

## Today's issue of PD

**Pharmacy Daily** today features four pages of industry news, plus a full page from **Gateway Training**.

## Focus on staff

**PHARMACY** owners can enhance workforce retention, engagement and career progression by using Gateway Training Academy.

Find out more information on the **back page**.

## HIC26 earlybird

**THE** Australasian Institute of Digital Health (AIDH) has opened the first-ever super earlybird registration for its upcoming Health Innovation Community (HIC26) conference.

Taking place at the ICC Sydney from 03-04 Aug, the program will feature five concurrent sessions offering insights on key issues, including person-centred care; safety and quality in healthcare; strong governance and leadership; and a sustainable health system.

The conference theme, keynote speaker, and plenary program for HIC26 will be announced shortly.

Available exclusively to the AIDH community, the limited-time rate offers savings of up to \$270, and is available until 28 Feb at 11.59pm AEST.

Register for HIC26 **HERE**.

# Sandoz expands biosimilar access

**SANDOZ** has announced the listing of the first aflibercept biosimilar, AFQLIR, on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS), improving access to ophthalmology treatments for Australians living with multiple neovascular-related conditions.

The medication offers an additional treatment option for the 160,000 people around the country who are affected by neovascular (wet) age-related macular degeneration (nAMD), which is the leading cause of vision loss in older Australians.

AFQLIR (aflibercept) provides clinicians with a biosimilar alternative to the reference medicine EYLEA (aflibercept), supporting timely and affordable access for eligible patients.

"Biosimilar medicines are an essential part of a sustainable healthcare system, and one of our focuses has been on understanding the real-world barriers that prevent Australians from accessing them," said Clint Holland (**pictured**),




general manager Sandoz Australia and New Zealand.

"Through ongoing engagement with patients, clinicians and policymakers, we're committed to supporting a system where biosimilar medicines are well understood, trusted and easily accessible for all Australians."

As part of the company's commitment to improve affordability, reliability and equity in access for Australians who rely on biologic and biosimilar medicines, Sandoz has partnered with Patients Australia to launch

a national survey examining the lived experiences and barriers faced by individuals and their families navigating treatment pathways, with the results to be released later this year.

Currently, biosimilar adoption in Australia remains comparatively low, with the country's uptake sitting at 39% for anti-TNF biosimilar medicines compared with an average of 67% across other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, including the US and Japan. *JM*

## More confirmed measles cases in Victoria

**THREE** new cases of measles have been reported in Victoria this week, bringing the total number of confirmed cases in the state in Jan 2026 to five.

All cases have been linked to overseas travel in South-East and South Asia.

Active public exposures sites in Victoria for recent cases are listed **HERE**, with those who have attended a listed exposure

site during the specified dates and times advised to monitor for symptoms for up to 18 days after the exposure and follow the recommendations provided by the Vic Department of Health.

There is an ongoing risk of measles importation in travellers returning from overseas and interstate, with those who are not vaccinated against the disease at increased risk.

## PBS site updated

**THE** Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) has announced an update to its website, including formulary allocations, first new brand price reductions, and section 19A medicines subsidised by the PBS.

New, amended and deleted items can be found on the 'summary of changes' page - **CLICK HERE**.

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\*Primary insomnia is insomnia without an underlying medical cause or any other clear cause.



## World-first cancer research centre

**THE** Cancer Council NSW and the University of NSW (UNSW) have entered into a \$40 million, 10-year partnership to launch a cancer survivorship centre this Thu.

The Australian Research Centre for Cancer Survivorship (ARCCS) will be the first research facility in the world dedicated solely to understanding and improving life after cancer.

Led by international cancer expert Professor Bogda Koczwara, the centre will advance research to improve outcomes for survivors - informing practice, services and policy across Australia and helping people to thrive, irrespective of stage or type of cancer.

The centre will work with consumers, primary care and industry to design, test and implement new models of survivorship support, with a focus on addressing inequities in regional and rural communities.

"Through our existing work to support those living with and



beyond a cancer diagnosis, we have identified a distinct need for research tailored to people navigating this 'new normal', to enhance quality of life," said Cancer Council NSW chief executive officer Professor Sarah Hosking.

"The launch of the Australian Research Centre for Cancer Survivorship, under the leadership of Professor Bogda Koczwara, is a vital step for Cancer Council NSW as we work to ensure better support, better care and ultimately better quality of life for cancer survivors, through an evidence-based approach and world-class researchers," Hosking said.

Koczwara added: "This centre is for those affected by cancer and it is here because we understand that cancer survivorship comes at a price."

"It can lead to physical, psychological, emotional and financial problems.

"We must create a world where each and every cancer survivor is supported through the delivery of personalised care," she added.

Australia has become a global leader in cancer survival, with more than 1.6 million Australians living with and beyond cancer.

ARCCS's launch coincides with World Cancer Day tomorrow. *JM*

### Oz leads the way

**A TREATMENT** has been developed in Australia for leprosy type 2 reaction, a complication in which leprosy sufferers experience fatigue, fever and skin lesions.

The first trials for the treatment will occur for patients in Philippines, Indonesia, Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Madagascar and the US.

The drug itself is being developed by Melbourne-based not-for-profit pharmaceutical company Medicines Development for Global Health (MDGH).

"This study advances a new therapeutic approach which has the potential to reduce suffering and deliver lasting improvements in patients' quality of life," said Dr Jane Fisher, director of MDGH's clinical operations.

