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OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF The Pharmacy Guild

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Year Finalists

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EDITOR

Fiona Lee Saunders

E production@goldx.com.au

DESIGNER

For Then Studio

E hello@forthen.au

PUBLISHER

Gold Cross Products & Services Pty Ltd

PO Box 505, Spring Hill QLD 4004



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Attending APP is a highlight of the pharmacy calendar and an opportunity to reflect on the previous 12 months, and also look forward to the opportunities ahead.

The past 12 months have been tough and have presented challenges which the Guild has met head-on in the interests of our members and the patients we serve.

Top-of-mind for people in this country has been – and continues to be – the cost-of-living pressures we all face.

Community pharmacists recognised early on that cost of living was a growing concern for Australians. Increasingly we heard reports of community pharmacists being told by patients that they could not afford their medicines. At other times we heard that some family members would have to go without, or that patients had to pick and choose which medicines they could afford.

The Guild acted on this and our strong campaign to have the PBS general co-payment reduced, resulted in a substantial benefit for patients – it was cut from \$42.50 to \$30.

This was a great start, but we need to do more and get it down to \$19. And we need to quarantine the copayment from annual inflation-based rises which simply erode any benefits gained by reductions.

Even with the reduced co-payment, Australian Bureau of Statistics data released late last year shows nearly 1.1 million Australians delayed or went without their required prescription medication because of the cost in the 2022-23 financial year.

This figure has been compounded by the annual indexed increase which has whittled away the big cut to \$30 that the Guild achieved. From 1 January this year, our patients have seen the general co-payment rise to \$31.60 (and the concessional co-payment rise from \$7.30 to \$7.70) so rather than helping ease cost-of-living pressure, the annual adjustment is simply adding to the problem.

With this in mind, we make no apology for our continued 'Affordable Medicines Now' campaign which seeks to reduce the maximum co-payment to \$19 for Australian patients.

As a sector, community pharmacy won't rest until the general patient co-payment is \$19. It's a commonsense and necessary outcome.

Cutting the co-payment to \$19 will deliver lasting cost-of-living relief to some 19 million Australians and their families at a time when they need it most.

The conversations that community pharmacists were having with patients over the cost of medicines led to the Guild developing its 'Affordable Medicines now' campaign.

While we have seen some relief, our members report those same conversations are again being had so the need for more action – and urgent action – is obvious.

And let's be clear – our modelling clearly demonstrates a cut to \$19 is achievable and non-inflationary.

It will also bring Australian patients more into line with similar economies such as New Zealand, France, and Germany.



In New Zealand, for example, there is no general co-payment for medicines; in Germany it's under \$17; and in France it's just 50 Euro cents.

Ensuring medicines are accessible and affordable is a Guild priority.

The past 12 months have also seen the introduction of 60-day dispensing.

This is bad policy and one which the Guild sought to delay pending research into its impact and implications.

As a result of our advocacy, we achieved an unprecedented result in having negotiations for the eighth Community Pharmacy Agreement brought forward by more than a year.

We sought this so that measures to ease the impact of 60-day dispensing on community pharmacists could be quickly and pragmatically addressed.

It was no mean feat to get the negotiations brought forward and the Guild negotiating team has been hard at work to ensure the best possible outcomes for members and patients.

However, an early agreement is only good if it is a good agreement.

We have also made great progress in seeing pharmacists being able to work to their full scope of practice.

Across Australia moves are being implemented which are seeing pharmacists delivering more services and reducing pressure on emergency departments and local doctors. The success of the Queensland Scope of Practice Pilot has been widely recognised and, with broad political support, we are working to harmonise the Queensland model of scope of practice across the country.

Just how important this is, is shown by Australian Institute of Health and Welfare figures which reveal 44 per cent of Australians presenting to emergency departments of hospitals, are waiting four hours or more for treatment. And wait times for a GP appointment continue to blow out.

There is a lot happening in our sector and there is a lot of work ahead of us.

Trent Twomey
National President

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COPD: chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. **References:** **1.** DuoResp[®] Spiromax[®] Approved Product Information, April 2021. **2.** Canonica GW *et al.* *J Aerosol Med Pulm Drug Deliv* 2015 Oct 1;28(5):309–19. **3.** Chrystyn H *et al.* *Int J Pharm* 2015;491:268–76. TEVA Pharma Australia Pty Ltd, ABN 41 169 715 664, Level 1, 37 Epping Road, Macquarie Park, Sydney, NSW 2113. Phone: 1800 AU TEVA (1800 28 8382). Fax: +61 2 8061 9999. www.tevapharma.com.au. DuoResp[®] and Spiromax[®] are trademarks of the Teva Global group of companies. www.tevapharma.com.au. Date of Preparation: January 2024, DUOR-AU-00150 (TEVA32151S).



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GUILD PHARMACY OF THE YEAR FINALISTS

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We'd like to introduce you to the six finalists of the 2024 Guild Pharmacy of the Year Awards. The winning pharmacy will be announced at the 2024 APP Conference, held on the Gold Coast from March 14-17.

The National Awards process recognises and celebrates the valuable contribution made by community pharmacies in their commitment to caring for their patients and in supporting their local communities.



Priceline Pharmacy Kincumber

Hard Work Pays Off

The Store Manager at Priceline Pharmacy at Kincumber on the NSW Central Coast says it feels "amazing" to be named as a finalist for the 2024 Guild Pharmacy of the Year Awards.

Ally Newell says becoming a finalist was on their 'to do list' for this year and now they have achieved their goal.

"It feels like all our hard work has paid off to be honest," said Ally as she began her shift at the pharmacy.

Priceline Pharmacy at Kincumber is focused on community engagement, a wide range of patient services, additional training for staff and rewards for high performing staff.

With five surrounding retirement villages or resorts, a big part of the pharmacy's focus is dose administration aids (DAA) for seniors in Kincumber and the surrounding area.

Ally says the pharmacy prepares over 400 community Webster Paks each week, with each package expertly prepared and checked by experienced staff.

"We're massive on making sure everyone is taking their meds right."

The DAA team of Taylor and Cheryl have 60 years' experience between them, earning them the trust of their patients.

The pharmacy also delivers to older residents in the area five times a week.

It is truly admirable that the pharmacy's staff have initiated more social based programs, recognising the decline of social interaction among older Australians.

"Sometimes they don't even get to have any connection with anybody outside of their house, so things like that just to connect with them and brighten their day," said Ally.

Women patients are also a big focus of Priceline Pharmacy Kincumber with staff actively promoting services to women in the community, especially new mothers.

Through its trusted suppliers, staff prepare sample packs for mothers to try, so they learn which brands and products suit them.

"Each week we take that up to the neighbourhood centre for them to have. Like a grocery store, but it's free every week and people can come in and pick up whatever they need for that week," Ally said.



The pharmacy has also formed a partnership with the local district health care centre which sees the centre referring new mothers to the pharmacy for in-pharmacy services such as baby weighing.

Priceline Pharmacy Kincumber also celebrates women's sport by sponsoring the Kincumber Colts Rugby League Team. For the team's 'Ladies Day' the pharmacy was printed on the Colts' pink jersey.

The pharmacy has also come up with fun initiatives to recognise the importance and value of its patients, customers and staff.

For example, its pharmacy awards its 'Customer of the Month' where the celebrated customer has a photo taken and the image is then displayed in the pharmacy for the whole month.

It's been such a hit Ally says some award winners bring friends and family into the pharmacy to show them their picture on the wall.

"If I'm a bit slow in putting the photos up and I get a bit busy and it takes a week or so, they come up and ask, 'Is my photo on the wall yet?' and then they go and find themselves, it's really nice."

The pharmacy has also initiated its 'Random Acts of Kindness' deliveries where to brighten a patient's day they are given a surprise delivery package such as flowers or chocolates or both!

Staff are rewarded and recognised too with their goals set out on a chart and once achieved are rewarded with vouchers and pizzas for lunch.

With such dedication to patients, customers and staff, Priceline Pharmacy Kincumber is a deserved finalist for the 2024 Guild Pharmacy of the Year.

Narrabri Pharmacy

Pivot and Succeed

The owner of Narrabri Pharmacy says being a finalist for the 2024 Guild Pharmacy of the Year Awards is “humbling.”

Karen Carter says it’s a boost for her and her staff to know that their efforts at the pharmacy are being recognised by the community.

“I guess it gives our staff a benchmark to say, ‘well we are actually doing really well so we really appreciate it,’” she said.

Narrabri Pharmacy has exemplified the adage of turning a crisis into an opportunity. Three years ago, Karen Carter and her team experienced difficulty in attracting pharmacists to the area. To adapt, they looked at ways to maximise efficiencies to free up existing staff to focus on their patients.

“Being able to pivot and move quickly to put a service in is something that makes Narrabri Pharmacy quite special,” said Karen.

The pharmacy’s staff explored opportunities to promote sales and customer growth and adapt to the changing pharmacy landscape including scope of practice.

Automation was implemented and they introduced initiatives to address falling vaccination rates. These included measures like pharmacy staff going to worksites such as mines and farms from 6am to offer vaccination to workers, especially some men who may not go out of their way to be vaccinated.

Community engagement is a recurring theme at Narrabri Pharmacy. Staff team up with their community for charity and special events such as R U OK Day, The Biggest Morning Tea, breast cancer awareness and Footy Colours Day.



The pharmacy’s staff engage with First Nation’s people through the Indigenous DAA service to improve health outcomes including special promotions such as blood pressure checks during NAIDOC week.

The pharmacy is also relied on by older Australians in Narrabri through the medicine delivery service and Webster-Paks for residential aged care facilities.

Staff have also undergone additional training to be able to treat and care for wounds with the pharmacy housing consult room for this care to be carried out in private.

The pharmacy has also taken advantage of modern technology by using dispensing robots and Scrypt messaging to streamline the dispensing of prescribed medicine.

“We recognised we needed more time for our pharmacists and so we have a dispensing robot to allow our dispense staff to work quite well in the dispensary and have that accuracy...to allow us to spend more time with our patients.”

The team review their business goals every month which has helped the pharmacy grow its patient base and sales over past years.

Narrabri Pharmacy and its staff are deserved finalists of the 2024 Guild Pharmacy of the Year Awards.



Chemist Discount Centre Gosnells

Expert Advice with Exceptional Service

Chemist Discount Centre Gosnells, located in the multicultural Noarlunga Health Hub, serves a diverse community with significant Indigenous and socio-economic challenges. Under the leadership of owner Gary Khoo, the pharmacy tailors its services to meet the varied health needs of its customers, many managing chronic conditions like diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

The pharmacy is now one of six to be named as a finalist in the 2024 Guild Pharmacy of the Year Awards.

Owner Gary Khoo says it is an honour and credits his staff for making Chemist Discount Centre Gosnells a finalist.

“Obviously without my team I can’t be where I am today,” he said.

As a discount pharmacy, Chemist Discount Centre Gosnells strikes a balance between affordability and quality service. This approach ensures accessible healthcare without compromising on comprehensive service delivery. Their commitment to high service standards at discounted prices underscores their dedication to community health.

“We are very proud that what we are implementing in Gosnells is having an impact.

Gary and his team collaborate closely with local health professionals, including General Practitioners, to address community health needs. This collaborative approach strengthens their network, enabling effective community service.

The pharmacy’s outreach extends through print and digital media, effectively promoting health messages like COVID and Influenza vaccination awareness. Regular communication with nearly 10,000 customers via loyalty programs and mobile SMS ensures widespread dissemination of health updates and services.

In 2023, Chemist Discount Centre Gosnells maximized health promotional resources, focusing on areas such as Suncare, Vaccination, Diabetes, and Asthma Management. Offering health information in various formats makes it accessible to more members of the community.

