

Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features two pages of news.

TGA ticked by WHO

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has been designated as an 'Authority' by the World Health Organization, strengthening the Australian body's access to medicines.

WHO Listed Authority (WLA) organisations are identified as national regulatory bodies that demonstrate advanced regulatory capability.

The TGA joins a select group of high-performing regulators, including the European Medicines Agency and Health Canada who are globally acknowledged for meeting international benchmarks.

"The WLA designation is a significant milestone for Australia, clearly demonstrating our commitment to regulatory excellence and public health," said Anthony Lawler, head of the TGA.

"It is a testament to the dedication and expertise of our organisation and people."

Lawler highlighted the importance of this designation in an era of widespread misinformation and disinformation circulating the medicinal community.

"This important recognition from the WHO reinforces that the TGA's decisions are evidence-based.

"Australians can trust in using the medicines and vaccines approved by the TGA.

"WLA regulators also play a critical role in improving global health by enabling others to rely on and have trust in the decisions we make."

The designation builds on the TGA's legacy as a previously recognised Stringent Regulatory Authority, which has been replaced by the WLA.

This new initiative was introduced in 2022, with many national bodies rolling over.

AdPha warns of health system growth disconnect

ADVANCED Pharmacy Australia (AdPha) has welcomed news of this year's record intake of graduate doctors into the Queensland health system, but warned that without comparable investment in hospital pharmacy interns, the state risks undermining medicines safety and the long-term sustainability of its health system.

The Queensland Government announced yesterday that more than 930 new first year graduate doctors will start their training in hospitals across the state this year, bringing the state closer to delivering the 46,000 additional health staff needed by 2032 to meet a growing demand for health services.

However, AdPha President Associate Professor Tom Simpson highlighted the disconnect between health system growth and pharmacy workforce investment, saying it placed patients at risk.

"Medicines are the most common intervention in healthcare, yet pharmacy resourcing is not keeping pace with growing demand," Assoc Prof Simpson said.

"You can build more beds and recruit more doctors, but without enough hospital pharmacists

coming through the pipeline, patients will face delays, increased risk of medication errors, and fragmented care."

AdPha's *State of Pharmacy: Workforce Insights 2025* report showed that Queensland's hospital pharmacy workforce is already under significant pressure, with 12.8% of hospitals reporting pharmacy intern vacancies, alongside widespread pharmacist and technician shortages.

In addition, the number of pharmacy interns has declined over the past decade and is now sitting at around 35 interns.

Meanwhile, Queensland Health's Pharmacy Workforce Plan 2022 - 2032 acknowledged that increasing intern positions is a critical activity and an indicator of success.

"Hospital pharmacy interns are not optional extras - they are essential to safe, high-quality care," Assoc Prof Simpson said.

"They support multidisciplinary teams, improve patient outcomes, and ensure medicines expertise is embedded across the entire health system.

"Their contribution is particularly critical in regional and rural



hospitals, where workforce shortages are often most acute."

AdPha has called for a \$219 million investment over four years, including funding for 200 hospital pharmacy intern positions annually from 2026 to 2029, progression into two-year Resident Training Programs from 2027, and the recruitment of clinical educators to ensure high-quality supervision and long-term workforce sustainability.

"If Queensland is serious about strengthening its health system, investment in pharmacy interns must match its ambition for medical workforce growth," Assoc Prof Simpson said.

"Every patient deserves timely, safe access to medicines - and that starts with building and sustaining the hospital pharmacy workforce of the future," he concluded. KB

Wegovy gets the nod, Shingrix age lowering knocked back

IN THE outcomes of its November meeting released at the end of last year, the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC) recommended an authority-required PBS listing for Wegovy (semaglutide, Novo Nordisk) for adults who have established cardiovascular disease with obesity (*PD Breaking News* 19 Dec 2025).

Also recommended was the National Immunisation Program (NIP) listing for the 21-valent pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (21vPCV, Capvaxive) for all adults with an at-risk condition, Indigenous adults aged 25 and over, and other adults aged 65 up.

This replaces the current schedule of the 13-valent pneumococcal conjugate vaccine with 23-valent booster doses,

and the age threshold for non-Indigenous adults is reduced from 70 years to 65.

Needlephobics will welcome the listing of UCB's Bimzelx (bimekizumab) 320mg/2mL prefilled pen for the treatment of severe chronic plaque psoriasis, providing the dose in a single injection instead of two 160mg/2mL injections.

People with chronic stable plaque type psoriasis vulgaris can benefit from the listing of a new form of calcipotriol with betamethasone (Actobet, Actor Pharmaceuticals) while those with chronic hand eczema may be eligible for Leo Pharma's delgocitinib cream (Anzupgo).

Celltrion had three biosimilars recommended - denosumab, tocilizumab and aflibercept - under

the same conditions as their respective originator biologics.

