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### Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features three pages of news.

### Last chance to get APP2025 discount

TODAY is the final day of earlybird pricing for the Australian Pharmacy Professional Conference and Trade Exhibition (APP2025).

Register now to save up to \$120 and join thousands of pharmacy colleagues on the Gold Coast from 20-22 Mar for pharmacy's premier event.

It features sessions on pharmacy's evolving role in primary health care, precision health, scope of practice and business sustainability.

The conference starts Wed 19 Mar with interactive workshops, and the main program and trade exhibition start Thu.

For more info, click [HERE](#).

## 34,000 kids in ED due to med issues

THE PHARMACEUTICAL Society of Australia released a report today that reveals serious medicine-related problems in children and adolescents, and calls for Australia's health system to be better equipped to deal with medicine safety challenges.

The *Medicine safety: Child and adolescent care* report notes that nearly 34,000 children present to emergency departments each year - around 93 per day - due to medicine-related problems, with around 40 admitted to hospitals.

This includes an average of 12 hospital presentations and eight hospital admissions per day due to poisoning by medicines.

Meanwhile, costs to the economy have been estimated at upwards of \$130 million per year.

Recommendations for action include the implementation of a national incident reporting and learning system, so that when children are harmed by medicines, health professionals and systems

learn how to prevent another child suffering the same harm.

Recommendations also call for increased availability of pharmacists in hospital paediatric wards, mandatory indication on prescriptions for children and adolescents, and mandatory manual dose checks when dispensing paediatric prescriptions.

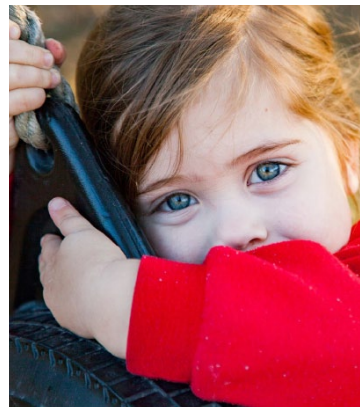
PSA National President Associate Professor Fei Sim said the report's findings painted a "sobering reality" of medicine use in Australia's children and adolescents, showing the urgent need for reform.

"Our health system is failing children and adolescents," she said.

"As a health community, we must commit to doing better, but we also need to be given the resources and tools to do better."

A/Prof Sim pointed out that pharmacists are critical to ensuring the safe use of medicines, and must be supported to do so.

"That means adequately staffing children's hospital wards with the



expertise of pharmacists, investing in systems that capture the data needed for evidence-based policy, and improving the quality use of medicines whenever medicines are used," she said.

"It takes all of us, across all areas of practice and indeed across all health professions, to make a difference to the children and adolescents who rely on our care," A/Prof Sim concluded.

The report is available [HERE](#). KB

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### Penington 2024 annual report released

**DRUG** safety and harm minimisation advocate, the Penington Institute, has released its 2024 Annual Review.

Its focus has been on driving progress in key areas, including advancing research and policy reform on cannabis, continuing to support frontline workforces, and taking action to reduce overdose deaths.

The group applauded government policy initiatives, including music festival pill testing trials in Victoria, Queensland, NSW and ACT.

The institute also recognised the Victorian Government's commitment to a trial of hydromorphone as a treatment for opioid dependence, along with several other overdose reduction measures.

"The health benefit from these decisions is plain to see - particularly given the increasingly complex and adulterated drug supply in Australia and around

the world," said CEO John Ryan.

Australia is falling behind a growing global shift toward evidence-based cannabis regulation, the most commonly used drug after alcohol, the report notes, with other countries demonstrating how better management of cannabis "can reverse the harms to people and communities inflicted by outdated policies".

Another 2024 highlight was the continuation of its International Overdose Awareness Campaign.

The institute's drug and alcohol overdose report highlighted the increasing role of pharmaceutical drugs in fatal and non-fatal overdoses, with opioids, benzodiazepenes, stimulants and antidepressants the main culprits, while its statistics on unintentional fatal overdoses showed a rapid increase in the proportion of deaths involving benzodiazepenes over 20 years.

The Annual Review is [HERE](#).

### Nutrient deficiencies in T2D

**MICRONUTRIENT** deficiency is common in people with type 2 diabetes, according to an analysis of international data.

Vitamin D was the most common micronutrient deficiency, and women were at greater risk than men of deficiencies.

The analysis included 132 studies, involving over 50,000 participants, published between 1998 and 2023.

Genetic predisposition, various environmental factors, sedentary lifestyle, an unhealthy diet and obesity are risk factors for the disease, the researchers explained.

Previous studies suggest that micronutrients - vitamins, minerals, and electrolytes - have a key role in the development of type 2 diabetes, by potentially affecting glucose metabolism and insulin signalling pathways.

