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## Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features four pages of industry news, including our **Beauty & Wellness** feature.

## FDA ticks Spravato monotherapy

THE US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved Spravato esketamine nasal spray monotherapy for the treatment of major depressive disorder in adult patients who have had inadequate response to at least two oral antidepressants.

The approval was based on data from a phase four study that found rapid and superior improvement in depression symptoms, with no new safety concerns reported.

Previously, Spravato had to be taken in conjunction with a newly initiated oral antidepressant, which is the current situation in Australia.

## Shareholders approve CWG-SIG merger

CHEMIST Warehouse Group and Sigma shareholders have greenlit the proposed merger of the two healthcare giants in meetings held in Melbourne yesterday.

More than 97% of Sigma proxies cast backed the merger, easily surpassing the regulatory requirement that at least 75% total number votes cast needed to be in favour for the deal to go ahead.

Meanwhile, 100% of votes cast by Chemist Warehouse shareholders were in favour of the merger.

Chemist Warehouse will own 85.8% of the merged company that will supply 1,200 Sigma-aligned pharmacies and own more than 658 Chemist Warehouse outlets, according to regulatory filings.

Chemist Warehouse founders Jack Gance and Mario Verrocchi will be joined by Chief Commercial Officer, Damien Gance, and Chief People Officer, Danielle Di Pilla, on the board of Sigma Healthcare.

Jack Gance, Sam Gance and Verrocchi will share a stake in



Sigma reportedly worth \$15 billion, while 104 franchisees will have stakes said to be worth between \$5 million and \$25 million.

Post-merger, CWG shareholders will hold approximately 85.75% of the merged group, with Sigma shareholders holding around 14.25%.

Sigma will pay the privately held Chemist Warehouse shareholders \$700 million in cash as well as stock.

The scheme remains subject to approval of the court at a Supreme Court hearing scheduled for 10.15am (AEDT) on Mon 03 Feb.

Assuming the court gives its approval, the merged entity will recast the ASX when it lists in Feb with an expected market capitalisation of about \$30 billion, according to the *Australian Financial Review*. KB

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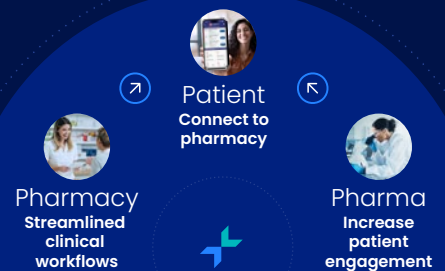
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# New Year, New Opportunities

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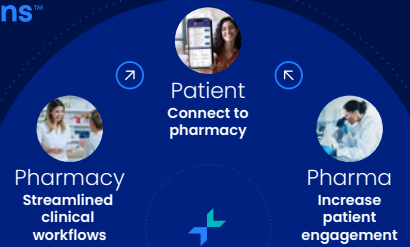
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## QBiotics senior appointments

AUSTRALIAN life sciences company QBiotics has announced two senior appointments to its medical leadership team.

Hong Kong-based physician Professor Victoria Elegant has been appointed Chief Medical Officer (CMO) and will oversee the general medical and clinical aspects of QBiotics' drug development programs.

Meanwhile, QBiotics Clinical Advisory Board member and senior oncologist Professor Aurelian Marabelle, based in Paris, has been appointed consultant and key adviser to the company's oncology drug development program.

QBiotics' current clinical focus is on novel treatments for cancer and debilitating chronic wounds, with its lead oncology drug, tigilanol tiglate, currently undergoing trials.

## NSW dermatology trial helps 1,500 people

ALMOST 1,500 people have received pharmacist care for common skin conditions as part of the NSW Pharmacy Dermatology Trial, the Minister for Health Ryan Park announced.

The trial allows appropriately trained pharmacists to manage common minor skin conditions, including impetigo (school sores), shingles, mild to moderate eczema and acute mild plaque psoriasis.

Over 480 pharmacies across the state are currently participating in the trial, which commenced 19 Jul last year.

Building on trials which have enabled authorised pharmacists to undertake consultations for urinary tract infections (UTI) and the resupply of the oral contraceptive pill (OCP), the initiative has given thousands of people the option of conveniently obtaining a prescription through their local pharmacist, the Minister said.

It has also relieved pressure on general practitioners, "freeing up

GP appointments for people who need them the most".

