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## Local At Heart

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\* Source: IQVIA Banner Movement - 01 Oct 25 to Dec 25 nett gain in pharmacies joining group.

# Local at heart<sup>®</sup>

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## Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features three pages of industry news, plus a front cover page from healthSAVE.

## Local at heart

HEALTHSAVE pharmacies put your business at the heart of everything they do.

See the cover page for more on joining Australia's fastest growing pharmacy network.

## Fluad approved for people 50+

CSL Seqirus' adjuvanted influenza vaccine Fluad is now approved in Australia for active immunisation against flu in people aged 50 and over.

Registered and funded since 2018 for adults aged 65 and over on the NIP, data in adults aged 50-64 years has shown higher antibody titres compared with non-adjuvanted vaccines, particularly against vaccine A-strains, for up to nine months post-vaccination.

"Enhanced influenza vaccines, including Fluad, are preferentially recommended by ATAGI over standard-dose vaccines for those aged 65 and over," said Dr Jules Bayliss, vaccines medical director for CSL Seqirus.

"The 50+ registration for Fluad means that more people will be able to access this vaccine if they choose."

## Women's health pilot gets mixed reactions

A NATIONAL women's health pilot designed to improve access to hormonal contraception and treatment for uncomplicated urinary tract infections (UTIs) was announced by the Federal Health Minister Mark Butler at APP2026.

From Jan 2027, an estimated 250,000 women concession card holders between the ages of 18-55 years will be eligible to access pharmacy-prescribed contraceptives, in accordance with state regulations, and uncomplicated UTI treatments, at the concession rate of \$7.70.

The reforms are being delivered under the Australian Government's \$792.2 million women's health package announced last year.

"With most states now aligned and with the impending advice on a national standard for prescribing contraceptives, we want to ensure that access is affordable and equitable for women," Minister Butler said.

"Making treatment for uncomplicated UTIs easier and more affordable to access will make a real difference for women who need fast treatment without unnecessary cost or delay."

The Pharmacy Guild of Australia has welcomed the announcement, saying it will expand safe, affordable access to essential care for Australian women.

The Guild reported that since the introduction of pharmacy-based UTI treatment, more than 145,000 women have received care from almost 4,000 participating pharmacies across metropolitan, regional and remote communities.

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Monthly service volumes remain high, which the Guild says points to the importance of this service to patients.

"Empowering trained pharmacists to deliver more women's health services means women can access the help they need sooner - and GPs can focus on more complex care," Guild national president Professor Twomey said.

"It's a win for patients and a win for the health system."

The Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) has also welcomed the announcement, and said it would work with government to continue removing barriers to women's health services, as well as advocating for national consistency in pharmacist prescribing.

"We currently have eight different protocols for pharmacist prescribing for uncomplicated UTIs in place across the country, as well as several different protocols for prescribing of contraception," said PSA national president Professor Mark Naunton.

"This pilot will provide an opportunity to remove this duplication and inefficiency through adopting a nationwide approach."

## Doctors in doubt

Doctors groups have criticised the move, accusing the government of "prioritising political donations over safety".

The Royal Australian College of GPs said the Federal Government has ignored expert advice from the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) by allowing pharmacists to



prescribe the oral contraceptive pill, and the "lobbyist-led decision represents a serious failure of health policy".

"Women's health is not a pilot project," said RACGP vice president Dr Ramya Raman.

"This decision puts politics ahead of patient safety and sends a troubling message to Australian women that expert medical advice can be ignored," she said.

The Australian Medical Association said pharmacy prescribing was already fracturing care and putting patients at risk and has called for reassurances from Minister Butler that the pilot will be appropriately assessed before the services are rolled out permanently.

"What we need is robust evaluation to ensure this program and others like it are safe, cost effective and don't fragment care," said AMA president Dr Danielle McMullen.

"We also need the right kind of reporting mechanisms for adverse events - not just from the pharmacists but from specialists and GPs who treat patients who have had adverse events from treatment within pharmacies." KB

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2025's biggest news*

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## Fighting medicines misinformation

**MEDSAWARE** Deprescribing Action Week kicks off today, with this year's theme focusing on health misinformation, and Advanced Pharmacy Australia (AdPha) is asking: are you MedsAware or misinformed?

Deprescribing Action Week, which runs from 16-20 Mar, is now in its fourth year, and aims to promote conversations between consumers, carers and healthcare providers around the dangers of polypharmacy and the benefits of deprescribing, highlighting the importance of trusted advice.

For this year's theme, AdPha points out that in an environment where patients are exposed to conflicting, inaccurate or misleading information about medicines, health professionals play a vital role in ensuring decisions about medication use are informed, evidence-based and person-centred.

By starting a conversation

with patients around health information they have come across online, pharmacists can take a proactive role in helping patients navigate this complex information environment in support of safe deprescribing.

"Today, in an era where health information - and misinformation - is more accessible than ever, pharmacists play a vital role in helping people navigate conflicting advice and make evidence-based decisions about their medicines," said AdPha president Associate Professor Tom Simpson.

"MedsAware Deprescribing Action Week empowers Australians - along with their carers, families and healthcare teams - to ensure conversations about medicines and treatment decisions are always guided by trusted clinical advice."

Dr Emily Reeve, chair of the Australian Deprescribing Network (ADeN), the founding partner of MedsAware Deprescribing Action



Week, said the campaign highlights the importance of evidence-based advice when it comes to medicines.

"It's encouraging to see people taking an active interest in their medicines and their health.

"There are some excellent online resources, but with so much information available, it can be hard to know what's trustworthy.

"That's where qualified health professionals make all the difference - helping people navigate the noise and together, make decisions that are safe, effective and right for them," Dr Reeve said.

