological approaches, such as exercise, diet and physical therapy, access to GLP-1 agonist therapy will remain a large question, particularly given existing costs and globally

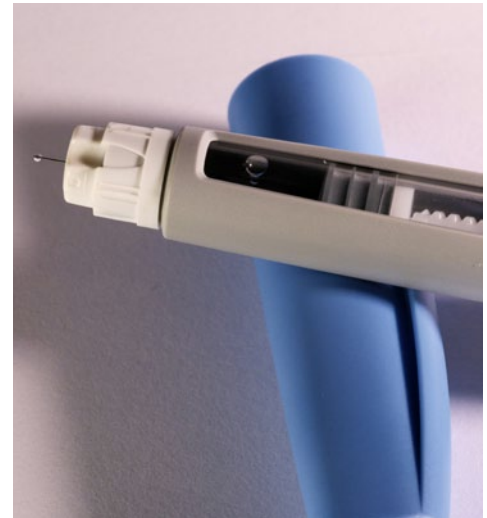
constrained supply."

However, he pointed to some health economic modelling suggesting that, in certain situations over a five year horizon, a GLP-1 agonist intervention could make pharmacoeconomic sense in knee osteoarthritis.

As for other conditions, a US study found that patients with rheumatoid arthritis taking semaglutide or tirzepatide not only recorded weight loss and improved HbA1c, but also improvements in pain and flare ups.

While the benefits can be achieved with any weight loss method resulting in a body weight reduction of 5% or more, GLP-1 agonists have had greater success than other methods.

Pain and disease activity is often incompletely managed in obese rheumatology patients, and readily actionable therapies have been hard to implement in the past, said Dr Liew, raising the possibility that rheumatologists will be discussing the option of GLP-1 agonists with



their patients.

However, he cautioned, it depends on many things, including better quality research data.

"There are incompletely answered questions about the long-term game plan for such patients - will they need indefinite treatment to sustain benefit, and will that be justifiable? And will such therapy be tolerable?"

"Only time will tell how GLP-1 agonist strategy will be implemented for rheumatology patients," said Dr Liew. KB



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