

Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features four pages of the latest industry news.

One million calls to 1800MEDICARE

MORE than one million Australians have accessed free health advice through the Australian Government's 1800MEDICARE telehealth and digital service, Minister for Health Mark Butler has announced.

The 24/7 service connects callers with a registered nurse, who provides expert advice and connects people to the right care, including GP telehealth services.

It has diverted over 170,000 people from emergency departments or from calling triple zero, taking pressure off hospital services.

One in five callers were from rural or remote areas in Australia, and one in three people used the service on weekends or public holidays.

The Australian Government has invested more than \$200 million in 1800MEDICARE as part of its commitment to expanding access to urgent care and after-hours care to strengthen Medicare.

"No matter the time of day or location, Australians can quickly get the expert advice they need to manage their health concerns," Butler concluded.

Osteoporosis program success

PHARMACISTS are being encouraged to register their community pharmacy to participate in a first-of-its-kind Australia-wide osteoporosis health literacy initiative, a collaboration between Healthy Bones Australia, the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA), Fred IT Group and Healthily.

The call comes in the wake of World Osteoporosis Day, which was marked yesterday, with this year's theme 'Strengthen your bones to protect bone health'.

Free and available to pharmacies that use Fred Dispense Plus software, the Osteoporosis Medication Health Literacy Program is designed to improve awareness about the condition and the role of treatment, support long-term medication adherence to reduce preventable fractures and hospitalisations.

The program delivers digital resources of osteoporosis information, animations, educational videos by pharmacists, and quizzes, and is available in five community languages.

Since its launch in May (*PD* 26 May), over 2,700 patients have already received the digital bundle of five tailored educational resource packages delivered over a six-month period via SMS when their osteoporosis medicine is being dispensed.

The aim is to reach 30,000 Australians through around 500 participating pharmacies.

Program project advisory committee pharmacist Ben Wilkins, owner of Eastern Road

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Pharmacy in Turramurra, Sydney said: "Having these tailored educational resources delivered directly to patients via their phone, complements the counselling we already provide in the community pharmacy."

"Results show that patients are very satisfied with the educational content," he added, with feedback from nearly 1,200 patients rating satisfaction at 4.48 out of 5.

The initiative is funded by the Australian Department of Health, Disability and Ageing under the Quality Use of Diagnostics, Therapeutics and Pathology Program.

Pharmacies that use Fred Dispense Plus dispensing software and wish to participate can register their interest [HERE](#).

APP2027 tier 1 pricing closes soon

REGISTER for the Australasian Pharmacy Professional Conference & Trade Exhibition (APP) by 31 Oct and save up to \$250 - learn more [HERE](#).

Bat bite lyssavirus warning for NSW

AN INCREASE in bat bites and scratches across NSW has prompted NSW Health to warn people to avoid touching or handling the animals, which may carry Australian bat lyssavirus, a close relative to the rabies virus.

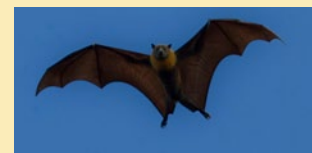
People who have been bitten or scratched by a bat are advised to immediately wash the wound thoroughly for 15 minutes with soap and water and apply an antiseptic with anti-virus action, such as betadine, and allow it to dry.

It is important to then seek immediate advice from a doctor regarding post-exposure treatment.

Rabies and Australian bat lyssavirus are notifiable diseases for both human and animal health authorities.

Pharmacists in some states are permitted to administer vaccinations for rabies and other lyssaviruses as pre-exposure prophylaxis to people at increased risk.

The increased contact with bats is due to food shortages on the east coast, with bats staying in feed trees during the day instead of returning to their larger colonies, according to the NSW Government.



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Getting in early can shape career

NATIONAL Australian Pharmacy Students' Association (NAPSA) president Mia Avram learnt early that putting your hand up can shape an entire career.

In the latest episode of the *Your Pharmacy Career* podcast, Avram shared the story of her journey, from a last-minute decision in high school to study pharmacy, through to her first NAPSA role as publications chair.

She went on to serve as policy and advocacy director and treasurer before becoming national president in Jul last year, where she now leads a national team of more than 70 students representing over 5,000 pharmacy students at universities across Australia.

"I can't imagine having not put my hand up in that first year," Avram told host Krysti-Lee Patterson.

"If I hadn't, life would look very, very different now, and probably not for the best."

As one of the key players in the campaign for pharmacy students to get the Commonwealth Prac Payment, Avram explained that as a young pharmacy student, meeting members of parliament offered her reassurance.

"Once you realise that everyone's a person at the end of the day, it really is a lot easier than people think."

Listen to the podcast [HERE](#).

Sigma flags "clear pathway for growth"

SIGMA Healthcare has presented a positive outlook for FY27 at its annual general meeting today, telling investors it is entering the year with "stronger foundations, a larger operating platform and a clear pathway for growth".

As he thanked the executive team and all Sigma team members for a successful year - its first full year post-merger - chairman Michael Sammells stated: "FY26 has shown what the combined Sigma can achieve."

"Our task now is to build on that progress with focus, discipline and a clear commitment to sustainable value creation."

Sammells revisited the FY26 financial results, where group revenue grew 15.5% to \$10.8 billion, with normalised EBIT up 20.6% to \$1.09 billion (**PD** 27 Aug).

