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## Today's issue of PD

*Pharmacy Daily* today features three pages of the latest news, plus a full page from **Dermal Therapy**.

## High SPF lip care

**DERMAL** Therapy has a range of SPF50+ lip care products to protect, moisturise and treat dry chapped lips with no bitter aftertaste - see more on **page four**.

## APP hotel inferno

**MORE** than 450 guests at Hilton Surfers Paradise were evacuated early this morning after one of the hotel's rooftop branding lights ignited.

The property is one of the designated hotels hosting delegates for next week's APP conference on the Gold Coast, however the hotel has been deemed safe and is operating.

## GPs urge PBS listing of Ozempic for weight loss

**THE** Royal Australian College of GPs (RACGP) has called for effective obesity-management medication, which could include semaglutide drugs, to be subsidised on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) to reduce health inequity.

The call reflects its recently released position statement on obesity which emphasises gaining health, not just losing weight.

RACGP Specific Interest Obesity Management Chair, Dr Terri-Lynne South, said that while a PBS subsidy will help reduce obesity for some patients, the health system must support all patients to gain health, and maintain it.

"There is a growing body of evidence that semaglutide medicines are an effective way for patients to reduce their risk of developing complex and chronic conditions that are linked to overweight and obesity," she said.

"Around 32% of Australian adults live with obesity, and the National Obesity Strategy estimates the

direct and indirect costs of this are around \$12 billion per year."

Australia's high rate of obesity is a major barrier to health equity, said Dr South, with people in rural and lower socioeconomic status areas more likely to experience obesity.

"Manufacturers have drawn exceptional profits from these medications - now they must invest in reducing costs for patients," she said, pointing out that PBS spending is an investment in health.

"If a medicine is effective and safe, and the cost of a condition to the health system outweighs the cost of treating it with a medicine, there's a strong case to subsidise that medicine."

The call comes just days after the Department of Health and Aged Care (DoHAC) sent more than a thousand GPs an 'education letter' raising concerns about their prescribing of semaglutide.

Ozempic is currently PBS listed for type 2 diabetes, but it is often prescribed off-label for weight loss

at a non-subsidised cost of \$150 for a pre-filled pen.

The DoHAC said it had identified the top 10% of doctors writing PBS scripts for Ozempic for patients with no history of taking type 2 diabetes medication, and sent them letters reminding them of the PBS criteria for semaglutide.

"If a patient does not meet the PBS restriction criteria, they must be issued a private prescription," the letter said.

The RACGP also called on all political parties to commit to policies that double the funding available to practices to employ allied health professionals like dietitians, pharmacists, psychologists and diabetes educators in their teams.

"It will immediately improve access to care for our patients, and in the long term, will improve health and wellbeing, meaning fewer people end up in hospital," said RACGP President Dr Michael Wright. *KB*

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## APC seeks student EOIs

THE Australian Pharmacy Council (APC) is seeking a pharmacy student to join the APC Accreditation Committee for a three-year term.

The APC Accreditation Committee (AC) decides on and monitors the accreditation of pharmacy degree and education programs against its accreditation standards.

It is inviting expressions of interest from students who are willing to contribute their expertise to assuring the quality of pharmacy education in Australia and help ensure future pharmacists meet the needs of the community.

The role offers a unique opportunity to contribute to the discussions and decision-making from the perspective of students, the APC said.

Applications close Mon 24 Mar - to learn more about the opportunity, click [HERE](#).

## Neurodivergent training

THE Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) is developing a training program for pharmacists and pharmacy assistants around assisting neurodivergent individuals, and is seeking input from pharmacy professionals.

Most pharmacists and pharmacy assistants have patient-facing roles where they deal directly with individuals who are neurodivergent on a daily basis, the PSA noted.

Many pharmacists have said they do not feel equipped to provide inclusive and high-quality care to these individuals and are keen to learn more (PD 11 Mar).

To address this need, the PSA will develop a foundation training for pharmacy practice for neurodevelopmental disorders (NDDs) for Australian pharmacists and pharmacy staff.

The aim of the program is to broadly upskill and equip pharmacists and their teams with the foundation knowledge, skills and information needed to provide



support to patients and their carers with NDDs including autism spectrum disorders (ASD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorders (ADHD), intellectual developmental disability (IDD), communication disorders, motor disorders and specific learning disorders.

The PSA has created a short survey to get input that will inform the learning objectives and content for this training program, and is inviting pharmacy professionals to take part.

It should take no longer than 10 minutes, and closes Fri 28 Mar.

The survey is [HERE](#). KB

## Gap not closing

THE Australian Medical Association (AMA) believes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led solutions are key to addressing the unmet targets of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

New data from the Productivity Commission shows only four of the 19 Closing the Gap targets are on track to be met by their deadline, while outcomes are declining for several targets, including incarceration, rates of suicide, child removal and early childhood.