"Imagine, instead of struggling to find a GP appointment to receive a script for a minor skin condition, you could just pop down to your local pharmacy, and receive the care you need, when you need it," Park said.

"I am so pleased more than 1,400 people across NSW have been able to access more convenient, timely support for common mild skin conditions thanks to this trial.

"The NSW Government is committed to supporting innovative initiatives like this one that are helping improve access to primary care services."

Authorised pharmacists in NSW have been able to offer the UTI service as part of usual business since Jun 2024, and the resupply of OCP since Sep.

"With over 480 participating pharmacies, the initiative offers convenient prescription access, easing the burden on GPs and



reserving their appointments for more critical cases," said Catherine Bronger, Senior Vice of President of the Pharmacy Guild of Australia, NSW Branch.

"This approach benefits both the community and its residents by making treatment more accessible and efficient.

"The Pharmacy Guild of Australia is proud and honoured to be part of this critical initiative, supporting and evolving the NSW healthcare landscape," Bronger said. KB

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**Alcon**

## Editor's Choice: Australian hair care brand gets a makeover

**WULI** Hair Care, an Australian gender-neutral and vegan haircare brand, has unveiled its brand evolution with a first-to-market eco-friendly bottle.

Formerly known as Wuli Grooming, the revamped brand has embraced a new name and upgraded its packaging to feature an eye-catching colour combination of sand, midnight blue and rose gold foil stamping.

It has also relaunched its popular Sea Salt Spray in a refillable aluminium bottle with a continuous mist spray nozzle, ensuring even coverage and making it easier for consumers to seal in moisture, tame frizz, and protect against heat.



"When it comes to curls, coverage is everything," said Amadou Doumbia, Wuli's Founder.

"Most hair salons use continuous spray bottles to add water to textured hair when styling and detangling - I thought, 'why not bring that same efficiency to Sea Salt Spray?'"

"Our goal has always been to

make wavy and curly haircare lazy-proof, and this new bottle embodies that mission."

Since launching in 2022, Wuli has grown from a direct-to-consumer favourite to a retail-ready brand, with its products now available in select Priceline Pharmacy and Blooms The Chemist locations in Sydney.

## TBN poised for growth



**TOTAL** Beauty Network (TBN), the parent company of popular pharmacy beauty brands Designer Brands Cosmetics, RAWW and Colour by TBN, came together recently for a four-day conference.

The bi-annual event saw the entire sales team unite at TBN's Melbourne headquarters to align on strategies and unveil new developments for the year ahead.

Staff were treated to a preview of upcoming product innovations across all brands, while also learning about TBN's expansion plans for both the domestic and international markets.

Led by TBN's Chief Executive Officer, Liz Webster, and Executive Chairman, Tony Rechtman, the conference highlighted recent milestones, including Designer Brands' expansion into Big W stores nationwide.

"Our team's passion and drive are at the heart of our success," Webster said.

"Together, we are reaching new heights, and this conference serves as a launchpad for even greater achievements in 2025."

With innovative products and expanded retail partnerships on the horizon, as well as a united team, TBN is poised for a year of major growth.

## Bondi says Get Glowin'

**THE** latest innovation from Bondi Sands, Get Glowin' is described by the brand as "the ultimate hydrating day and night moisturiser", and retails for \$18.95.

The moisturiser claims to visibly reduce the appearance of fine lines, prevent dehydration, brighten dull skin, and minimise pigmentation, thanks to a formula that includes vitamin C, ferulic acid and Australian finger lime extract.



## Nourish dry skin with Bioderma's new 2-in-1 oil



it stays hydrated and smooth throughout the day.

According to Bioderma, the gentle exfoliating action of an AHA ester removes dead skin, combined with the nourishing and skin barrier strengthening benefits of squalene, ceramide 3, and three biomimetic vegetable oils.

Users will enjoy the satin-like, non-greasy texture, which means they can apply and head out straight away.

The oil has been proven to deliver a 31% decrease in skin roughness, and 24-hour hydration.

The product is suitable for eczema-prone skin, as well for babies, teens and adults.

The Bioderma Atoderm 2-in-1 Oil is available at Chemist Warehouse for RRP\$54.99.

**THERE'S** a new solution on the market for those suffering from dry and flaky skin, with Bioderma releasing the Atoderm 2-in-1 Oil.

Specifically developed to target the needs of dry skin, the double-action oil both exfoliates and nourishes the skin to help ensure

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**Beauty & Wellness**  
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## Dispensary Corner

**AMONG** the list of reasons to call an ambulance, you wouldn't think a blocked nose would be among them - but according to one NSW paramedic, that's just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the ridiculous "emergencies" he has attended to over the years.

