

Today's issue of PD

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

- Fred IT
- Nova Pharmaceuticals
- Bird Healthcare

Digital basket

FRED IT's 'digital basket' feature for its MedView Flow electronic script queuing system is designed to bridge the gap between physical and electronic prescriptions.

See **page four** for more.

The right choice

NOVA Pharmaceuticals' MediChoice products are the right choice for accessible, cost-effective treatments.

The range includes Epsom salts, eucalyptus spray, vapour rub, inhaler and analgesics - see **p5** for special winter deals.

Fertility drugs and contraceptives on PBS

FROM 01 Apr 2025, women with severe follicle-stimulating hormone (FSH) and luteinising hormone (LH) deficiency will have immediate access to the combination therapy Pergoveris (follitropin alfa/lutropin alfa) through the PBS.

This ovarian stimulation injection was previously only funded in later IVF cycles.

In addition, double the number of Pergoveris pens (four instead of two) per script will now be reimbursed, meaning women will pay just one patient co-payment for up to four pens.

Without the PBS subsidy, four Pergoveris pens would cost more than \$3,500.

"This PBS change will provide greater access, convenience and affordability for patients going through the IVF process," said Dr Paul Atkinson, National Medical Director & Fertility Specialist at Adora Fertility.

"Fertility specialists have long advocated for changes to remove

barriers and make it easier for patients along their fertility journey.

"The announcement is a big win for Australians impacted by fertility issues," he said.

"Our patients will now be able to access Pergoveris from the get-go, rather than having to first go through the anguish of multiple cycles.

"More cycles mean more time, and for women up against their biological clock this adds another challenge to the IVF process."

Also to be added to the PBS is the progestogen-only oral contraceptive Slinda (drospirenone 4mg), available from 01 May.

Currently, around 80,000 Australian women are paying up to \$80 for a three-month supply of the drug, and will instead pay \$31.60 (or \$7.70 for concession holders) for a four-month supply.

"Progestogen-only pills are especially suitable for older women, women at increased risk of blood clots, those who suffer



migraine attacks, breast-feeding mothers, those who smoke, are overweight, or have high blood pressure," said Dr Terri Foran, Sexual Health Physician.

The new subsidy is in addition to the Federal Government's \$573 million women's health funding announcement made in early Feb.

Sleep diagnostics

SLEEPIMAGE is the new revolution in sleep diagnostics. Bird Healthcare's device is FDA-approved and clinically validated against traditional level 2 Medicare-rebated home sleep testing.

Learn more on **page six**.

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Beyond closing the gap: collection

THE CSIRO has published a collection of papers relating to health experiences and challenges encountered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples, calling for a long-term political commitment to build a healthcare system that is truly equitable.

See the collection [HERE](#).

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Pharmacists boost AF treatment uptake

A PHARMACIST-PHYSICIAN initiative aimed at patients with atrial fibrillation (AF) has boosted blood thinner uptake among patients deemed high risk for stroke in regional Victoria.

The rapid access atrial fibrillation (RAAF) clinic situated at Grampians Health Ballarat operated between Apr 2022 and Nov 2023.

The model involved patients receiving an initial consult with a specialist cardiology pharmacist via telehealth, followed by a face-to-face or telehealth consultation with a general medicine physician with experience working in stroke clinics.

Written information on AF and relevant medications was emailed or posted to patients, based on their preference.

During the study period, waiting times for appointments reduced from a median of 224 days to 14 days; the proportion of patients who received blood-thinning medications for stroke prevention increased from 88% (pre-clinic) to 97% (post-clinic); and further therapy optimisation occurred in 35% of patients overall.

The research team, led by Adam Livori, a Grampians Health clinical pharmacist and PhD candidate, also

found the RAAF clinic improved guideline concordant care and had high levels of patient satisfaction.

Livori said AF is increasingly a major cause of hospital admissions globally, and people in regional areas of Australia with less access to specialist care had lower uptake of timely treatment.

"Timely access to care is particularly important in atrial fibrillation, given that longer periods without blood-thinning medications lead to a higher cumulative risk of stroke and therefore a higher likelihood of life-limiting symptoms," Livori said.

"However, Australian data has shown low uptake of timely interventions, with people in regional areas having a greater risk of low uptake compared to people in metropolitan areas.