"We are disappointed to see progress going backwards in many areas of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, which shows the current approach simply isn't working," said AMA President Dr Danielle McMullen.

She argued that gov't must enable First Nations leadership in order to improve outcomes.

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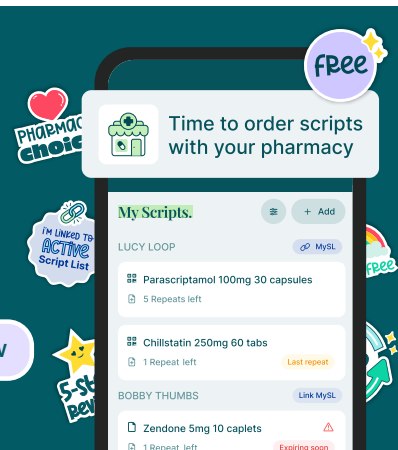
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### Dispensary Corner

**MAKING** a change from the usual student stress-reduction techniques, such as mindfulness meditation, black market Xanax or an afternoon at the campus bar, Thai researchers are proposing some furry, four-legged fun.

They asked 122 students to report how stressed they felt before and after playing with a dog for 15 minutes, and measured the students' blood pressure, heart rate and the levels of the stress hormone cortisol in their saliva.

After playing with the dogs, the students felt less stressed, and their heart rates and cortisol levels decreased.

To be clear, the dogs were "friendly dogs" - playing with hungry pit bull or a chihuahua with size issues might not have the same effect.

To see if the dogs also benefitted, the team measured cortisol levels in their saliva and poo before and after meeting the students.

Cortisol levels in the dogs' saliva weren't affected by the interaction, but levels in the animals' poo increased, which the researchers say is likely because they were excited rather than stressed.

"Friendly dogs could be a valuable addition to university stress management programs," the authors concluded.



## Aspirin may halt metastases

**RESEARCHERS** have discovered a mechanism by which aspirin could reduce metastasis of certain cancers by stimulating the immune system.

The team from Cambridge University said that the discovery could lead to the targeted use of aspirin to prevent the spread of susceptible cancers, and to the development of more effective drugs to prevent metastasis.

The research was prompted by previous observations in studies of people with cancer that those taking daily low-dose aspirin had a reduction in the spread of some cancers, such as breast, bowel and prostate cancers, and that led to ongoing clinical trials.

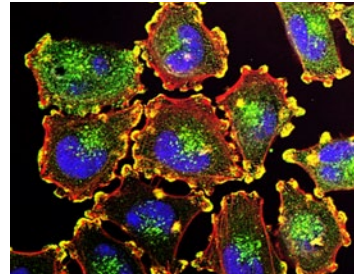
However, until now it wasn't known exactly how aspirin could prevent metastases, with the scientists describing their discovery as "serendipitous".

It is known that when individual cancer cells break away from their originating tumour and spread to another part of the body, they are particularly vulnerable to immune attack.

This is because the immune system can recognise and kill these lone cancer cells more effectively than cancer cells within larger originating tumours, which have often developed an environment that suppresses the immune system.

The researchers found the same molecule that is involved in blood clotting, called TXA2, also suppresses the immune system cells that would otherwise attack the metastatic cells.

Aspirin acts on a pathway that suppresses TXA2 and therefore reduces clotting - but it also releases the immune system cells from suppression so they can attack the metastatic cells.



"Most immunotherapies are developed to treat patients with established metastatic cancer, but when cancer first spreads there's a unique therapeutic window of opportunity when cancer cells are particularly vulnerable to immune attack," said Professor Rahul Roychoudhuri, who led the study.

"We hope that therapies that target this window of vulnerability will have tremendous scope in preventing recurrence in patients with early cancer at risk of recurrence."

Clinical trials are currently underway to determine how to use aspirin safely and effectively to prevent cancer spread, with the researchers warning that it can have serious side effects and people should consult their doctor before taking it.

Read the paper **HERE**. KB

## Heat repels less

**HOTTER** temperatures may render natural insect repellents less effective against mosquitoes, researchers from Ohio State University recently discovered.

The study, published in the journal *Pesticide Biochemistry and Physiology*, found that a pain receptor called TRPA1 (or 'wasabi receptor') becomes less sensitive in mosquitoes when exposed to heat.

This means that the chemical cues that usually trigger insect avoidance behaviours don't activate as strongly.

"What we found was that the chemicals were not able to activate the mosquito wasabi receptor as effectively when temperatures exceeded the heat activation threshold," explained co-author of the paper, Peter Piermarini.

"So the mosquito would find certain repellents less irritating in hotter weather."

The authors also found that conventional synthetic repellents are more effective on hot days, compared to a natural product containing citronella or catnip oil.



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