Tim Booth, who started working as a paramedic in 2016, had a rude awakening when he discovered that only around 10% of call-outs were actually for life-threatening situations.

In fact, the absurd call-outs provided enough material for Booth to write a book about them, titled *You Called an Ambulance for What?*

One man requested an ambulance because of chest pain, which simply turned out to be sunburn, and then asked Booth and his colleague to help rub Greek yoghurt on his back.

"Once, I was called out to a man cowering behind a tree, terrified of being attacked by a magpie," he said.

"I've lost track of the number of times I've attended people freaking out after smoking or ingesting marijuana."

Many call-outs come from the same people with the same complaints, Booth added, such as addicts wanting medication and elderly patients.

"I strongly believe the system needs to change where our services are reserved for the real emergencies," Booth said.

"But until then, I'll continue to attend to the sunburn and blocked noses people call the ambos for."

## Pharmacy's year ahead

**ON THE** wish list for pharmacy in 2025 are national harmonisation of pharmacist services, more collaboration with non-pharmacy stakeholders and a greater emphasis on multidisciplinary care.

*Pharmacy Daily* asked members of the pharmacy community to share their hopes and expectations for the year ahead.

Nick Munro, Executive General Manager at TerryWhite Chemmart, said harmonising pharmacist services across states and territories is essential to ensuring all Australians have access to equitable healthcare, regardless of where they live.

"Another area of opportunity is strengthening collaboration between community pharmacy, GPs, and allied health professionals.

"As an industry, we have an incredible chance to deepen these relationships, foster partnerships with peak bodies, and collectively address the challenges in our healthcare system to deliver better outcomes for patients," Munro said.

National Rural Health Alliance CEO Susi Tegen agreed, saying there is a real need for a continuous relationship and multidisciplinary approach to meet the needs of rural patients in particular, who are already challenged health-wise, but also have to deal with the impact of drought, floods, fires and storms.

"Scope of practice legislation needs to be the same across all states and territories and support the population and situation", Tegen added.

Pharmacy career opportunities look set for further growth in 2025, says Heidi Dariz, General Manager of Raven's Recruitment, with strong demand across community, hospital and aged care settings.

"Workforce shortages, an



ageing population and expanded pharmacist roles - including vaccinations and prescribing - are driving competition for skilled pharmacists," Dariz said.

"Employers are seeking professionals with advanced clinical expertise, strong communication skills and the ability to adapt to evolving technologies.

"Locum work is also surging in popularity, offering pharmacists flexibility, higher pay and diverse experience," Dariz added.

Pharmaceutical Society of Australia National President, Associate Professor Fei Sim, said that 2024 was a year where the pharmacy profession as a whole had greater connection than ever before with the Department of Health and Aged Care, the primary healthcare networks, and other external stakeholders as well.

"I think moving into next year, I would like to see our profession being more united, as opposed to disconnected," A/Prof Sim said.

With the federal election in the first half of the year, Sim says it is important to have bilateral support for the pharmacy profession and its work.

"The work that we do as healthcare professionals doesn't stop and it doesn't change - that recognition needs to continue, and the work needs to continue." KB

## NSW GPs urge free meningococcal vax

**THE** Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) is calling on the New South Wales government to provide free meningococcal B vaccine for at-risk groups.

The RACGP recommends meningococcal B vaccines for every child aged two and under and every teen aged 15 to 19-years-old, but financial burden is preventing people getting vaccinated.

RACGP NSW & ACT Chair Dr Rebekah Hoffman said: "We can dramatically reduce the deaths and disability related to meningococcal B."

"Effective vaccines are available, now it is up to the government to ensure free access to all at-risk Australians.

"Prevention is the best solution, and vaccines are one of the most important tools we have for keeping our people safe from deadly infections such as these," Dr Hoffman said.

In South Australia, the free meningococcal B vaccination program cut rates among children by 60%, and by 73% among adolescents.

Queensland and the Northern Territory have rolled out successful programs, while Western Australian GPs called for a free program last year (*PD* 16 Dec 2024).

"You cannot place a cost on a life or our children's future," Meningitis Centre Australia CEO Karen Quick said, noting that 86% of parents simply cannot afford the vaccination.

"The government can fix this, saving NSW children from death and lifelong disability," Quick said.