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Connecting communities to care

The vaping opportunity for pharmacy

PHARMACIES searching for new revenue opportunities in the wake of last week's shock 60-day dispensing decision (**PD** 26 Apr) must expand their product and service offering or face significant viability issues, according to Wilhelm David, CEO of From The Fields Pharmaceutical.

David, whose company is an innovator in medicinal items including medically prescribed Nicotine Vaping Products (NVPs), said already implemented prescription model changes and post-COVID impacts in the UK and NZ had contributed towards many pharmacy closures in both nations.

World Pharmacy Council data indicates there are now 1,100 fewer pharmacies in the UK and 70 fewer in New Zealand, with David noting local estimates of as much as \$900 million per annum in Australian pharmacy revenue reductions.

"One pathway for local pharmacy sustainability would be better, more proactive support and proper adoption of the prescription model for medically prescribed vaping products," he said.

"We believe this will particularly be the case across peri-urban, regional and rural centres, where the new common medicine prescription changes are likely to have the greatest impact on normal retail pharmacy foot traffic



and commercial turnover in these areas," David added.

He noted that Australia continues to have around 2.6 million adult smokers, with GP-prescribed and pharmacy-distributed NVPs legitimately supporting improved smoking cessation practices.

"Too many Australians continue to smoke," he said.

"Vaping, ideally offered through a prescription model, can produce better individual health, as well as improved community health outcomes longer term.

"Medically prescribed vaping products, retailed in volume through pharmacies, would make counter-cyclical commercial sense for community pharmacy as common prescription purchase volumes fall."

David noted that just one monthly lost script for a blood pressure

medication, at a \$10 dispensing cost, could easily be replaced with one smoker purchasing a monthly legal NVP script, with a margin of as much as \$56.

He highlighted the Government's intentions to address the \$1 billion-plus vaping industry in Australia, which is currently being fuelled by a black market.

"We argue for bolder thinking by both the Pharmacy Guild and individual local community pharmacy to capitalise on the \$400 million in estimated retail margin on offer through vaping today in Australia," the Fields Pharmaceutical CEO added.

More than 90% of vape products now consumed in Australia remain unregulated in both their purchase and use, with many young people, in particular, accessing the product.

Meanwhile, smoking remains the leading cause of preventable death and disease in Australia.

"Through controlled use, vapes have a clear purpose and role in helping Australians stop smoking cigarettes and other tobacco products, which continue to cause major health and financial harm."

He said community pharmacies can achieve positive health outcomes and improve commercials by supporting GP-prescribed vapes provided to people wanting to stop smoking.

SA expands pharmacist jobs

SOUTH Australia's expansion of its official Vaccine List (**PD** breaking news Fri) puts the state at the forefront of immunisation availability through pharmacies.

As well as being able to administer 10 additional types of vaccinations, SA pharmacists are also now able to give the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine, as well as the diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus vaccine (dTpa) and the diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus and polio vaccine (DtPa-IPV) to South Australians aged 10 years and older.

SA Health Minister, Chris Picton, said the simple change would lessen the load for general practitioners while increasing vaccine access.

"South Australians will now have the most extensive access to pharmacy-administered vaccines in the country.

"We want to do what's within our power as a state government to lessen the load on our incredibly burdened GPs...this is one simple measure to do just that, with pharmacists as trusted health professionals ready and willing to step in," Picton said.

Other vaccines now available through South Australian pharmacies include the Japanese Encephalitis vaccine for people five years and older, as well as inactivated polio, Hib, meningococcal ACWY, meningococcal B, hepatitis A and hepatitis B, HPV, Varicella for those 10 years and up, and the herpes zoster vaccine for patients 50 years and over.

MyHealth1st sold to HealthShare

THE appointment booking engine operated by ASX-listed 1stGroup has been purchased by HealthShare for \$1.25m.

1stGroup CEO Joshua Munday said the deal would "considerably reduce net cash outflows" with the sale including assets, client

agreements supplier deals, intellectual property, goodwill, business names & domain names.

MyHealth1st is considered to have the third largest share of the doctor appointment bookings behind HealthEngine and HotDoc.

Zeposia listing

TODAY marks the new PBS availability of Zeposia (ozanimod) from Celgene, a once-daily oral selective sphingosine-1-phosphate receptor modulator for adults with moderately-to-severely active ulcerative colitis.



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