Current treatments of leprosy type 2 reaction are known to have severe side effects.

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## SPECIAL REPORT OUT NOW

*A year in review:  
2025's biggest news*

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### New game-changer solution for brain cancer

**THE** University of Queensland has unveiled a new technology designed to improve the survival rate for brain cancer, and change how a range of neurological conditions are treated.

Dr Richard Lobb and Dr Zhen Zhang from UQ's Australian Institute for Bioengineering and Nanotechnology have developed a new diagnostic device that can "open a window to the brain", revealing how deadly brain tumours respond to treatment from a simple blood test.

Currently, there is no way to determine if therapies are working for Glioblastoma - the most common form of brain cancer in Australia - without performing an invasive biopsy or waiting until the late stage of the disease to perform an MRI.

"There has been very little success so far in clinical trials for new and experimental glioblastoma treatments," Dr Lobb said.



"That's partly because there is no way to tell if a therapy is working precisely as it should at that moment without drilling into someone's head."

The Phenotype Analyzer Chip works by examining small samples of blood and capturing messenger cells known as extracellular vesicles that originate from glioblastoma tumour tissue.

It has been validated in more than 40 brain cancer patients and will soon undergo clinical trials.

UQ researchers said the device could also be tweaked to unlock therapies for neurological disorders such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, motor neurone disease (MND), and depression.

### GHB taking a bigger toll

**GHB-RELATED** deaths have increased 10-fold since 2013, while the number of hospitalisations more than tripled, according to an Australian-first study from the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC) at UNSW Sydney.

Despite rates of GHB use being fairly low compared to other illicit drugs such as MDMA, cocaine and methamphetamine, the proportion of Australians reportedly using the sedative drug is rising.

At low doses, GHB can cause euphoria, increased libido and lowered inhibitions, while at higher doses it acts as a depressant, slowing down breathing and heart rate, and potentially leading to loss of consciousness.

In a study published in *Addiction*, the researchers have highlighted the need for improved prevention, treatment, and harm reduction strategies for GHB, as well as better public health messaging.

"What we're seeing is a clear and accelerating trend - harms



from both GHB and its precursors 1,4-butanediol (1,4-BD) and gamma-butyrolactone (GBL) are rising rapidly," said Associate Professor Amy Peacock, who is deputy director of NDARC and senior author of the study.

"These numbers are a cause for alarm; without targeted action, the situation will only worsen, and more people will be harmed."

Harm reduction messages should focus on the dangers of taking multiple doses and mixing GHB with other substances, such as alcohol, ketamine and other depressants, A/Prof Peacock said, noting the drug's relatively low overdose threshold and heightened risk of dependence. *JM*

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## Dispensary Corner

**WHO** knew that the humble bowl of porridge could bring so many health benefits?

Researchers at the University of Bonn in Germany have revealed that eating it exclusively for two days can bring great health benefits that last six weeks afterwards.

Published in the journal *Nature Communications*, the research featured a trial group of participants who had a metabolic syndrome associated with diabetes.

After being on a calorie-reduced diet of oatmeal for two days, their cholesterol levels improved significantly.

It was also revealed that eating oats for two days straight was more beneficial than eating 80 grams a day for six weeks without any other restrictions.

"Today, effective medications are available to treat patients with diabetes," explains Marie-Christine Simon from the Institute of Nutritional and Food Science Bonn.

"As a result, this method [oats] has been almost completely overlooked in recent decades."

## Walk for mental health



**THE** Pedestrian Council of Australia is partnering with the Black Dog Institute this year to lead its annual Walk to Work Day campaign, which has now moved to Fri 27 Mar.

"Given the benefits a simple walk can have on mental health issues like anxiety, depression and stress - we hope this simple reminder will go a long way in getting Australia's working population to walk more, not just on Walk to Work Day, but every day," Pedestrian Council of Australia CEO Harold Scruby said.

This year, workplaces are being encouraged to get involved and walk together through lunchtime walks, walking meetings or team

step challenges, in addition to fundraising together to support better health outcomes nationwide.

"Walking supports healthier, more productive workplaces while improving physical and mental wellbeing, reducing car dependence, easing congestion and benefiting the environment," Scruby said.

"It's a simple action with wide-ranging benefits for individuals, employers and the broader community," he added.

Research shows that regular walking can reduce stress, improve focus and connection at work.

Pharmacies can learn how to get involved **HERE**. JHM

## Hair offers insights

**HAIR** cortisol levels may be able to provide insight into the impact of stress on children with autism, according to a new study from Neuroscience Research Australia (NeuRA) and UNSW Sydney.

The research explored the connection between chronic stress, co-occurring conditions, sleep and autistic features, and biological samples from the Autism CRC Australian Autism Biobank.

During stressful situations, cortisol is incorporated into the hair from the blood, as well as via sweat and sebum over weeks or months.

"We found that lower hair cortisol concentration was associated with greater autism severity, particularly internalised distress, behavioural difficulties, and co-occurring ADHD," explained Dr Adam Walker from NeuRA's Laboratory of ImmunoPsychiatry.

There were also links discovered between higher hair cortisol concentration and sleep anxiety, night wakings, lower family income and younger children.

Check out the latest in

## Beauty & Wellness

Every Thursday in *Pharmacy Daily*



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