Gary Khoo also led the pharmacy to understand specific needs in the local demographic. The pharmacy began to supply medicinal cannabis, filling a service gap for his patients with chronic pain. This involved training pharmacists and assisting local doctors in becoming authorised prescribers.

The pharmacy also developed Nicotine Vaping Products (NVPs) as an alternative smoking cessation aid, addressing the high smoking rates in the community. This initiative aligns with their commitment to reducing the health impacts of nicotine dependence.

“With the skills set that I have I can collaborate with my local GPs, and I talk to them and implement the two strategies which is medicinal cannabis and (therapeutic) nicotine vapes.”

Investing in a robotic DAA packing machine, the pharmacy improved its efficiency, allowing pharmacists to focus more on customer engagement. This automation helps the pharmacy meet their efficiency goals.

Chemist Discount Centre Gosnells is a worthy finalist of the 2024 Guild Pharmacy of the Year award.

Gary Khoo’s hands-on leadership, along with the team’s commitment to meeting community needs, embodies the pharmacy’s ethos of “Expert Advice with Lower Prices.”

“If we do win the Pharmacy of the Year, that would give us more confidence to do better in the coming years,” Gary said.



Capital Chemist Southlands

Comprehensive Approach to Healthcare and Pharmacy Services

Capital Chemist Southlands stands out for its comprehensive approach to healthcare and pharmacy services. The team, led by Stacey Fuller and Louise McLean, has built a pharmacy that not only serves the community but also leads the way in professional innovation and effective business management.

Louise says being named as one of six pharmacies to be finalists in the 2024 Guild Pharmacy of the Year Awards is "quite awesome".

"I love that we were nominated by a customer, I think that's really beautiful."

The pharmacy's commitment to community engagement is evident through their support of various local events and causes, such as the Special Children's Christmas Party and Ronald McDonald House.

This engagement extends beyond events, with active support for educational initiatives for students and intern pharmacists. Regular lectures on vaccination and Opioid Maintenance Therapy (OMT) provided to University of Canberra students showcase their dedication to nurturing future healthcare professionals.

When it comes to professional innovation, Capital Chemist Southlands offers a selective yet well-executed range of services. They have a special focus on medicinal cannabis dispensing that they pioneered in the ACT, noticing an opportunity in the local market.

The pharmacy's efforts in educating both professionals and patients around the benefits of medicinal cannabis, including setting up a dedicated Facebook group for pharmacist support, highlight their commitment to continuous learning and community engagement.

Louise says the pharmacy is also supportive of medicinal cannabis as a means to help patients.

"There was definite need from our patients for the service and they would come to us.

She has since learnt a lot more about medicinal cannabis because there's new information about the treatment being published consistently.



"I said, 'Let me learn' and that was really hard (because) where do I go to learn....so that we can adequately support the patients and not make any dispensing errors.

Louise is now so knowledgeable on the topic she is working with other health professionals such as psychologists in helping treat patients properly.

Stacey and Louise have developed their business model thoughtfully and strategically. After completing significant renovations to enhance service delivery, including the installation of additional consulting rooms and a ROWA dispensing robot, services have been expanded to include National Immunisation Program (NIP) vaccinations and private consultations for health services.

"One hundred per cent our focus is service," said Louise.

"The big thing is at any one time we have a lot of pharmacists working."

She says on busy days there can be as many ten pharmacists on duty, up from the usual eight.

"There's very much that white coat presentation, and every customer who walks through the door will be served by one of us at some point."

The team's proactive approach to adapting to market changes, like partnering with online services for prescription orders, demonstrates their agility and foresight in business operations.

"We don't want to do everything because then you don't do anything well, so we focus on what we can do well and that's kind of the motto we stick with," Louise said.

Overall, Capital Chemist Southlands exemplifies a pharmacy that tailors its business strategy to a deep understanding of its community, demonstrating leadership in professional healthcare services, and excelling in business management.

Emerton Amcal Pharmacy

A Cornerstone of Community Health and Innovation

At the heart of the Emerton community, 50km west of Sydney's CBD, lies a pharmacy with a vision for more than just medications. Emerton Amcal Pharmacy, under the passionate leadership of Margaret Ruhnau, Curtis Ruhnau, and Matthew Quick, has become a cornerstone of community health and innovation.

Their philosophy, according to Curtis is "never see a need without trying to do something about it," and has transformed the pharmacy into a hub of health services and community engagement.

"The Blacktown local government area is a very culturally diverse community and reflective of that, our staff are very culturally diverse," said Curtis Ruhnau.

"We have pharmacists from Fijian Indian background, Afghanistan, Syria, another one from Iraq, another one from Lebanon and our non-pharmacist staff are just as diverse including Australian First Nations."

Their journey began with volunteering at Marrin Weejali Health Outreach, and since then, their community involvement has grown exponentially. They have been integral in health programs at Marrin Weejali, a local Aboriginal controlled Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) service and have actively participated in events like International Overdose Awareness Day and Mental Health Day.

"They really don't care who you are they will help you no matter who you are.



"I walk taller every time I walk out of there just because of the energy and the vibe," Curtis said.

Their collaborative efforts with Western Sydney Local Health District on Quit Smoking programs, and their role as local coordinators for the 'Too Deadly' for Diabetes program, highlight their commitment to public health initiatives.

Curtis said the program is making a real difference by getting real results.

"It's actually reversing diabetes in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

"We have an Aboriginal exercise physiologist who is actually dealing with some of our most challenged and most disadvantaged groups in the country and he's actually doing something that I was pretty sure couldn't be done."

Innovation at Emerton Amcal Pharmacy is evident through their development of a Webster-Pak booklet. Designed to simplify medication management for patients, this booklet has since been adopted by Webstercare for wider use. Their expertise in pharmacy services is acknowledged by local doctors, who frequently recommend their reliable and accurate Webster-Pak service.

The pharmacy's design reflects their inclusive approach, with features like a moving wall for group sessions and integrated spaces for Opioid Replacement Therapy and Needle and Syringe Return programs, aiming to reduce stigma and maintain efficient workflow.

Their business management strategy focuses on filling community health needs, and they continuously seek to raise the status of the pharmacy profession. The team's commitment to professional development is evident in their participation in various health programs and cultural competency courses, ensuring they can effectively serve their diverse community.

The ethos of Emerton Amcal Pharmacy is encapsulated in Margaret's words, "we meet people where they are." This reflects their dedication to serving the community not just within the pharmacy but also outside, always aiming to leave the world a better place.

Or as Curtis sums it up, "No matter how people say welcome or how they identify we want them to know they're welcome by all of us in our pharmacy."

TerryWhite Chemmart Colonnades

Part of a Thriving Healthcare Network

Colonnades TerryWhite Chemmart (TWCM) Pharmacy is nestled within the Noarlunga Health Hub, located a half-hour's drive south of Adelaide CBD. Owners Matthew Gillespie and Anghus Hall provide comprehensive health services and proactive participation in the community's well-being, making the pharmacy's commitment to healthcare excellence evident in how they operate.

It's now one of six pharmacies to be named as finalists for the 2024 Guild Pharmacy of the Year.

Anghus Hall says it is the work the pharmacy does with the community which inspired their nomination for the award.

"I think we entered the competition on the back of the work we do within our community," he said.

The pharmacy's approach is characterised by active engagement with customers. Pharmacy assistants, students, interns, and pharmacists employ forward dispensing, allowing for direct interaction on the shop floor. This approach ensures personalised attention, setting Colonnades apart from other pharmacies. It's not just about dispensing medication but about ensuring every customer receives excellent service and valuable health advice.

"We're open seven days a week, and we make all services to the community available on any day at any time," said Anghus.

Colonnades Pharmacy's strategic location within a large shopping centre and its proximity to Noarlunga Hospital and the Aboriginal Family Clinic have enabled strong relationships and collaboration with other services. The pharmacy efficiently manages a range of prescriptions, including DAAs and those for acute, emergency, and palliative care. This has not only contributed to their growth, but also fulfilled an urgent need for care within the local community.

Recognising local health needs, Colonnades expanded its health aid section, enhancing the availability of medical aids like moon boots and crutches. The pharmacy's active use of social media for promotion has furthered its reach, allowing it to provide healthcare to more patients.

Colonnades has also expanded its vaccination service, offering in-store and offsite clinics to organisations including the Department of Child Protection (DCP). Social workers at DCP appreciate the convenient service and how it facilitates easier coordination for family vaccinations.



"We left the four walls of the pharmacy and provided health checks, provided education, went into other businesses and provided services on site," Anghus said.

A newly built second clinic room, isolated from the main pharmacy area, provides a private and safe space for services like vaccinations, an area that is particularly busy during the flu season!

"We've just promoted what pharmacy can do for the public in a health sense."

Their ventures into alternative therapies, such as partnering with Metagenics for Practitioner Only Vitamins, have opened up new revenue streams. A collaboration with a local osteopath has enhanced their joint therapy offerings, further diversifying their service range.

Colonnades Pharmacy's involvement in the community extends to supporting women's health through partnerships with local sports teams like the South Adelaide Football Club's Women's Team. Their sponsorship includes providing team uniforms.

"We employ some of their staff, but we sponsor them heavily, we engage with local businesses to promote that via social media," Anghus said.

Additionally, their support for the Port Noarlunga Bowls Club goes beyond financial contributions, offering healthcare advice and services to club members.

The introduction of a dedicated Homy Ped area in the pharmacy caters to specific footwear needs (including for diabetics) further showcasing the pharmacy's commitment to diverse patient groups.

"It has a shoe range that provides comfort, particularly aimed at diabetics to help with their blood flow but also to provide stability for our generally older customers."

Overall, Colonnades TWCM Pharmacy's model blends healthcare services with community engagement and strategic business management. Their continuous innovation, responsiveness to community needs, and commitment to providing a diverse range of services and products make them a vital asset to their community.

DATA & PRIVACY BREACHES

How to Safeguard Your Business' Future Success

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Serious data and privacy breaches are rapidly rising across the healthcare sector. In this article, Special Counsel Hayley Bowman and Principal Georgina Odell from Meridian Lawyers explain the upcoming privacy reforms and provide important advice on how you can protect your pharmacy.

Words | Special Counsel Hayley Bowman
and Principal Georgina Odell

Meridian Lawyers



Pharmacy is a tightly regulated industry with privacy and data protection important factors that can make or break a pharmacy's future success. This is especially relevant given the current landscape and upcoming privacy reforms that aim to strengthen existing privacy regulation in Australia.

These reforms include introducing:

- the concept of fair and reasonable handling of personal information
- new privacy rights for individuals
- a greater range of enforcement powers to the privacy regulator, the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC)
- mandatory destruction of personal information once it is no longer required.

The reforms also include establishing stronger privacy protections for children and enhancing requirements for the security of personal information.

Digitisation and Privacy

Becoming more digitally enabled may help you to generate new revenue streams and improve your customer's experience, but as with the adoption of any new technology, it is not without risks.

Pharmacists are increasingly collecting personal information (and in some cases sensitive information), using, disclosing, and storing that information. As with all private health service providers, pharmacists are bound by the Australian *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth) and the Australian Privacy Principles (APPs).

Where any technology you intend to adopt in your pharmacy is involved in any aspect of the lifecycle of personal information that you collect and hold, that technology needs to be carefully reviewed to ensure that it is compliant with privacy legislation.

Developing a Privacy Policy

As a health service provider, it is mandatory for every pharmacy to have a Privacy Policy.

This Privacy Policy should not be a copy and paste from another business. It needs to be carefully considered and tailored to your own business and be easily accessible in your pharmacy and/or on your pharmacy website. Your Privacy Policy should also be reviewed and updated regularly to ensure that it adequately reflects your business practices and remains compliant with the ever-changing regulatory landscape.