"There is evidence that RAAF clinics internationally and within Australia via a cardiologist-led model can lead to reduced hospitalisation and death via early investigation and treatment, but many of the previous studies were conducted in major cities where there is greater access to cardiologists than in regional areas.

Livori said this needs to change.

"Our findings highlight how regional health centres can utilise the existing skillsets of onsite pharmacists and physicians to enhance and accelerate access to critical patient interventions and treatment programs."

A health economic analysis of the RAAF clinic will explore how the service impacts stroke risk with consideration of service costs and future implementation.

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

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Dispensary Corner

MCDONALD'S is certainly not something a doctor or pharmacist would recommend as part of a healthy diet.

But one man in the US state of Wisconsin is defying the typically poor health content of fast food, sitting down last week to consume his 35,000th McDonald's Big Mac.

Don Gorske not only set but has now officially extended his existing Guinness World Record of 'Most Big Macs eaten in a lifetime', which was initially recorded in 1999, improved in 2022 and now stands at 35,000.

You might be surprised Gorske has made it this far, for reasons beyond the obvious health hit.

Today, he averages two Big Macs per day or 14 weekly but back in 1972 when he started, he was devouring nine of the burgers per day.

To maintain some sort of health, Gorske walks nearly 10km per day to control his blood sugar and cholesterol.

Gorske has been so committed to his record attempt since then that he has kept every container and receipt from every one of those 35,000 Big Macs.

To mark his death-defying achievement, McDonald's Fond Du Lac in Wisconsin hosted a party as Gorske finished the milestone burger, with local media and McDonald's "enthusiasts" in attendance.

But Gorske says he has no plans to slow down on his love of the two all-beef patties, special sauce, lettuce, cheese, pickles, onions and the sesame-seed bun, with more to come.

Heat impact on heart health



HOT weather is responsible for 7.3% of the heart disease burden in Australia, according to a study published in the *European Heart Journal* today, and most of that impact is fatal.

The study, conducted by researchers from the University of Adelaide, found that during the 15-year period from 2003 to 2018, there were more than 48,000 years of life lost each year to cardiovascular disease attributable to high temperatures.

With the current trend of greenhouse gas emissions, that impact is set to double by 2050, and potentially triple.

South Australia currently has had the highest burden, while the Northern Territory has the lowest, but under projected increases due to climate change, the NT faces the most significant rise.

The research was led by Peng Bi, Professor of Public Health and Environmental Medicine, who explained: "When the weather is hot, our hearts have to work harder to help us cool down.

"This added pressure can be dangerous, especially for people with cardiovascular disease."

"Many of us have experienced how a warming climate can make us feel unwell, particularly during

longer periods of extreme heat," he continued.

"However, it's still not clear exactly how many people are living with serious heart disease or dying early because of higher temperatures, and we need to understand how this burden will increase in the future."

The research has implications beyond Australia, and while the specific risks may vary depending on local climates, demographics and levels of adaptation, it is likely to be relevant to people in many parts of the world.

"Our research shows that as climate change brings more frequent and intense heat, the risks associated with higher temperatures are likely to increase, especially for vulnerable groups," said Professor Bi.

"It highlights the importance of taking precautions during hot weather, such as staying hydrated, finding cool environments and seeking medical help when needed.

"Our findings also call for urgent investment in adaptation and mitigation strategies, including urban cooling plans, public health campaigns and improved emergency responses during hot weather," he concluded.

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

FDA acts on benzoyl peroxide

THE US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently conducted independent testing of 95 acne treatment products containing benzoyl peroxide, when third-party test results raised concerns about elevated benzene levels.

Six of the products were found to have elevated levels, leading to voluntary recalls, including La Roche-Posay Effaclar Duo, Proactiv and Walgreens products.

Chronic exposure to benzene has been associated with an increased risk of leukemia and other blood disorders, and the FDA requires manufacturers to evaluate and test for potential contaminants, including benzene, to ensure the safety and quality of their products.

The agency has reassured the public that even with daily use of these products over an extended period, the risk of developing cancer from the detected benzene levels remains low.

The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has previously issued recalls of certain sunscreen products that were contaminated by benzene in 2021 and 2022.

It has been approached for comment.



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