In women's health, two new menopause therapies were recommended - Theramex's Bijuva (estradiol with progesterone tablets) and Astellas Pharma's Veezo (fezolinetant tablets) - as well as Femvi (Sun Pharma), a new form of cetrorelix for use in assisted reproductive technology (ART).

On the other hand, Lawley Pharmaceuticals' AndroFeme 1 testosterone cream for women with hypoactive sexual desire dysfunction missed out.

Meanwhile, GSK's request to get the NIP listing of Shingrix age lowered from 65 to 60 was knocked back due to concerns around cost effectiveness.

Find the full outcomes [HERE](#).

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Dispensary Corner

IT SEEMS that sitting on the toilet scrolling through social media may be bad for your health - and not necessarily for the reason you might think.

Beyond being hygienically questionable, researchers have also linked toilet phone use with haemorrhoids, or piles, attributed to spending more time sitting on the toilet in an anatomically non-ideal position.

While anecdotal evidence has previously linked smartphone use on the toilet with increased risk of haemorrhoids, few studies have actually investigated this.

So a US team conducted research on 125 adults undergoing colonoscopy, surveying them about their lifestyle and toilet habits and having endoscopists check them out for piles.

Among all participants, 66% reported using smartphones on the toilet, and after statistically accounting for other potential risk factors - such as exercise habits, age and fibre intake - the researchers found that phone users had a 46% higher risk of haemorrhoids than non-users.

Meanwhile, 37% of phone users spent more than five minutes at a time on the toilet, compared to 7% of non-users.

"This study bolsters advice to people in general to leave the smartphones outside the bathroom and to try to spend no more than a few minutes to have a bowel movement," the study's senior author Trisha Pasricha concluded.

Weight loss jabs' downsides downplayed

THE enthusiastic uptake of injectable medications for weight loss, including semaglutide, liraglutide and tirzepatide, has raised concerns that some of the side effects - particularly regarding mental health - are being overlooked.

With the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC) recommending the PBS listing of Wegovy (semaglutide, Novo Nordisk) for weight loss (**PD page one**), their use is expected to become more widespread and potentially reach a more diverse demographic.

Writing recently in *Australian Prescriber*, Doctors Natasha Yates and Terri-Lynne South highlighted some of the unintended mental health effects that health professionals should look out for.

By reducing the enjoyment of food, the drugs may lead to changes in a patient's relationship with food and the pleasure eating can provide, and researchers are currently looking into the psychosocial effects this may have on mental health - including exacerbating conditions like depression, suicidal ideation and suicidal action.

A related issue is that it complicates assessment and investigation of appetite loss, and serious illnesses such as infection, cancer or an eating disorder could be missed.

Doctors Yates and South also noted that injectables may be misused by people who do not have, or no longer have, obesity, particularly those with eating disorders.

"Appetite suppression induced by these drugs may lead to self-starving or poor nutritional intake," they wrote.

"The psychological and social

pressure to be thin is a powerful driver for some people, particularly in a society that frequently stigmatises obesity."

They cautioned that prescribers need to manage requests for weight-loss drugs from people who do not have obesity in a way that addresses their reasons for requesting them.

"Asking 'What has been your highest weight?' may give helpful insight into patients' histories and mindsets," they suggested.

A further area of concern is the potential mental health impact for those who do not respond to the drugs, with no published research around this, and also what happens after stopping the medication, when weight regain is the norm.

"Obesity is a chronic, multifactorial condition and use of injectable weight-management drugs must be integrated into holistic, multidisciplinary care that prioritises overall health improvements for the individual," they concluded.

MEANWHILE, leading breast surgeon Associate Professor Sanjay Warriar has reported that demand for male breast reduction surgery has risen sharply over the past two years, thanks to rapid weight loss



from Ozempic and other GLP-1 medications leaving behind loose skin and residual glandular tissue that cannot be fixed with diet or exercise alone.

"This is not a vanity issue," Associate Professor Warriar said.

"Gynecomastia can have a real impact on body image, mental health and quality of life.

"Many men tell me they have lived with embarrassment or discomfort for years before they finally seek help."

He explained the psychological burden can be particularly heavy for men who have recently improved their health and feel the last remaining barrier to confidence is their chest.

Men should seek an assessment from a qualified specialist to determine the cause and appropriate treatment, he concluded. **KB**

TGA \$1 million Bendigo vapes bust

AN investigation into the suspected illegal supply and manufacture of vaping substances by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) led to a major operation targeting illicit vaping products in Bendigo.

With assistance from Victoria Police, the TGA seized over 15,000 disposable vaping

devices, vaping accessories and vaping substances with an estimated street value of more than \$1 million from a retail outlet and the home of the company directors.

A warning letter was issued by the TGA earlier in 2025, and the warrant executed after further suspected non-compliance.