At a minimum, your Privacy Policy should set out:

- Your pharmacy entity name and contact details
- The kinds of personal information (and sensitive information) that your pharmacy collects and stores
- How your pharmacy collects personal information

- The purpose for which the personal information (including sensitive information) is being collected
- Details about how a patient's personal information is stored – is it stored in Australia or overseas? If overseas, the Privacy Policy will need to list the countries in which the information is likely to be disclosed
- How you intend to use and disclose personal information (for example, do you disclose personal information to third parties for provision of software or storage purposes?)
- How a person can access their own personal information and how they can request correction of any errors, and
- Details of how to lodge a complaint with the OAIC.

When engaging third party service providers such as software providers (that use, store, or process personal or sensitive information on your behalf), it is important to understand the privacy practices of that third party. This includes where geographically that service provider stores any personal information disclosed to it by your pharmacy.

If any service providers use servers located outside of Australia, your pharmacy Privacy Policy will need to be transparent in this respect, including by listing the countries where that data is disclosed.

Data Breaches on the Rise

Healthcare service providers, including pharmacists, are a primary target for malicious and criminal attacks. They have ranked consistently as the highest reporting sector for data breaches since mandatory data breach reporting was introduced in 2018.

The OAIC reported 497 data breach notifications between July and December 2022. Of these breaches, 70% were the result of malicious or criminal attacks, 25% were the result of human error, and 5% resulted from system faults.

Common examples of human error that can lead to unintended data breaches, resulting in any number of risks, in monetary terms as well as loss of confidence, reputation, and trust from clients and customers include:

- Emails being sent to the wrong recipient
- Unintended release or publication of personal (or sensitive) information
- Failure to use the blind copy function when sending an email to a group of people
- Loss of physical paper files, loss of a removable data storage device or laptop.

It is critical that all pharmacy staff, no matter their experience or qualifications, are trained to understand, and do understand, the expectations around handling of personal information in their roles. Privacy training should be tailored to your organisation and form part of inductions for new staff and be refreshed at regular intervals.



Penalties for a Privacy Breach

Where an eligible data breach has occurred and where that event is likely to result in serious harm (including financial harm) to one or more individuals, that breach must be reported to the OAIC under the Notifiable Data Breaches Scheme (introduced in February 2018).

In December 2022, amendments to the Privacy Act included increases to the maximum penalties relating to serious or repeated breaches of the APPs and the Notifiable Data Breaches Scheme. Consequently, the maximum civil penalty for serious or repeated interferences with privacy increased from \$2.2 million to an amount that is the greater of \$50 million, three times the value of the benefit obtained from the conduct, or 30% of an entity's adjusted turnover in the relevant period.

These 2022 amendments also provided the OAIC with broader regulatory powers when investigating privacy practices, coordinating with other regulators, keeping the public informed, and assessing privacy compliance.

Developing a Data Breach Response Plan

We strongly recommend that every pharmacy has its own Data Breach Response Plan, which is akin to an emergency and evacuation rehearsal.

This framework sets out the roles and responsibilities in managing a data breach.

The plan does not have to be complicated, but should be in writing, understood by all staff, and thoroughly tested and rehearsed on a regular basis.

If an actual or suspected data breach does occur, this will be a useful reference tool to allow your pharmacy to act quickly to:

1. Contain the damage
2. Assess the damage
3. Notify the relevant regulators (if necessary) and,
4. Review the situation to identify how the breach or suspected breach occurred. This includes implementing changes to prevent it from happening again.

What Can You Do Now?

Preparation is key. We recommend undertaking a review of your pharmacy's current privacy practices and thoroughly audit and understand the personal information that your pharmacy collects, holds, uses and discloses.

For example:

- Does your pharmacy have a bespoke Privacy Policy that adequately describes your privacy practices?
- Does your pharmacy collect only personal or sensitive information that is necessary to provide your products or services?
- Review the information you hold periodically and delete or de-identify it once that information is no longer required for the purposes for which it was collected, or to comply with records retention requirements.
- Does your pharmacy have a data breach response plan in place to allow your pharmacy to respond to any suspected or actual data breach without delay?



HOW WE CAN HELP

Meridian Lawyers' commercial team has specialist knowledge in pharmacy legislation and regulation in Australia, including ownership rules and privacy compliance. We have strong knowledge of the pharmacy industry having acted for many pharmacists throughout the country and are the principal legal advisor to the Pharmacy Guild of Australia.

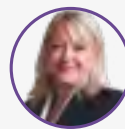
To learn more visit: meridianlawyers.com.au/pharmacy

If you have any questions or require further information about your pharmacy's compliance with the current privacy legislation please contact:



Hayley Bowman

Special Counsel, Meridian Lawyers
+61 3 9810 6723
hbowman@meridianlawyers.com.au



Georgina Odell

Principal, Meridian Lawyers
+61 2 9018 9975
godell@meridianlawyers.com.au

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Offering best-in-class energy efficiency, Liebherr's comprehensive range of pharmacy appliances is supported by a market-leading 5-year warranty. And thanks to over 60 years of manufacturing experience and the use of premium quality materials and processes, Liebherr's pharmacy appliances safely and reliably store highly sensitive substances, samples, medicines, and vaccines.

The wide range of appliances specifically made for the biomedical sector meets the most stringent standards in quality and energy use. With maximum temperature stability, consistent and precise temperature controls, Liebherr appliances are the ideal cold storage solution. Constant temperatures are crucial for the safe storage of such substances and Liebherr biomedical appliances vaccine and pharmaceutical appliances, innovative refrigeration technologies and precise control systems ensure constant interior temperatures – set precisely between +2°C and +8°C – and keep energy consumption exceptionally low. Constant interior temperatures are maintained by the forced-air cooling system and by optimum airflow within the interior. Numerous alarm

functions offer safeguards in the event of a fault, extended door openings or unexpected temperature fluctuations.

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ARE YOU REALLY THE TRUSTED AUTHORITY IN HEALTHCARE?

Do you remember when you used to complain that customers and patients trusted 'Dr. Google' more than you as a healthcare professional? Or maybe you still do? Because as we all know, the internet has been a resource for health-related information for years. However, the growing reliance on search engines for medical guidance is also a significant growing concern. Particularly as another rapidly emerging revolution is underway.



Not only is the revolution bringing about worry as to how health information is sourced, consumed, and disseminated, the major concerns lie in the accuracy and reliability of the information found, a concern that has only intensified with the revolution brought about by the evolution of Artificial Intelligent (AI)-driven platforms.

The increasing use of AI in providing medical information is a testament to its growing influence, but it also raises significant questions and concerns, especially within the Australian community pharmacy sector.

AI tools like ChatGPT and Microsoft's Bing Chat represent the next phase in this digital evolution. Unlike traditional search engines that provide a list of links, AI systems can engage in a conversational manner, offering tailored responses and simulating a more human-like interaction. This shift from static, keyword-based searches to dynamic, AI-driven conversations marks a significant change in how people seek medical advice and information.

And so, with this in mind, let's park aside the opportunities that AI brings about, and bring back the conversation to what opportunities YOU now have as a result of AI.

Because here's the reality.

The convenience and accessibility of AI platforms are undeniable. They offer immediate answers to health-related queries, a feature particularly appealing in today's fast-paced world.

And so, as a consumer, you can instantly see the appeal of using these platforms rather than going to their local pharmacist for advice.

However, here's the honest truth.

This convenience comes with caveats. As we delve deeper into the role of AI in pharmacy, it becomes crucial to discuss its limitations, especially in the context of the nuanced and complex field of healthcare.

And as we explore this in this article, remember one thing, AI, for all its advancements, cannot replace the irreplaceable value of human interaction – a cornerstone of effective healthcare.

The Unreplaceable Value of Human Connection: Navigating Misinformation and Trust

Put simply, the rise of AI tools in providing medical information, while groundbreaking, brings with it a significant challenge – the risk of misinformation. This issue is not just a technological concern but strikes at the heart of patient trust and care.

The dangers of misinformation from AI tools are multifaceted and significant. Consider a scenario involving Amy, a regular pharmacy customer. Amy, like many others, turned to an AI tool for quick health advice. She received information about a health condition, complete with recommendations and treatment options. However, the information, while presented in a way which sounded reputable and trustworthy, was in fact incorrect, and referenced articles that didn't even exist. This disparity led to not only confusion, but poorer health outcomes as a result of following the incorrect advice.

This example is not an isolated incident but a representation of a growing concern in the healthcare community: AI tools, despite their sophistication, are susceptible to providing inaccurate advice.



“THIS ISSUE IS NOT JUST A TECHNOLOGICAL CONCERN BUT STRIKES AT THE HEART OF PATIENT TRUST AND CARE.”



I'm going to throw another example in the mix, simply from what you might see on social media.

Take a look at the image on the right.

Read the caption, and think about how this makes you feel.

Take a moment, and really think about it.

What would you comment or say to this young man who is said to have made the airplane with his bare hands?

Would your comments sound like those already made by over 1,000 other people as shown below?



But take another look at the photo. What's actually wrong with it?

Are there details that would make you question the accuracy of the information being presented to you?

If you haven't picked up on it yet... take another look.

Still can't see it?

Look at the boy's legs. They are literally carved into the wing of the plane.

Now this is more obvious than other AI generated images, however, despite this, over 30 thousand people have liked this image, and there are over 1.5 thousand comments, most of which are praising the young man's efforts.

But the truth is, as you know, that this image is a complete fake.



There is no Jack.
There is no plane.
This was all generated by AI.

And yet, thousands of people have looked at the information presented, and said to themselves, this isn't only true, but it is amazing as well.

So, bringing this back to your community pharmacy and the provision of healthcare advice and counsel, AI systems are based on algorithms and data sets. As a result, they might lack the context and nuanced understanding necessary for accurate medical advice. Moreover, the source material used by these AI tools may not always be vetted, leading to the dissemination of outdated or incorrect information.

And so, considering just these two examples, where AI and online resources are increasingly prevalent, the need for human connection in healthcare becomes even more critical. Healthcare, at its core, is not just about treating symptoms or diseases; it's about understanding individuals in their entirety. This understanding is where pharmacists, with their unique blend of

scientific knowledge and interpersonal skills, play an irreplaceable role.

In a world of misinformation, falsehoods and deliberate deception, pharmacists can balance the efficiency of AI with their clinical training, and blend this with empathy and a personal touch that can only come from human interaction. They can provide the clarity and certainty that patients seek in an age where information is abundant but often overwhelming. By interpreting and contextualizing AI-generated information, pharmacists can guide their patients more effectively, ensuring that the advice they receive is not only accurate but also tailored to their specific health needs.

However, in order to do this, it's vital that pharmacists reaffirm their place in the eyes of their customers and patients, as the one and only trusted and expert healthcare providers, rather than succumbing to second or even third place behind 'Dr. Google' and AI. This reassertion involves acknowledging the role AI plays, but intrinsically embracing and enhancing the unique, irreplaceable human skills and knowledge a pharmacist and their team has.

Reaffirming the Pharmacist's Role in the Age Of AI

The first step for pharmacists in establishing themselves as trusted experts in the AI era is to enhance accessibility. By being readily available for consultations and queries, pharmacists can provide the personalized touch that AI lacks.

Engagement is equally crucial; pharmacists should actively engage with patients, showing genuine interest in their health and well-being, which goes beyond the capabilities of any AI.

Keeping up-to-date with the latest medical knowledge and pharmaceutical advancements is another critical area. Continuous learning ensures that pharmacists can provide accurate, current information, supplementing and sometimes correcting AI-provided data.

Specialisation in specific areas of healthcare can further distinguish pharmacists, not only from AI, but from competitors as well. For instance, in my own journey, I blend pharmaceutical knowledge with expertise as a qualified personal trainer, to exemplify the value of a multifaceted approach. For me, it's not just about dispensing medication but providing comprehensive care, including aspects like exercise and lifestyle advice into a patient's treatment plan. The pursuit of building and using knowledge to the betterment of patient care is what this is all about.

