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## NT reaches breaking point

**PROFESSIONAL** Pharmacists Australia (PPA) members in NT government hospitals are set to vote early next week on taking industrial action, unless high pharmacist vacancy rates - which potentially undermine patient welfare and safety - are urgently addressed.

Royal Darwin Hospital and Alice Springs Hospital are currently operating with a 30% vacancy rate.

Meanwhile, Katherine Hospital is facing the potential closure of its pharmacy department as it is unable to find qualified staff, despite ongoing recruitment efforts.

The closure would affect chemotherapy patients and threatens the NT's regional cancer care services, with Royal Darwin Hospital - which has its own staffing issues - working on contingency plans.

PPA members have asked for an attraction and retention allowance and improvements to base pay

rates and conditions as part of enterprise agreement negotiations.

They said the offer put forward by the NT Government was not adequate, and the state's Health Minister Steve Edgington has declined to meet with representatives.

"Pharmacists and pharmacy technicians are being ignored by the NT Government, even though evidence shows that pharmacists and pharmacy technicians keep bed flow moving and capacity open," said PPA President Leon Yap. KB

### Osteo control

**NEW** MediChoice OSTEO-CAPS from Nova Pharmaceuticals provides up to eight hours of relief from osteoarthritis pain.

The pharmacist-only medicine contains 665mg of paracetamol and comes in a pack of 96 - more on **page five**.

### Today's issue of PD

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

- Glucojel
- MediChoice OSTEO-CAPS

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Reference: 1. <https://compliance.health.gov.au/artg/search=melatonin> cited 09/05/2025.

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## Partnerships behind TWC success

**TERRYWHITE**  
Chemmart held its annual Supplier Forum in Melbourne this week, bringing together more than 300 partners to provide a comprehensive update on the brand's strategic priorities and outline the plans for the upcoming year.

The event showcased the critical role that supplier relationships play in the network's success across its 620+ pharmacies.

Attendees heard updates on key strategic initiatives, including plans to lead in the expanded scope of practice for pharmacists, continued investment in CareClinic programs, and new strategies to future-proof the front-of-store and drive prescription growth.

There was also an update on TWC Connect, the brand's retail media platform that was launched last year (**PD** 01 Aug 2024).

Nick Munroe, Executive GM at



TerryWhite Chemmart, opened the day by emphasising the value of strong supplier connections.

"The success of our network is built on the strength of our partnerships," Munroe said.

"Together with our network and supplier partners, we're uniquely positioned to shape the future of community pharmacy, delivering better health outcomes, innovating the retail experience, and growing stronger through shared ambition."

The forum also featured keynote presentations from globally recognised thought leaders.

International futurist and trend forecaster Michael McQueen spoke on the future of healthcare, customer expectations, and the innovation shaping retail partnerships.

Meanwhile, Colin Lewis, an award-winning marketer with over two decades of global experience, explored the rising influence of retail media and the critical role of TWC Connect.

"Now is the moment for suppliers to embrace integrated, insight-led media strategies that connect with pharmacy customers across every touchpoint - online and offline," Lewis said. **KB**

**Pictured:** Exec GM, Nick Munroe; Head of Marketing, Janice Hoogeveen; Head of Ethics, Clinics & Partnerships, Krystel Tresillian; and GM Merchandise, Kevin Allman.

## Govt cuts pharmacy approval fees

**THE** Department of Health, Disability and Ageing has announced a cut in its pharmacy approval fees, taking effect from 01 Aug 2025.

The current \$1,600 fee to establish a new pharmacy, or relocate an existing one that is approved to supply pharmaceutical benefits, will decrease to \$1,370.

Pharmacists who wish to change ownership of their business or alter the size of the pharmacy premises will pay \$465 from 01 Aug, down from the current \$555.



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Author: fx Medicine by BioCeuticals team

## Pharmacists key in hep B and C testing

**WORLD** Hepatitis Day was marked this week, highlighting the need for better awareness of the risk factors for hepatitis B and C, increased testing and access to treatment, with a key role for pharmacies.

Around 300,000 Australians live with viral hepatitis, however approximately half of those either do not know they have hepatitis, or are not getting the treatment they need, according to Hepatitis Australia.

Hepatitis can cause scarring and liver disease, and is the leading cause of liver cancer.

While treatments are available, awareness is the issue, said Professor Joe Doyle, President of Hepatitis Australia.

"The key for driving better awareness of hepatitis B and C is that we want people to understand the risk factors and get tested if they're at risk," Prof Doyle told **Pharmacy Daily**.

"People access healthcare through pharmacies possibly more than through other services, so they are ideally placed for public healthcare interventions with those who may not regularly visit a GP or health service," Prof Doyle said.

Community pharmacies around the country have been getting involved with pilot projects that aim to increase hepatitis B and C testing using point-of-care finger-stick tests.

Professor Doyle highlighted the Expand-C project, which is looking to get at least 100 community pharmacies that already dispense opioid replacement therapy on board.

"Eligible patients who consent to testing will receive harm minimisation information and

a finger-stick blood test, with further testing and treatment plans offered to those who need it," he said.

Hepatitis Australia also leads a national program called Heplink, an advice and support line both for people with hepatitis and also health practitioners, including pharmacists who want help and advice on how to manage people with the diseases.

"Information and support is free of charge, and you don't need a Medicare card, and that is something that can certainly help pharmacists and their clients," Prof Doyle said.

**MEANWHILE**, National Aboriginal Controlled Community Health Organisations (NACCHO) and Hepatitis Australia are calling for urgent national action on hepatitis B and C, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities disproportionately affected by the two diseases.

"Every day, ACCHOs prove what's possible when you back local leadership," said NACCHO Chair, Donnell Mills.

"When we're supported to lead, the results are clear: health outcomes improve, and gaps start to close."

NACCHO and Hepatitis Australia are calling for the backing of ACCHOs and communities to drive prevention, testing, treatment and care, as well as investment in proven programs like the Hep B PAST program in the NT.

"As a country, we can't claim progress if the most affected communities are still missing out," Mills concluded. **KB**

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### Dispensary Corner

**MOST** of us have probably, at least on our laziest days, dreamed of being able to increase our fitness without lifting a finger.

Well, that dream may soon be realised, thanks to a new technology currently in development in the UK.

Researchers at the University College London and Queen Mary University of London recently tested a small device that clips to the outer ear and sends gentle electrical pulses to increase the activity of the vagus nerve, which plays a key role in regulating heart function.

In a study involving 28 healthy volunteers, half were given the device to wear for 30 minutes per day while the other half were given dummy devices.

In subsequent tests, the researchers found that those who had worn the nerve stimulator were able to exercise at a greater intensity than the control group.

Additionally, those who wore the devices saw increases in their oxygen intake, maximum breathing rate and maximum heart rate during physical activity.

Blood sample results also suggested wearing the device helped reduce inflammation.

While more studies are needed, the researchers said they hope the new technology could eventually be used to improve wellbeing and quality of life for inactive people, as well as people with heart failure.

## PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT

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