Commenting on the group's interest in the potential acquisition of the UK Boots business earlier this year (**PD** 10 Jun), Sammells highlighted the valuable insights gained into the British market in the process, while stating, "We are pursuing growth, but not growth at any cost."

The group's strategic priorities are to sustain growth in Australia through network expansion, to expand internationally with discipline, and to continue to differentiate its brands and selectively grow its own and exclusive label portfolio, he said.

In addition, the group "will unlock further operating leverage through integration, synergy benefits and the scale of our distribution network."

MD and CEO Vikesh Ramsunder



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focused on the group's operational performance, highlighting that the group now has a global pharmacy network of over 950 stores.

This includes 561 Chemist Warehouse (CWH) stores in Australia, which achieved 16% sales growth for the year.

International sales increased by 23%, with 20 new stores added.

A trading update for the current financial year to 16 Oct showed strong sales momentum for CWH, though Ramsunder noted that discretionary items like ladies fragrances, vitamins and supplements are "experiencing softness" due to cost-of-living pressures.

"Our business model however is very defensive and resilient," he reassured investors.

Strong performance in healthcare and GLP-1 supporting products is key, with the anticipated release of oral formulations expected to further enhance accessibility for patients while increasing network sales growth.

The next few months will see a further 14 CWH stores nationally, 42 Amcal and Discount Drug Stores in Australia and 19 stores around the world.

"We have a clear plan, strong momentum, and significant opportunities still ahead," he said as he wrapped up.

"Our job is to keep executing our strategy, and to turn that execution into sustainable value for shareholders." KB



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Milestone for Springfield City

SPRINGFIELD City Group has celebrated a major construction milestone with the successful slab pour of the Nightingale Specialist Medical Suites, a development set to strengthen Health City Springfield's position as one of Queensland's leading integrated healthcare precincts.

Located directly opposite the Mater Private Hospital Springfield and serving surrounding communities such as Ripley, Yarrabilba and Greater Ipswich, Nightingale is designed to deliver purpose-built specialist medical suites that will bring leading clinicians closer to one of Australia's fastest-growing populations.

Due for completion in the middle of next year, the facilities will also include a large pharmacy and other allied health services.

TWC expands MTick range

AS TERRYWHITE Chemmart moves further into the menopause support space (**PD** 19 Oct), the group has announced it is expanding its range of MTick-certified menopause-friendly products after becoming the first Australian pharmacy network to join the GenM collective earlier this year (**PD** 16 Feb).

The MTick gives consumers a simple way to identify products that have met rigorous criteria for supporting menopause, and the group's MTick product line expansion reflects the increasing number of Australian health and beauty brands achieving the certification.

Leading Australian brands to have recently joined the GenM Collective include Boost Lab, Hey Sister!, Lifespace and Ostelin.

With World Menopause Awareness Month marked in Oct, GenM has launched a wider education campaign: 'Know the Sign. Look for the MTick.'



It aims to close the menopause education gap, giving women the knowledge to recognise the signs of menopause and the confidence to seek support.

"Our partnership with GenM reflects our commitment and dedication to women's health in Australian communities," Michael Beaumont, general manager at TerryWhite Chemmart, said.

He added that as pharmacists are often the first point of contact for people when it comes to their health, there is a valuable opportunity for them to recognise patterns, provide trusted information and connect women with the right level of care. **KB**

DHL automates

DHL Supply Chain Australia has announced the deployment of advanced automation at its pharmaceutical-grade Life Sciences and Healthcare logistics facility in Sydney.

The \$9 million investment in automation and a warehouse upgrade is expected to increase capacity, agility and scalability to support Australia's growing life sciences and healthcare sector.

Catering to the needs of 20 existing customers, the fitout includes 14,700 shelving locations, 14,000 inventory totes serviced by 12 automated storage and retrieval system robots, five goods-to-person pick stations, six dedicated decant and pack stations, and 10 smart dispatch sorting lanes.

The facility also features built-in sustainability measures, including renewable electricity generation through a 1 MWp rooftop solar system.

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Dive into our latest podcast episode featuring **Mia Avram**, final-year Monash University pharmacy student - "From First-Year Volunteer to NAPSA National President".

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Dispensary Corner

TIKTOK is emerging as a potent platform for illegal drug dealers to connect with buyers, and according to a recent University of Bath-led study, the social networking service is doing little to stop them.

The study found TikTok returned 'no violation' on more than nine in 10 reports of accounts which were advertising drugs, failing to act on most of these concerning reports.

A vast majority of TikTok accounts identified by researchers as connecting drug sellers with potential buyers in the United Kingdom remained publicly accessible 14 days after being reported for suspected breaches of the platform's rules, the study said, which was published in the *International Journal of Drug Policy*.

Over a five-month period from Feb to Jul, the team identified 455 TikTok accounts that offered to supply drugs, making references to cocaine, synthetic cannabinoids and others.

More than 95% were found to have made 'no violation' and almost 85% remained online two weeks later.

Findings raise questions about how effectively social media platforms respond to reports of illegal activity, according to the study team, led by professor Chris Pudney.

The research is believed to be the first independent real-time audit of how a major social media platform responds when ordinary users report accounts suspected of facilitating the sale of illegal drugs.

PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT

Suppliers wanting to promote products in this feature should email advertising@pharmacydaily.com.au

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