And as patients continue to seek certainty and clarity, the ability to blend personal knowledge, alongside personal experiences and expertise allows the practitioner-patient relationship to effectively wade through all the confusion, and to provide care and advice that is going to positively impact the patient.

By incorporating a holistic, proactive and interactive approach to healthcare, rather than relinquishing the responsibilities of care to technology, the emergence of AI in the healthcare world doesn't spell obsolescence for pharmacists and their teams. Instead, it represents an opportunity to enhance their role, combining their irreplaceable human expertise with the efficiency of AI.

By focusing on personalized care, continuous learning, and holistic health solutions, pharmacists can continue to be indispensable allies in their patients' health journeys, even in an increasingly digital world. This superpower is further enhanced when pharmacists and their teams actively build relationships and networks beyond the counter as well.

Beyond the Counter: Building Relationships and Networks

Today, in the age of digital information and AI, the importance of personal connections and professional networks has never been more pronounced. For pharmacists, these relationships are not just a facet of their profession but a cornerstone of their success and growth.

Now when I talk about personal connections and professional networks, think about the human connections you foster with your customers, your team, your peers, and your colleagues.

Because while we tend to focus solely on our customers, the role of personalized interactions, regardless of who they are with, is something that, as healthcare professionals, is irreplaceable by AI.

In other words, every encounter is an opportunity to understand someone else's unique situation. And in the world of health, this translates to their healthcare needs and preferences, thereby building trust and rapport.

Simple gestures like remembering someone's personal preferences or a key event can significantly enhance the relationship. Furthermore, open and honest communication, that ensures psychological safety so that information can be shared freely, and mutual support is nurtured is essential. And building relationships with peers within the industry allows you to open doors to new insights, and collaborations and opportunities that you may have never realized the power of.

As a result, it's vital that you engage in community events, run health workshops and seminars, and partake in other local initiatives to reaffirm your role as a trusted health authority within your community.

Attending conferences is also another great networking opportunity, particularly as your "network is your net worth". Stepping into what might seem uncomfortable situations where you might not know anyone, and simply introducing yourself and striking up a conversation is a great way to build confidence and to explore the potentials of the newfound relationships.

By stepping beyond the counter and engaging in meaningful networking and relationship-building activities, pharmacists can significantly enhance their professional journey, something that AI cannot do. And in doing so, they not only enrich their own practice but also reaffirm their stature within the broader healthcare community, ensuring a vibrant and interconnected future for the industry.



“FOR ME, IT’S NOT JUST ABOUT DISPENSING MEDICATION BUT PROVIDING COMPREHENSIVE CARE, INCLUDING ASPECTS LIKE EXERCISE AND LIFESTYLE ADVICE INTO A PATIENT’S TREATMENT PLAN. THE PURSUIT OF BUILDING AND USING KNOWLEDGE TO THE BETTERMENT OF PATIENT CARE IS WHAT THIS IS ALL ABOUT.”

Let's Start Now With A Catch Up

Now as we look to conclude our journey into understanding the opportunity YOU have to reaffirm your place as the trusted authority for healthcare within your community, I'm going to ask you the same question we started with...

Are you really the trusted authority for healthcare in your community?

Don't just say yes. Think about it.

How accessible are you really?

How well do you meaningfully engage with your patients, your team and your peers?

How proactive are you in expanding your knowledge, and not just clinical knowledge, but business as well?

What do you specialise in? In other words, what are you known for?

And how do you provide certainty and clarity, particularly in the face of the internet or AI generated answers and responses?

Because the opportunity is NOW.

But not just for you, but also AI as well.

Only one will be seen as the primary trusted authority.

And it's up to YOU which one it is.

Because while it is evident that the human connection in pharmacy is essential, the emergence of AI has undeniably transformed how medical information is accessed and delivered.

So, are you ready to reaffirm your place as the trusted authority, or continue to be complacent and ignorant to what is on your doorstep right now?

And with that challenge comes the challenge to reach out for support to help you reaffirm your authority, and to step beyond your counter, to build your networks, and to create new collaborations and connections to help you thrive.

I invite you to reach out, and to organise a face-to-face catch-up at the upcoming APP Conference in March 2024.



To book this, simply scan the QR code.

And with that, I'll leave you to your day, and to the decision you have to make as to where you and your business are headed.



WHAT IF I COULD GIVE YOU THE OWNERS MANUAL TO UNLOCK THE BUSINESS WITHIN YOUR PHARMACY?

You were given the keys to a pharmacy, a team to lead, and a bank loan to pay off, but no owner's manual to run the business successfully.

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This is where Foundations comes in.

Foundations empowers you and your team with the tools and resources to leverage all of the amazing clinical skills they have, into the entrepreneurial skillset and mindset required to build a thriving pharmacy.

It's the culmination of everything we did with our team to achieve the results we did, mixed with world-leading techniques and research, all in an online program designed to bring out the best in our talent.

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SO KNOWING WHAT'S HERE NOW, AND COMING TOMORROW, YOU DON'T HAVE TIME FOR TRIAL AND ERROR. INSTEAD, LEARN FROM OUR MISTAKES AND SET YOURSELF, YOUR TEAM AND YOUR BUSINESS UP FOR SUCCESS RIGHT NOW.

Check out more about Foundations by scanning the QR code!



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Zamil Solanki works with healthpreneurs – from individuals to large multi-national organisations – to help them overcome unique challenges and achieve their goals through curated training programs, and tailored holistic solutions. Unlike other coaches and consultants, we pair global research and techniques with our own experiences, having grown our own pharmacy by \$4 million and exiting it for 3x the industry average multiple. To do this, we focus holistically using 5 key pillars – mindset, planning, leadership, marketing and sales and specialize in workflow, innovation, automation and systems.

Zamil Solanki

Pharmacy Owner, Business Strategist & Entrepreneurial Coach



DIVERSIFICATION IS KEY TO SUCCESS



Often, I think Pharmacy can be isolated and we need to take learnings from other industries to help us to improve and grow our industry. In the current climate, diversification of income is critical for business success and to remain relevant in the community.

Words | Rowan Lowe | Owner at Donnybrook Pharmacy



Living in a rural setting, I often find myself having discussions with farmers around diversification of farms either through mixed farming (orchards, grain, cattle) or even dipping their toe into Tourism through Farm Stay accommodation.

They have realised that it is not sustainable to rely on one source of income that can be influenced by so many external factors such as weather, industry prices and even Government regulations. The same can be said for the pharmacy industry, I think pharmacy is very isolated and we need to take learnings from other industries to help us to improve and grow our industry.

Diversification of income and becoming less reliant on PBS has been one of our business goals since we purchased Donnybrook Pharmacy 11 years ago. That was a good plan that has become more relevant since the commencement of 60-day dispensing.

We wanted to become a destination for health and this journey has been a long road with a lot of self-discovery through trial and error. We were fortunate enough to have partnered with Amcal early. We saw them as a brand that would offer consistency from a retail perspective, taking the burden off me as an owner to create the retail theatre, allowing me to concentrate my efforts on being the pharmacist and growing our footprint in the health services space.

The key to growth in the health services space has been the ability to execute a service and to do so consistently. By consistency I am not only talking about the ability to produce quality outcomes for patients regularly, I am also talking about availability and being able to service many demographics by offering our services during all opening hours, and most importantly on a Saturday. This last point is one that has been difficult as it requires you to have the correct mix of pharmacist availability and trained staff so there is always someone rostered on who is knowledgeable in that service or health condition.

Initially we started the journey with cosmetic changes to the pharmacy such as installing 3 consulting rooms, ensuring that our dispensary workflow was as efficient as possible and that our pharmacists could stand forward and not have to dispense. The biggest barrier to this was not store layout but upskilling our Pharmacy Assistants and empowering them to take control of the dispensary, stock control and daily workflow. This created the time for us to build up our services and to develop consistency and reliability in the services we offer.

We then had to step into a growth mindset and implement more technology into our pharmacy to help us to further enhance our efficiencies. Initially with something as simple as promoting MedAdvisor and controlling our workflow. Then we stepped into automation through an Alpaca DAA machine and have now graduated up to full dispensary automation with a Meditech robot.

This growth mindset also helped us to look at other health industries such as GPs, physios etc to see how we could deliver a more efficient service and led us to engaging better with our online booking tool; making it a pivotal piece of our daily workflow.

Next, we implemented customer management software which ensured consistency for the patient across all the health services, ease of communication with patients and GPs and provided the ability to offer telehealth consults if required. It even allows us to send pre-appointment questionnaires which, when complete, populates the patient's details.

The next step, and one that helped to accelerate our progress, was the creation of the health concierge position, a position that really helped to cement that consistency in our service as that team member is focused on services and not distracted by the chaos that is everyday Community Pharmacy. This position takes the clerical workload off the pharmacists and has created more time for consultations. It also ensures more follow-up with both patients and GPs which has increased the number of repeat visits, and ensures the pharmacist is organised and the room is ready for the consult before the patient arrives.

Consultation and promotion of our services has further strengthened our relationship with other healthcare providers within our region. Initially, we reach out to each practice and ask for the best point of contact, then follow up with an email detailing our services and asking if they would like us to come and talk to the nurses and GPs about the services our pharmacy offers to the community. We have been surprised by the positive response and the willingness of GPs to engage with our services.

Two of the key aspects for success in achieving referrals are leaving material for the GP to give to the patient (referral pad or flyer) and ensuring that when a patient is referred to us, we communicate the outcome of the appointment back to the GP. Positive patient experiences have encouraged the GPs to continue

to refer new patients as they are happy with not only the outcomes but the way the service is delivered.

Above all, our strong team is the most important element and is the key to our success and the growth of our business. For me, the journey to becoming a better leader has been the most rewarding, but also the most challenging aspect. We have created space for daily department huddles, monthly one-on-ones and team leadership meetings. These allow staff to meet and talk about their priorities as a team, develop a plan and create a culture of support for each other.

The creation of the huddles and one-on-ones has allowed our monthly staff meetings to be more education focused, and ensures we approach our community with a uniform message around catalogues, health campaigns and advice. These key factors create consistency in the customer experience through staff being aware of everything that is happening in the store rather than being siloed into retail, dispensary or health services.

The journey is still continuing today and we are always looking for new opportunities in the health services field, by observing gaps in services in our community, different pools of funding, and/or creating private fee-for-service initiatives. In the last 3 months we have implemented a cannabis education service, weight management service and the ability for patients to book one-on-one time with a pharmacist for either a short or long consultation.

During this journey, we have found that our business has grown evenly across all areas such as dispensary, retail and health services which makes us believe that we are on the right path to creating a point of difference and becoming the pharmacy of choice in our area as we truly are a complete health care destination.



THE POWER OF EXIT INTERVIEWS

In Driving High Performance

Effective feedback is an integral aspect of fostering a high-performing team. An exit interview, conducted upon an individual's departure from an organization, serves as a potent tool for gathering insights that can enhance organisational and team performance.



In the realm of high-performance organizations, actively seeking feedback from employees throughout the employee lifecycle ensures a foundation of honesty when it comes to exit interviews.

At Leading Teams, we emphasise the significance of genuine conversations and meaningful connections as the cornerstone for positive feedback outcomes. Cultivating open lines of communication and building trust within relationships becomes paramount in effective team leadership.

By nurturing relationships and promoting a culture of open communication, leaders can then shift their focus to other crucial aspects of providing feedback to their teams to drive performance and achieve results.