For examples of conversation starters, visit AdPha's MedsAware hub [HERE](#). *KB*

## Sandoz teams with Camp Quality

**SANDOZ** Australia has announced a new national partnership with Camp Quality, a leading Australian children's cancer charity that provides free cancer education, hospital-based support and community programs for families facing cancer.

The world's first Kind Accredited company (*PD* 12 Mar 2025), Sandoz AUNZ is committed to embedding kindness in every aspect of its work, including interactions with patients and communities.

As such, the partnership is about more than just financial support, and represents the company's commitment to creating stronger communities.

"At Sandoz, expanding access to information, support and equitable care is core to improving health outcomes, but it's also personal," said Clint Holland, GM of Sandoz Australia & New Zealand.

"Our team and I feel strongly connected to Camp Quality's mission because it brings hope and positivity to families facing incredibly tough circumstances.

"Their programs don't just educate, they give kids moments of joy, help parents feel less alone, and strengthen communities around them.

"We are proud to stand alongside Camp Quality and contribute to work that makes such a profound difference."

## Ruston highlights challenges facing small businesses

**IN HER** keynote address to delegates at APP2026, shadow health minister Anne Ruston highlighted the importance of pharmacists to the health system and community more broadly, and congratulated pharmacists for their resilience.

Senator Ruston placed particular emphasis on the current challenges pharmacists face as small businesses.

"I know right now that the role of being in small business is getting

tougher and tougher and tougher.

"Across the country, you, like everybody else, are grappling with rising costs, work force shortages, and increasing red tape.

"You're managing increasing rental rates, increasing wages, insurance - and every single one of your inputs is going up at the moment," she stated.

"I acknowledge your resilience in the face of all these challenges."

Senator Ruston highlighted that a strong health system relies on

a strong economy, but a strong health system strengthens the economy.

"So that's why it's so important that we get small business right.

"One of the things that defines pharmacy to me is that it doesn't matter how much of a challenge gets put before you, you always seem to rise to it.

"Keep leading, keep innovating, keep advocating, because Australia and Australia's health systems are relying on you."



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### Dispensary Corner

**DISTURBING** dreams could serve as an early indication that illness is about to strike, psychologists believe.

The theory suggests that 'prodromal dreams', which are strange and unusually vivid, may happen when the brain detects subtle biological changes in the body during the beginning stages of sickness.

Professor Patrick McNamara, a psychologist specialising in sleep at Boston University School of Medicine, explored the topic in a recent theory paper.

"The brain is constantly monitoring signals from the body's internal organs to keep our physiological systems in balance," he explained.

"These signals are integrated in paralimbic regions such as the anterior insula, which track the body's internal state.

"During REM sleep the brain effectively compresses and synthesises this information, producing a kind of snapshot of what's happening inside the body," Prof McNamara said.

## In-person visits drive sales

THE 2026 *Community Pharmacy Industry Insights Report* released by the Pharmacy Guild of Australia, in partnership with Westpac, shows that Australia's community pharmacies continue to be the most accessible frontline primary healthcare provider.

As cost-of-living pressure, long waits for care and rising demand drive more patients to seek timely help closer to home, data suggests Australians still want in-person, expert healthcare support, particularly for unexpected or everyday health conditions where the wait for a GP appointment may be too long.

Among the findings were that Australians spent more than \$12.5 billion in pharmacies in 2025, accounting for around one quarter of all out-of-pocket healthcare spending.

The vast majority of spending took place in-store, with online sales accounting for only 11.6% of total pharmacy spend and transaction value falling by 10% - a trend defying typical retail patterns.

Prescriptions accounted for around two-thirds (66.5%) of the



spend, with the remaining third coming from pharmacy professional services and programs, pharmacy and pharmacist-only medicines, and over-the-counter products.

The report also highlighted the vital role of pharmacies in rural and regional health, and in 2025 there were 376 Australian localities where community pharmacy was the only frontline health service.

The average spend per transaction in rural and regional pharmacies was \$49.75 in 2024, up from \$46.11 the previous year, and growth in spend was greater than for metro area pharmacies.

Pharmacy Guild national president, Professor Trent Twomey, said the findings confirmed a significant shift in the way Australians access healthcare.

"Community pharmacy is Australia's most accessible and trusted frontline primary healthcare destination," Professor Twomey said.

"We know 90% of Australians support the expansion of in-pharmacy care and patients are voting with their feet.

"They want timely care from highly trained health professionals they trust - that's exactly what community pharmacists provide every day across the country," Professor Twomey concluded.

The full report is available [HERE](#).



### Weekly Comment

Welcome to *Pharmacy Daily's* weekly comment feature. This week's contributor is **Meg Brideson, Managing Director at Willach Australia.**



### Innovation, information, and connection

CONFERENCE season is officially here.

Across brands such as TerryWhite Chemmart, IPA and Capital Chemist, the focus is on delivering an expanded scope of practice, remaining true to each brand's purpose while supporting the goals of owners and their businesses.

APP continues to be the Guild's jewel in the crown, bringing the profession together, offering a chance to step away from day-to-day operations, creating space for professional and personal development, recognition through awards, and meaningful networking with peers and suppliers.

APP2026 had a strong message: current opportunities signal an exciting and transformative time for the pharmacy industry.

Behind success is the power of intentional change, recognising that progress stems from clear vision, purposeful goals and consistent effort. Importantly, no one is on this journey alone with abundant resources and a 'village' to support you.

Pharmacies are well-positioned to play an even greater role in patient health; technology is a key enabler.

[CLICK HERE](#) for more.

## DID YOU KNOW?

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