The prevalence of micronutrient deficiency among people with type 2 diabetes varied according to country or region, but the overall global prevalence was 45%.

Very low levels of vitamin D affected 61% overall, and magnesium deficiency was also common, affecting 42%, while iron deficiency affected 28%.

The global prevalence of B12 deficiency was 29% - and higher among patients taking metformin.

The authors could not establish the cause of deficiencies, nor was it clear whether the micronutrient deficiency preceded poor glycaemic control or was a consequence of it.

Due to a lack of data in the general population, the authors could not draw comparisons with patients with type 2 diabetes.

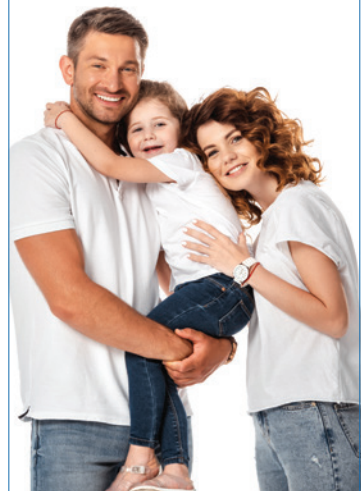
"The treatment of type 2 diabetes often tends to focus on energy metabolism and macronutrients, but [these findings are] a reminder that optimising overall nutrition should always be a priority," said Sydney dietitian Shane McCauliffe.

Read the full paper [HERE](#). *KB*



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## Dispensary Corner

A PLASTIC surgeon in Taiwan, Dr Chen Weinong, decided to “gift” his wife with the promise of having no more children, by performing a vasectomy - on himself.

And they say chivalry is dead.

Of course, to prove he actually did take matters into his own hands (literally), the father-of-three recorded the whole procedure for “education purposes” and uploaded the video onto social media, which has unsurprisingly gone viral and attracted four million viewers.

Dr Chen was fully conscious after using a local anaesthetic to numb his genitals for the hour-long procedure.

However, he admitted “it was a strange feeling to touch and suture my own urethra”.

Ironically, Dr Chen encouraged viewers to see a medical professional for their own vasectomies, rather than attempting to DIY like he did.

It should be noted that Dr Chen was also under the supervision of a qualified urologist, so he wasn't completely alone. Phew.

It certainly takes balls to take on such a task.

Most cases of self-surgery take place under life-or-death circumstances.

One of the most famous documented cases involved a Russian physician, Leonid Rogozov, who successfully removed his own appendix after suffering appendicitis during an isolated Antarctic expedition in the 60s.

Don't try this at home, kids.

## Pregnancy vax decline



**PREGNANCY** vaccination coverage in NSW has declined since the onset of the COVID pandemic, according to research by the National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance (NCIRS), and reflects similar decreases in other states.

The research found a decline in pregnancy vaccination coverage for influenza from 59% in 2020 to 49% in 2022, and a smaller decrease in pertussis vaccination from 79% in 2020 to 77.6% in 2022.

Professor Bette Liu, Associate Director, Population Health at NCIRS, said that the “stalling pregnancy vaccine uptake, that has been seen not just in NSW but also in other jurisdictions, is a clear call to action”.

“Every year influenza, pertussis and respiratory syncytial virus [RSV] cause a significant number of hospitalisations and occasionally death among infants,” Professor Liu said.

“Vaccination against these diseases during pregnancy is strongly recommended to protect infants in their first months of life, when they are most vulnerable.”

A new free RSV pregnancy vaccination program was recently

announced (**PD 20 Jan**), meaning influenza, pertussis and RSV vaccines will now be routinely available for pregnant women.

The study used Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) and NSW Perinatal Data Collection (PDC) linked data sources.

Researchers identified significant under-reporting of pregnancy vaccinations to the AIR compared with the perinatal dataset - despite the requirement to report all NIP-funded vaccines - which compromises the ability to maximise the impact of the RSV pregnancy vaccination program.

The preprint is available **HERE**. *KB*

## Victoria expands pill testing

**THE** Victorian Government has announced an expansion of the state's pill testing trial, which will now include four more festivals in early 2025.

The pill testing service will be available at several events between Feb and Apr, including Hardmission Festival, Pitch Music and Arts Festival, Ultra Music Festival, and The Warehouse Project.

The announcement follows the trial's launch in Dec at the Beyond The Valley festival, which saw more than 700 people use the service.

Nearly 40% of patrons said they would use a smaller amount of their drugs following their discussion with a healthcare worker at the service, while one in six people intended to discard their drugs after having them tested.

“The results from Beyond the Valley speak for themselves... It allows people to see what's really in their substances and make informed health decisions,” said Minister for Mental Health, Ingrid Stitt.



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