Establishing a culture of open communication and continuous improvement begins with a thorough understanding of your team and actively supporting their success. In addition to working in a safe and inclusive environment, they are entitled to:

- Understand what is expected of them – have role clarity and understand the values and behaviours.
- Know how their performance is being assessed.
- Be informed about the potential outcomes resulting from their performance or behaviour.
- Understand the process for a successful exit from the organisation, leaving behind a positive legacy.

High-performing organisations must have a set of values and behaviours, they are often encapsulated in a team trademark. A mutually agreed-upon set of norms governing team culture, perception, and conduct. Team trademarks typically emerge from the team's overarching culture, values, and purpose. These foundational values not only shape the team's identity but also serve as a robust framework, providing context for the delivery of feedback.



Tips for Successful Exit Interviews

1. DEFINE THE GOAL AND PLAN AHEAD

Prior to engaging in an exit interview, clearly define the purpose of the conversation.

Effective feedback involves preparation, delivery, and follow-up. Determine what you want to achieve and how best to approach the conversation.

The success of your feedback depends significantly on choosing the right moment and setting. A neutral, private space is best for sensitive discussions.

2. STRUCTURE THE FEEDBACK

Using a review tool to structure feedback can be helpful for both parties. At Leading Teams, we use a peer review tool based on the 'stop, start, keep' method, which explores one to two things to stop and start doing, followed by a series of things to keep doing. This creates balance when discussing what's working well and areas for improvement. This is a helpful tool to use to seek feedback from employees on their exit on what their organisation should stop, start and keep doing.

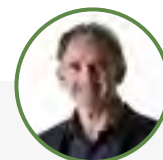
3. POST-INTERVIEW ENGAGEMENT

The conclusion of the interview doesn't mark the end of the process; following up is crucial. It's essential for both parties to reconnect after the event, prompting questions such as, "What resonated with you during the exit interview?" or "How did you feel afterward?" These inquiries aid in understanding the departing individual's perspective and can bring to light any lingering concerns. A prompt follow-up contributes to ensuring that the interview remains a constructive and positive experience for all involved.

4. REVIEW

Organisations should undertake a comprehensive review to identify recurring themes, such as employees' reasons for departure. This process helps prioritise areas that require attention in terms of employee engagement and retention, ultimately contributing to the enhancement of overall organisational performance.

The real power of an exit interview is achieved when an organisation first has a healthy culture that values relationships, supports genuine conversations and is motivated to continuously improve.



FIND OUT MORE

To connect with Leading Teams and learn more about how culture drive performance, please visit our website www.leadingteams.net.au

MITIGATING FLOOD DAMAGE RISKS

Floods are an unfortunate part of life for many people and businesses in Australia and the devastation they cause can be catastrophic. Sadly, the recovery from flood damage is often not as quick as people would hope and this can have significant consequences for businesses.





We can't prevent a flood from occurring, but we can take steps to reduce the impact of a flood. The tips below will assist business owners and their staff be better prepared for a flood and better able to prevent or reduce impacts to the business. They'll help you get back on your feet and trading again sooner.

For the purpose of this article, the definition of Flood is as per your Product Disclosure Statement (PDS), which is:

Flood means the covering of normally dry land by water that has escaped or been released from the normal confines of any of the following:

- a. a lake (whether or not it has been altered or modified);
- b. a river (whether or not it has been altered or modified);
- c. a creek (whether or not it has been altered or modified);
- d. another natural watercourse (whether or not it has been altered or modified);
- e. a reservoir;
- f. a canal; or
- g. a dam.

Pre-Flood Planning

- Make yourself aware of the flood rating and likelihood for the location you're in. If new to an area, engage with others who live and work there to understand the flood history of that area.
- When fitting out your business, consider using materials which are less susceptible to damage when wet, therefore limiting the potential need for replacement after a flood. If you're part of a larger organisation and don't have complete ownership or control over the fit out of your business, have a conversation with your organisation to raise their awareness of this need. This isn't always obvious to those who live outside of flood risk areas.
- Have an evacuation plan and ensure all staff are familiar with this. It should include details on the likely warning timeframes and cover not just leaving the premises, but also the area if people need to move to higher ground. Again, engage with others in the area to assist in creating a safe plan.
- Have a plan for moving stock, electronic equipment, and other moveable equipment and furniture where possible. This might be to a higher level of the building or to another premises/location less likely to be impacted by flooding.
- Have a plan for sandbagging both outside the premises as well as inside over floor drains and toilets. There are sand-free sandbags available which are worth considering. > Prepare an emergency kit that allows access to important information, equipment or tools. There'll be occasions where the damage to a building is so great that it can't be safely entered. Therefore, business owners must consider what they'll need to access to both deal with the damage caused (such as insurance details and an asset register) and maintain business operations as much as is possible.
- Have your data and any business information which is stored electronically backed up in a way that can be accessed off site. This is important if the premises can't be accessed or if information has been lost due to power shortages. Alternatively, consider cloud hosted storage solutions to protect your data.
- Ensure your business' asset register is up to date. A detailed asset register means the process of an insurance claim is much faster and hassle free.
- Discuss insurance cover, including business interruption, and its cost with your Guild Insurance Account Manager or insurance adviser and ensure you understand the financial protection afforded to you in the event of a flood.
- Have a maintenance program in place so your building and fit out is in an ideal condition. A building which has been allowed to deteriorate or has been poorly maintained may suffer more damage during a flood.
- If there are maintenance issues with your building and you lease the premises, engage with your landlord as soon as possible to discuss a plan and the necessary action.
- Develop a business continuity plan that will detail how you'll manage your customer needs as well as your business and financial needs immediately after a catastrophic event. Thinking about this before an event can make the immediate impact and stress more manageable.
- Given there'll likely be high demand for many services and trades, it would be wise to create a list of local services before there's an urgent need. Utilise the knowledge of your local real estate agents; they can be a great support for putting you in touch with local trades and services.

Planning When a Flood is Imminent

- Don't be complacent when there are flood warnings. Floods not only cause significant damage to buildings and other material possessions, but sadly they can lead to loss of life. Listen to all local advice and ensure you don't delay implementing your flood preparation plan in a safe way, given time available before floodwaters are forecast to inundate your property.
- Have a plan for where and how you'll access local and current advice when a flood is approaching, to be sure you can make the most appropriate decisions regarding when to move furniture and equipment and when to evacuate.
- When there are warnings that a flood appears likely, bring inside any outdoor furniture, equipment or other items where possible. This not only prevents them from being damaged by heavy rain and rising water levels, but also stops them from being washed away.
- When evacuating a building due to a flood, where possible turn off the gas and electricity supply. Be sure you know how to do this ahead of time.



Post-Flood Response

- Contact your Guild Insurance Account Manager or insurance adviser as soon as is possible to notify them of the event and any losses suffered.
- If you begin the clean-up yourself and wish to dispose of any damaged and unsalvageable items, ensure you take a photo of these items first, and keep a list of what's been thrown out, to assist with your insurance claim.
- If you aren't fully insured and are therefore managing aspects of the clean up and recovery yourself, it's advisable to begin by prioritising what needs to be done and determining how you'll do this and whose assistance you'll need. There are restoration services available that can assist with this.
- Following natural disasters, there's often government support available to assist in the recovery. Be sure to stay up to date on what's available from your local, state and federal governments.



FOR FURTHER ADVICE AND SUPPORT:

Please contact Guild Insurance on **1800 810 213**, or visit **guildinsurance.com.au**

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MITIGATING STORM DAMAGE RISKS

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Storms are an unfortunate part of life for many people and businesses in Australia and the devastation they cause can be catastrophic. Sadly, the recovery from storm damage is often not as quick as people would hope and this can have significant consequences for businesses.



We can't prevent a storm from occurring, but we can take some simple steps to reduce the impact of a storm. The tips below will assist business owners and their staff be better prepared for a storm and better able to prevent or reduce impacts to the business. They'll help you get back on your feet and trading again sooner.

- Have a maintenance program in place so your building is in an ideal condition. A building which has been allowed to deteriorate or has been poorly maintained is likely to suffer more serious damage during a storm. For example, a roof which is in poor condition is more likely to let in water during heavy rain and insurance may not cover you.
- If there are issues with your building and you lease the premise, engage with your landlord as soon as possible to discuss a plan and take action.
- Regularly clean gutters, down pipes and drains. A build-up of debris means water can't flow as intended which can lead to water entering a roof cavity when raining.
- When there are warnings a storm is approaching, bring inside any outdoor furniture, equipment or other items where possible. This not only prevents them from being damaged, such as by falling branches, but also stops them from being blown away.
- If your property is prone to water entering during heavy rains, have a plan for how you will lessen the impact of this, such as moving items off the floor where possible and sandbagging outside the premises. There are sand-free sandbags available which will make this process more manageable.
- Trim trees which could fall on your property. Check with your local council regarding any guidelines or permits which may apply. And be sure you engage experts to do this as cutting down branches is more dangerous and difficult than it may seem.
- Prepare an emergency kit that allows access to important information and equipment or tools. There'll be occasions where the damage to a building is so great that it can't be safely entered. Therefore, business owners need to consider what they need to access to both deal with the damage caused (such as insurance details and an asset register) and maintain business operations as much as is possible.
- Have your data and any business information which is stored electronically backed up in a way that can be accessed off site. This is important if the premises can't be accessed or if information has been lost due to power shortages.
- Ensure your business' asset register is up to date. A detailed asset register means the process of an insurance claim is much faster and hassle free.
- Ensure your insurance policy is up to date and provides the necessary cover for your building and assets and ensure you have considered business interruption insurance as part of your cover.
- Follow all local advice and warnings both in terms of preparation when a storm is approaching and maintaining safety during the storm.



FOR FURTHER ADVICE & SUPPORT:

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DIETARY INTERVENTION FOR IRRITABLE BOWEL DISEASE

Irritable Bowel Disease (IBD) is an umbrella term used to characterise disorders that cause chronic inflammation at various sites along the gastrointestinal tract, it includes both Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis.¹

Words | Bridget Scrogings



Both conditions share similar symptoms, including urgent diarrhoea, rectal bleeding, abdominal pain and excessive gas.¹ The severity of these symptoms can fluctuate significantly, with patients experiencing unpredictable flares and remissions. During flares physical symptoms can be severe and debilitating, with additional psychological disorders, such as anxiety and depression, frequently reported.²

Despite their similarities, there are distinct differences which allow the two conditions to be differentiated.

Ulcerative colitis: involves continuous inflammation and ulcers along the lining of the large intestine (colon) and rectum.¹

Crohn's disease: involves non-continuous sections of inflammation anywhere in the digestive tract, from the mouth to the anus. It can often penetrate through the intestinal lining and involve the deeper layers of the digestive tract.¹

Given the profound effect IBD can have on quality of life there is great interest by patients and healthcare professionals alike to identify potentially useful interventions for the management of the condition.

Pathophysiology

While the aetiology of IBD remains largely unknown, research has suggested that it likely involves a complex interaction between external environmental triggers, microbial environmental and genetic predispositions.^{1,3} This interaction contributes to an inappropriate immune reaction and an exaggerated inflammatory response in the gastrointestinal tract.

It is not yet understood which factor plays the greatest role in the development and progression of IBD, but there is growing interest in the influence of the microbial environment.⁴

Patients with IBD have been found to have an imbalanced composition of microbiota, known as dysbiosis.⁵ When compared with healthy individuals, patients with IBD have a lower microbial diversity, with a greater abundance of opportunistic bacteria (such as Bacteroidetes and Proteobacteria) and a smaller presence of beneficial bacteria (such as Firmicutes).^{4,5}

This imbalance translates to an increase in inflammatory cytokines such as tumour necrosis factor (TNF) and interleukins-6 and a decrease in beneficial metabolites such as butyrate.⁵ These changes allow for disturbances to the mucosal barrier, which contributes to intestinal inflammation and IBD development.⁵

Given the extensive research indicating that both microbial diversity and inflammation can be modulated through diet, the potential of a therapeutic diet for IBD is plausible. Yet without expert guidance patients can put themselves at high risk of unnecessary dietary restriction. As such, healthcare professionals should be familiar with the evidence behind popular therapeutic diets in order to provide sound education and eliminate misconceptions.

Gluten Free Diet

Gluten is the general name for the complex proteins glutenin and gliadin present in most carbohydrate foods, such as wheat, rye and barley.

For individuals with Coeliac disease, the consumption of gluten is associated with symptoms of bloating, diarrhoea, abdominal pain and fatigue. In these patients, gluten peptides trigger an abnormal immune response that causes intestinal inflammation and damage.⁶

Given the similarities between IBD and coeliac disease, there was early interest

in whether gluten was contributing to the gastrointestinal inflammation identified in IBD and whether a gluten-free diet (GFD) could be an appropriate therapeutic diet.⁶

Despite patients with IBD self-reporting improvements in clinical symptoms following dietary gluten elimination⁷, to date there has been no association between the intake of gluten and IBD progression.⁶ By contrast, research has shown that the unnecessary removal of gluten may have a negative impact on microbial diversity which may have a negative impact on gastrointestinal health.⁸ Palma et al found that when healthy subjects trialed a GFD, the microbial implications imitated those evident in the active phase of IBD; a reduction in beneficial bacterial and an increase in opportunistic bacteria populations.⁸ In addition, research into the nutritional quality of gluten-free products consistently shows lower protein content with high fat and salt content compared to their equivalent gluten-containing products.⁹

It is likely that self-reported improvements are a result of changes in diet quality. For example, the benefits arise from eliminating refined carbohydrate grains rather than the removal of gluten itself. This hypothesis is supported by the well-established association between a diet high in refined carbohydrates and both an increased presence of inflammatory markers and lower microbial diversity.¹⁰

Therefore, there is insufficient evidence to recommend a GFD to individuals with IBD unless coeliac disease or a gluten intolerance has been diagnosed.¹¹



Mediterranean Diet & IBD

The gold standard for an anti-inflammatory diet is the Mediterranean diet (MD); heavy on vegetables, whole grains, olive oil; moderate on fish and red wine and light on red meat and processed foods.

MD has been shown to prevent the onset of dysbiosis by promoting microbial diversity and enriching beneficial bacteria, which support the mucosal barrier function and reduce intestinal inflammation.¹⁰ In patients with IBD, MD adherence has been associated with decreased inflammatory markers such as tumour necrosis factor (TNF) and interleukins-6.¹²

Despite there being limited research, the MD has been shown to reduce symptoms and improve quality of life in patients with IBD.^{12,15} When compared with other therapeutic diets, MD stands out as the preferred dietary intervention, based on clinical outcomes, ease of following and the other health benefits associated with MD.¹⁵

While more research is required, the MD can be recommended as a supportive dietary intervention to reduce disease markers and potentially relieve symptoms for patients with IBD.¹¹ This advice is appropriate for IBD patients during remission and low symptom states, however during flares these patients may need to alter their diet texture and composition.

Recommendations

Although there is limited data from well-designed clinical trials to inform the routine use of any particular diet for treatment of IBD, it has been well-documented that patients with IBD are at higher risk of nutrient deficiencies and are more likely to avoid specific foods because of misconceived beliefs that specific foods will cause gastrointestinal symptoms.¹¹ As such patients should be gently discouraged from trialling any restrictive diets and dietary education should emphasise the importance of following a nutritionally adequate dietary pattern, such as MD, to promote and support long-term health.



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Calamine Lotion is on the World Health Organization's List of Essential Medicines . Calamine Lotion has its origins as far back as 1500 BC .

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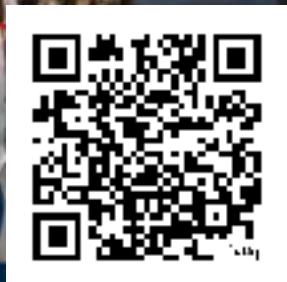
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ASSESSMENT Q'S | P.55



ASSESSMENT Q'S | P.56

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Succeeding with Pharmacy Services in 2024

- Understand consumer expectations and the significance of consumer experience in the context of pharmacy business success.
- Recall key elements to consider when exploring new service options for a pharmacy.
- Understand how to create a goal-orientated action plan for implementing a new pharmacy service.

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Navigating Ear Health: A Guide to Managing Common Ear Conditions in Community Pharmacy

- Recall the symptoms and differential diagnosis of common ear conditions.
- Recall appropriate OTC and prescription medications indicated for common ear conditions.
- Understand the importance of providing education around the prevention and management of common ear conditions.

SUCCESSING WITH PHARMACY SERVICES IN 2024

In Australia, 2023 has been the year of monumental change for community pharmacy. Whilst many had started the year feeling there was a glimpse of light at the end of an exhausting tunnel (aka pandemic pandemonium), the pharmacy industry was soon in the midst of a heated debate with GPs over pharmacist prescribing, only to be overtaken by the tsunami-sized news that was 60-day dispensing (60DD)...and then before one could say “no, you’ll need a new script to get two lots of your medicine” the year was over.





Learning Objectives

On completing this activity pharmacists should be able to:

1. Understand consumer expectations and the significance of consumer experience in the context of pharmacy business success.
2. Recall key elements to consider when exploring new service options for a pharmacy.
3. Understand how to create a goal-orientated action plan for implementing a new pharmacy service.

Competency standards addressed:

1.1, 1.4, 1.5, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.7



Accreditation Number: A2403ITK1

Expires: 31/12/2025

This activity has been accredited for 1.0 hr of Group 1 CPD (or 1.0 CPD credit) suitable for inclusion in an individual pharmacist's CPD plan which can be converted to 1.0 hr of Group 2 CPD (or 2.0 CPD credits) upon successful completion of relevant assessment activities.

Whilst 2024 will no doubt bring its own challenges, a new year also signifies not only a fresh start but also an opportunity to establish new objectives with a renewed sense of enthusiasm and invigoration. And what will the year hold for our industry? What do consumers and, more importantly, patients want in 2024? What are the secrets to business success and retaining customers (and dollars)?

The undeniable opportunity for community pharmacy, perhaps more than ever, lies in leveraging the value a pharmacist-patient interaction brings to the health consumer experience – this is where the value of pharmacy services arises. Not only as a means of mitigating the impact of 60DD and maximising the opportunities arising from the extended scope of practice but as a way of providing an experience that will have the patient coming back for more. So, what does 'good' service look like in 2024, and how do you take those first steps towards setup and implementation of a new service in your pharmacy?

What Does 'Good' Look Like to Your Patients?



“THERE IS ONLY ONE BOSS – THE CUSTOMER. AND HE CAN FIRE EVERYBODY IN THE COMPANY FROM THE CHAIRMAN ON DOWN, SIMPLY BY SPENDING HIS MONEY SOMEWHERE ELSE.”

– Sam Walton, Founder of Wal-Mart

As Sam Walton suggests, when defining 'good' in terms of service, experience, and outcomes, the focus should be on the consumer, or in this case, the patient. The patients' expectation and perception of the received service and the associated experience determine their level of satisfaction. The formula is simple: fall short of expectations and you have a dissatisfied patient, meet, or ideally exceed expectations and you have a satisfied, or even delighted patient. The patient expectations come from a set of ideas and anticipations about a product, service, or brand that the patient has. These ideas are often shaped by factors such as personal preference or bias, awareness, knowledge, and previous experience. Not surprisingly, increased access to information has changed expectations over time, making for a highly informed (or often misinformed) and hence demanding consumer.^{1,2,3}

And what about the patient experience – **the sum of all touch points and interactions your patient has with your pharmacy.** With data indicating 62% of consumers say their experience with one industry influences their expectations of others, it would be naïve to think pharmacy shouldn't be taking inspiration from leaders in other industries and what they are doing to delight their customers. What does a patient think and feel about their experience visiting a pharmacy, having earlier walked out of an Apple store or the latest trendy café? Whilst we can not necessarily compare the product or reason for shopping at either, it may be pertinent to reflect on the consumer experience with other establishments. Looking up any article, blog, research paper on business, marketing or strategy reveals a mountain of evidence to suggest experience is the number one success factor in winning and retaining customers. In fact, regardless of business type, size, or industry, research suggests experience surpasses price and product as the most important factor for customers, with some compelling data to warrant giving it the time and attention it deserves.^{1,2,3}

- 71% of consumers polled indicated they made a purchase decision based on quality of experience.
- 88% indicated the experience a company provides is as important as its product or service.
- 91% of consumers said they were more likely to make a repeat purchase after a positive experience.
- 86% were willing to pay more for a great experience.

What makes this even more compelling is that research also suggests whilst positive experiences influence purchasing decisions in almost every industry, they are particularly influential in healthcare, with a willingness to pay a 14% price premium for health services with a positive experience.²

So, what contributes to a great patient experience and satisfies expectations? Insights from numerous sources suggest consumers across the board highly value speed, convenience, knowledge, and personalised help. In healthcare, researchers analysed more than 600 articles to identify three key themes that influenced patient satisfaction and experience: the environment, staff and (indirectly) the processes which enable the delivery of care.^{1,2,3,4,5,9} In other words, providing a professionally presented space, access to a friendly and knowledgeable pharmacist, and efficient processes puts one on track for success!

And whilst there has been an increase in online consumerism and adoption of digital health tech, there is evidence to show bricks and mortar retail that provides a good in-store experience is drawing customers back. Not only do Australian consumers prefer to shop in a store (73% according to data published by the Financial Review in December 2023), but pharmacy ranked as the number one service consumers wanted on their local main street.^{7,8} Adding to this is the 2023 EY Global Health Survey, which found 80% of health consumers in Australia prefer face-to-face consultations with their health care professionals. A further 80% of those respondents said they felt this allowed them to develop a personal connection with their provider, and 73% said it improved the overall quality of the consultation.^{6,7}

The prospects for community pharmacy in 2024 are both exciting and encouraging! The industry is well-positioned to align with patient expectations through the provision of pharmacist-led services. Additionally, there is an opportunity to capitalize on these services by providing patients with compelling reasons to visit the pharmacy beyond the routine task of filling prescriptions. While a number of pharmacies excel in offering a range of services, there are still many that miss out on the rewards to be gained from service delivery. While the idea of implementing new services can be daunting, the key to avoiding overwhelm is to maintain simplicity in the process.



Identifying Service Options for your Pharmacy

The options for pharmacy services have always been broad, however extended scope of practice and the increasing demand for accessible and convenient healthcare have further amplified this. This can make it difficult to know where to start – so here are a few areas to consider.

EXISTING, STRUCTURED, COMMUNITY PHARMACY PROGRAMS FUNDED UNDER THE CPA

These are the services most pharmacists are familiar with, such as supply of DAAs, Opioid Dependence Treatment, Meds Checks, Medication Reviews, vaccination services, etc. The Pharmacy Programs Administrator website (www.ppaonline.com.au) provides clear and easy-to-follow information about participation, payment eligibility, as well as a number of useful resources to get you started with planning and implementation. Whilst these have been in place for some time now, a number of pharmacies still miss out on the 'low hanging fruit' revenue these can provide.

EXTENDED SCOPE OF PRACTICE PILOT PROGRAMS

Whilst still an evolving space that varies depending on which state you practice in, these pharmacy pilots not only recognise pharmacists' clinical skills but reinforce the pharmacy as a health-centric destination rather than a retailer. Information about eligibility, participation, and payments can be found on state health department websites, and additional useful resources and state-relevant training are also available through the Australasian College of Pharmacy as well as the PSA websites.

OTHER PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

In addition to the formal programs discussed above, the options for valuable pharmacy services are much broader, with several great examples out in our industry to take inspiration from. These options vary from OTC based to more clinical services, which generate revenue from an associated product, a fee for the service, or both. Examples include in-house headlice treatment clinics, pharmacist-led health checks, minor ailment consultations, point-of-care testing, specialised services provided by diabetes educators, nurse practitioners or naturopaths, wound care clinics, weight loss programs – and many more.



The scope of pharmacy services is bound only by creativity and passion. When appropriately packaged, these services can be strategically positioned as fee-for-service offerings to the patient, thereby establishing a new revenue stream. Reflecting on the previously discussed value of patient experience, this entails delivering the service in a manner that ensures exceptional experience and perceived value to the patient. Critically, the service should be administered by a proficient and knowledgeable professional within a dedicated, professionally presented environment that visually conveys the message that this is a 'clinical health space' rather than a 'miscellaneous back room.' A formal booking structure for the

service should be considered along with professionally presented resources (such as patient information leaflets, personalised plans, etc.) that include your pharmacy details. Whilst you can certainly develop a packaged service around an area of interest, you may also consider a ready-to-go 'off-the-shelf' service solution.

An 'off the shelf' structured clinical service focused on a particular therapeutic area, such as asthma and hay fever, can be a great way to start for many pharmacies. These 'clinics' often include full onboarding programs that cover staff education, upskilling in the therapeutic area, advice on implementing and launching the clinic at your pharmacy, as well as tools and promotional material to get started.

Packaging up pharmacists' skills and knowledge in this professionally structured way, delivered in an equally professionally presented consult room environment, provides a compelling value proposition to the patient, allowing these clinics to be successfully positioned as a fee-for-service offering.

With so many service options to consider, a simple brainstorming exercise is a good place to start. Involving the whole team in the early stages of planning has its advantages for engagement and 'buy-in'. Creating a short list of a few options is a good place to start. Here is an example of factors to take into consideration when selecting the right service for your pharmacy.

Pharmacy Service Option Review

| Component | Option 1 | Option 2 | Option 3 |
|------------------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Area of interest | | | |
| Target market | | | |
| Differentiation | | | |
| Resources | | | |
| Facilities & Tools | | | |
| Promotion | | | |
| Measuring & Monitoring | | | |

AREAS OF INTEREST

Is there something that you and/or your team are particularly passionate about? Being passionate about a project will maintain your drive, enthusiasm, and motivation.

TARGET MARKET

Who are your patients? Young families? Elderly? Are you located in a CBD area? Shopping centre? Rural town? What services would your patients benefit from? Is there a particular health need or service gap in your community? What is the size of the opportunity, and could you attract a new group of patients with a service? You may need to do a bit of basic research, but this can also identify some great opportunities.

DIFFERENTIATION

What services could give you a point of difference? If there are similar existing options offered in the area, could you do it differently? Better? Identifying a service that will be unique to your business that your team can excel in will give you a competitive edge – regardless of how many and how close other pharmacies are. As the data suggests, if your service can provide the patient with an exceptional experience, they are likely to return... and be willing to pay a premium.

RESOURCES

What resourcing will be required? What skills does your team have, and will any training be required? When could you

offer the service to make it work with your current roster? Who will be the 'champion' for the service? Your team is not just necessary for the delivery of the service but instrumental in promoting it. Effective internal communication is essential to keep the team informed about the service implementation project, as this plays a critical role in ensuring its success.

FACILITIES

What are the requirements to provide the service? What area(s) can be repurposed? What is required to create an appropriate clinical health space for the service, and what will this cost? As discussed, the environment plays a big role in the patient experience. The International Health Facility Guidelines provide a wealth of resources



for the development of health facilities, including references to the Australasian guidelines. Local industry associations and state health departments provide additional guidelines, and you can also refer to experts in the field for further advice.¹⁰

PROMOTION

How will you attract patients to the service? Historically, the community has had a low understanding of the services offered by pharmacies, despite some improvements in patient awareness due to the pandemic.¹¹ Ensuring your target audience is aware and understands your service is critical to success, and leveraging your team is one of the best ways to create awareness and engage patients. Keeping it simple works. A personalised chat by one of your staff to let a suitable candidate know about your service can be very effective! Also, consider relevant community groups you could approach to promote the service, e.g., run information sessions. You could advertise locally. Use existing channels such as your website, etc. Some of the 'off the shelf' services provide promotional material in hard copy and/or digital format – simple, easy, and ready-to-go marketing tools that help create awareness.

MEASURING & MONITORING

How will the success of the service be measured? In order to assess if the service is meeting set goals and objectives, a set of clear, measurable performance indicators is required. These may reflect a direct uptake of the service, e.g. conduct 'x' minor ailment consultations per week, generate x dollars from service fees/funded remuneration, or generate x dollars in sales linked to the service (e.g., sales of allergic rhinitis products – associated with the provision of a hay fever and asthma fee-for-service clinic). Patient satisfaction surveys, whilst requiring a bit of proactive effort, can provide a useful guide on how the service is perceived. Templates for simple Customer Satisfaction Score (CSAT) surveys are readily available online and are straightforward to interpret. Slightly differing from an NPS score that assesses the overall relationship a patient may have with your pharmacy, a CSAT survey provides a more specific measure of satisfaction with the particular service.¹² In addition to identifying the parameters and setting targets, consider the frequency of measuring each – some results may be more immediate and faster to track (i.e., those directly reflecting service rollout), whilst others, which are a secondary benefit of the service may need more time.

Formalising the Goal and Plan

After reviewing the shortlist and choosing which service to implement, it is important to set clear goals and draft the rollout plan. Keeping it simple is essential to stay motivated and on track.

CLARIFYING YOUR GOAL

S.M.A.R.T. goal setting is a simple yet practical approach that also pulls in some of the groundwork you have done with your review above.

Going through the steps and writing them down helps to organize thoughts and provides a useful tool for sharing the service project with the team. There are a number of free, readily available 'goal' templates online. The graphic below illustrates the S.M.A.R.T. goal elements, and there is also a useful summary available online at Harvard.¹³ When setting goals, it is important to keep the patient in mind – how does the goal contribute to providing the patient with an exceptional experience?



MAPPING OUT THE ACTION PLAN

The final step to getting the new service project underway is outlining the steps needed to reach Day 1 in an action plan. Referring to the considerations worked through in the earlier sections will provide a good starting point. The purpose of the action plan is to set out the specific tasks that need to be completed before the service can be launched, who will be responsible for each task, key milestones, and dates, as well as how completion/success of each task will be assessed or measured. Delegating tasks is not only helpful in avoiding overwhelm, but is also a great way to get everyone excited! An example action plan template has been provided for reference below, and there are several free, readily accessible templates available online that can be adapted.¹⁰

Action Plan

| Service | Description of Activity (What specific activities are required for the inactive?) | Responsible (Who is responsible?) | Timeframe (What is the planned timeframe/due date?) | Measurement (How will progree and success be measured?) |
|---------|--|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| | 1. | | | |
| | 2. | | | |
| | 3. | | | |

Success with pharmacy services in 2024 is achievable and is within everyone’s reach. All that is required is a clear goal and a well-structured plan. While some may be already successfully operating a service-focused pharmacy business model, there are numerous pharmacies that, for various reasons, have yet to tap into these opportunities.

The research on health consumer needs provides a preponderance of evidence, overwhelmingly in favour of professional pharmacy service, and the success stories from pharmacies embracing this approach further support this. The value of providing an exceptional experience in the pharmacy is, without argument, the number-one success factor for any pharmacy, and pharmacist-led pharmacy services offer an ideal platform to elevate the patient experience in the pharmacy setting.

A professionally presented environment that conveys a message of high-quality clinical care combined with interaction with the pharmacist forms an essential part of the experience. Implementing a pharmacy service that is delivered in a professional setting and which maximises the value of the pharmacist will not only contribute to revenue but will, most importantly, give your patients a reason to visit the pharmacy beyond the need to fill a prescription and will steer your business to success in 2024.



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NAVIGATING EAR HEALTH

A Guide to Managing Common Ear Conditions in Community Pharmacy

In the dynamic landscape of community pharmacy, patients frequently rely on pharmacists for advice on common ear presentations, making it crucial for pharmacists to be well-informed and equipped to address these concerns. This article will provide an overview of the diagnosis and appropriate pharmacological and non-pharmacological management of various ear-related issues, such as otitis externa, otitis media, cerumen impaction, and tinnitus.





Learning Objectives

On completing this activity pharmacists should be able to:

- Recall the symptoms and differential diagnosis of common ear conditions.
- Recall appropriate OTC and prescription medications indicated for common ear conditions.
- Understand the importance of providing education around the prevention and management of common ear conditions.

Competency standards addressed:

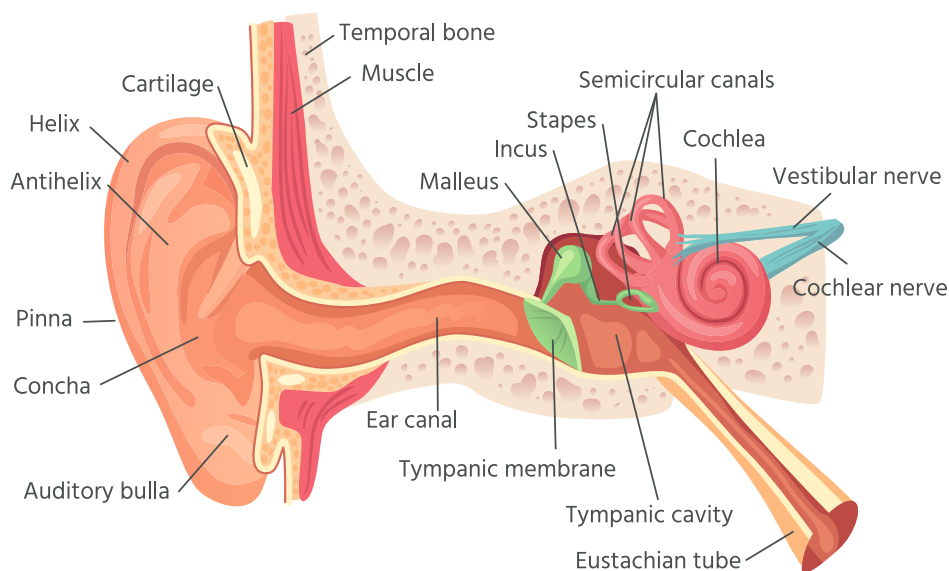
1.5, 2.2, 2.3, 3.1, 3.2, 3.5



Accreditation Number: A2403ITK2

Expires: 31/12/25

This activity has been accredited for 1.0 hr of Group 1 CPD (or 1.0 CPD credit) suitable for inclusion in an individual pharmacist's CPD plan which can be converted to 1.0 hr of Group 2 CPD (or 2.0 CPD credits) upon successful completion of relevant assessment activities.



Acute Diffuse Otitis Externa: The Swimmer's Ear

Acute diffuse otitis externa (ADOE), or swimmer's ear, is the most common inflammatory condition affecting the external auditory canal.¹⁻² The inflammation may extend to the outer ear structures, including the pinna or tragus.^{1,2} ADOE is more common in tropical climates and during summer, often caused by water retained in the ears after swimming. It may be secondary to dermatological conditions such as dermatitis or psoriasis.¹⁻⁵ Incidence of ADOE peaks in children aged between 7 and 12.³

Pseudomonas aeruginosa and *Staphylococcus aureus* are the most common bacterial pathogens associated with ADOE.¹⁻³ Fungal infections, known as otomycosis, occur less frequently than bacterial infections and typically arise following extended antibiotic usage.^{1,2} The most prevalent fungal pathogens in these instances are *Candida* or *Aspergillus* species.¹

In most cases, ADOE resolves quickly with appropriate treatment, however in rare instances, particularly among the immunocompromised or elderly, ADOE can take a malignant form known as necrotising otitis externa, spreading aggressively into the mastoid and temporal bones surrounding the ear canal.

PRESENTATION

Presenting symptoms of OE include ear pain, pruritus, hearing loss, and occasionally discharge. The diagnosis of OE is primarily clinical, with considerations given to factors such as water exposure, humidity, skin conditions, or local trauma that may influence its development.^{1,5} Otoscopy plays a crucial role in distinguishing between different ear conditions. In ADOE, the external ear canal appears inflamed with erythema and oedema when visible. Fungal infections, such as otomycosis, can be identified through otoscopy, where fungal debris is visualised in the canal.^{1,5} Furthermore, distinctive features like white 'blotting paper' debris or black spores observed during otoscopy suggest the presence of specific fungi, typically *Candida* (white) or *Aspergillus* spp (black spores).¹

MANAGEMENT OF ADOE

Pain associated with ADOE can range from mild to severe and all patients should be provided with adequate pain relief.^{1,2} Paracetamol is the preferred choice due to its favourable adverse effects profile however, if the pain is severe, NSAIDs or other stronger pain medications might be warranted. Anaesthetic ear drops are not recommended as they have the potential to impede the effectiveness of topical antibacterials and mask the progression of the infection.

It is crucial to keep the external ear canal dry, and dry aural toilet is recommended for the removal of discharge or debris.¹ This can be performed either by a

healthcare professional or by the patient/carer using rolled tissue spears (**Table 1** describes the process of dry aural toilet). Fungal infections are initially treated with debridement and dry aural toilet.¹ Following this, combination corticosteroid and antimicrobial ear drops are instilled.^{1,2} The choice of ear drops depends on factors like tympanic membrane integrity and whether a fungal infection is present/suspected (See Table 2 for summary).^{1,2} In severe cases with complete occlusion of the ear canal, a wick may be inserted to facilitate ear drop administration.¹ Topical therapy is supplemented with oral antibiotics in cases of fever, spreading inflammation, or associated conditions like diabetes.¹⁻²

Patients are advised to keep the ear dry during and two weeks after treatment.¹ It is recommended to use cotton wool balls coated with white soft paraffin, such as Vaseline®, during showering or bathing and to abstain from swimming during this period.^{4,5} Antiseptic and drying agent ear drops (e.g. acetic acid, ethanol, isopropyl alcohol) may be considered for mild otitis externa; however, they should be avoided if skin is broken or inflamed due to irritation and pain.² They are more often used as preventative measures for recurrent OE.

If symptoms persist, consideration of non-infectious causes, such as dermatitis, is recommended, particularly if pruritus is the dominant symptom. Table 2 summarises the differential diagnosis and management of OE.

Dry mopping ears with tissue spears

Procedure:

1. Prepare tissue spears by taking a piece of toilet paper and twisting it from the corner until a tight tissue spear is formed.
2. Avoid rolling the tissue, as it may become too thick for insertion into the ear canal.
3. Break off the tip (which may be too floppy) and the opposite end of the tissue spear so that the spear is about the length of your thumb.
4. Gently straighten the ear canal by gently pulling the edge of the ear down for infants and toddlers, straight back for young children, and back and up for older children and adults.
5. With a slight twist, insert the tissue spear into the ear canal. Stop when the tissue reaches its limit or if the child reacts by crying, coughing, or blinking (approximately 2.5cm).
6. Leave the spear in place for a few minutes to absorb any discharge
7. Slowly and carefully remove the tissue spear, disposing of it properly.
8. Repeat the process with a new tissue spear until a dry outcome is achieved.

Important consideration:

- If there is ear discharge, ensure the child blows their nose before and during the procedure.
- Insert the tissue probe well into the ear canal near the eardrum (approximately 2.5cm).
- Do not worry about pushing the spear too far; the tissue is soft and should not cause discomfort.



| Cause | Symptoms | Discharge | Treatment options |
|---|--|---|---|
| Bacterial infection | Significant swelling, severe discomfort requiring oral analgesics, fever may be present, lymphadenopathy. | Scant white mucus, occasionally thick in acute infection; bloody discharge in chronic infection | Analgesia (i.e. paracetamol, NSAID) for pain management Corticosteroid and antimicrobial ear drops *: 1. Dexamethasone, framycetin, gramicidin ear drops, 3 drops 3 times daily for 7 days; OR 2. Flumetasone, clioquinol ear drops, 3 drops instilled into the affected ear, twice daily for 7 days |
| Fungal infection | Often asymptomatic, may include pruritus, fullness, tinnitus. | Fluffy white, off-white, black, grey, bluish-green, or yellow discharge. | Antifungal ear drops* 1. Flumetasone, clioquinol ear drops, 3 drops twice daily for 7 days; OR 2. Triamcinolone, neomycin, gramicidin, nystatin ear drops, three drops, three times daily for 3 to 7 days. |
| Systemic dermatological disease (e.g. psoriasis) | Atopic dermatitis: Intensely itchy; generalized skin involvement; red, thickened, crusty, hyperpigmented skin. Psoriasis: Raised, red lesion with silvery-white scale; often itchy. | No discharge | Control systemic dermatological disease. Topical corticosteroids may be used with caution. |
| Contact dermatitis | Sudden onset, red, swollen, itchy lesions; may affect the outer ear and lobe. | No discharge | Remove irritant/allergen. Topical corticosteroids may be used: 1. Hydrocortisone cream applied once daily until skin is clear (up to 1 week); OR 2. Desonide lotion is applied once daily until the skin is clear (up to 1 week). |

*Aminoglycosides are associated with ototoxicity and should be avoided if eardrum perforation cannot be excluded. Flumetasone and clioquinol OR ciprofloxacin+/- hydrocortisone ear drops preferred for patients with a perforated tympanic membrane or the tympanic membrane cannot be visualised.

PREVENTION

Preventing ADOE involves diligent ear care practices, primarily centered around keeping the ears dry. Following the resolution of ADOE, the use of earplugs while swimming, showering, or bathing is advisable.^{1,2} Additionally, the use of drying agents (i.e., acetic acid with isopropyl alcohol ear drops) after water exposure can further aid in prevention.^{1,2,5} It is crucial to emphasise the avoidance of local trauma to the ear canal, and patients should be strongly advised against the use of cotton earbuds.^{1,2} By incorporating these practices into their routine, individuals can significantly reduce the risk of otitis externa recurrence.

Acute Otitis Media

Acute otitis media (AOM) is a prevalent paediatric condition involving inflammation and infection of the middle ear space.^{8,9} The spectrum of otitis media (OM) ranges from mild, such as otitis media with effusion (OME), also known as “glue ear,” to severe, such as chronic suppurative otitis media (CSOM).⁸⁻¹⁰ Episodic occurrences of AOM and OME are common in children, with concerns arising when these become frequent or persistent, particularly within the first six years of life.¹⁰ While most children in developed countries spontaneously recover from AOM episodes, those with persistent OME or CSOM face potential long-term consequences. All types of OM result in conductive hearing loss with varying degrees of severity.¹⁰ AOM is primarily caused by viral infections and is generally self-limiting, with spontaneous resolution occurring in over 80% of children within 2 to 3 days.¹⁰ Bacterial AOM, more common in Indigenous Australian populations, involves pathogens like *Streptococcus pneumoniae* and *Haemophilus influenzae*.^{8,10}

The impact of OM on hearing can have profound effects on auditory-language development, school performance, and long-term mental health, emphasising the need for early intervention in high-risk populations, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.¹⁰

PRESENTATION AND DIAGNOSIS

Common signs and symptoms of AOM include acute onset of ear pain, fever, irritability, and loss of appetite.^{8,10-12} These symptoms may or may not be accompanied by symptoms of upper respiratory infection such as a runny nose, sore throat, or cough.^{8,10-12} In more severe cases, discharge from the ear (clear yellow fluid or blood from the ear) serves as a notable symptom, suggestive of a potential perforated tympanic membrane.^{8,11-13} Confirmation of the diagnosis is made when either bulging of the tympanic membrane) or otorrhoea (provided acute diffuse otitis externa has been excluded) is observed through physical examination.^{8,13}

MANAGEMENT OF AOM

The management of AOM involves ensuring that all patients receive adequate analgesia to alleviate pain and fever associated with acute infection, with paracetamol being the preferred choice due to its favourable adverse effect profile.^{8,9} NSAIDs can also be considered if not contraindicated.^{8,9} Limited evidence suggests that the use of anaesthetic ear drops (e.g., 2% lidocaine solution) in conjunction with oral analgesia may provide faster pain relief, particularly in children over three years of age.^{8,9}

Oral antibiotics are frequently prescribed for OM, and their routine use has been discouraged due to several factors. Most children with acute OM experience symptoms like pain for only 24 hours, and spontaneous resolution is common.⁹ Antibacterial use contributes to drug-resistant bacteria, and it nearly doubles the incidence of adverse effects such as diarrhoea, vomiting, and rash in children.⁹ For mildly unwell patients, symptomatic

treatment with analgesics is recommended for the first 24–48 hours, and oral antibacterials should be initiated only if symptoms persist beyond this time frame.^{8,10-13} However, early antibacterial treatment may be appropriate for some patient groups, including:

- Infants younger than six months
- Children younger than two years with bilateral infection
- Children who are systemically unwell (e.g., lethargic, pale, very irritable); fever alone is not an indication for antibiotic therapy
- Children with otorrhoea
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- Children at high risk of complications (e.g., immunocompromised children).^{10,11,13}

In cases where the use of antibiotics is necessary, the initial recommended first-line treatment is oral amoxicillin 15 mg/kg up to 500 mg, administered every 8 hours for five days.^{8,13} However, if there are concerns about the practicality of adhering to an 8-hourly regimen, an alternative approach involves using amoxicillin at a higher dosage of 30 mg/kg up to 1 g, taken orally every 12 hours over a 5-day period.⁸

If children demonstrate insufficient response within 48 to 72 hours, the addition of clavulanate to amoxicillin is recommended. For children two months or older, oral amoxicillin with clavulanate at a dosage of 22.5+3.2 mg/kg up to 875+125 mg every 12 hours for 5 to 7 days is required.⁸

Patients who have hypersensitivity to penicillin should be commenced on either cefuroxime (children > 3 months) 15 mg/kg up to 500 mg orally, 12-hourly for five days, or combination trimethoprim + sulfamethoxazole (child > one month) 4+20 mg/kg up to 160+800 mg orally, 12-hourly for five days. Cefuroxime is preferred to cefalexin and cefaclor because of its superior anti-pneumococcal activity.⁸

PREVENTION

Risk factors for AOM include group childcare, allergic rhinitis, adenoid disease, structural anomalies (such as cleft palate), Down syndrome, exposure to smoke (from sources like cigarettes and wood fires), and socioeconomic disadvantage that may lead to crowded housing conditions.⁸ It is important for health care professionals to recognise and address any modifiable factors to manage and prevent recurrent bacterial OM.

Parents should also be encouraged to ensure their children are up to date with pneumococcal vaccination.⁸ It is important to note antibiotic prophylaxis shows limited effectiveness in reducing the recurrence rate. In the event of recurrent infections, it is recommended to manage them following protocols for AOM, and the patient may require a referral to an otolaryngologist for specialised care.^{10,13} Persistent recurrences may necessitate more proactive interventions, such as myringotomy (making a small hole in the eardrum to facilitate the drainage of fluid from the middle ear) and the insertion of tympanostomy tubes (grommets) to address the underlying issues and promote long-term prevention.^{8,10,11,13}

Cerumen Impaction

Cerumen impaction, commonly known as earwax build-up, is prevalent in specific demographics, including older individuals, young children, and those with cognitive impairment.¹⁴⁻¹⁵ The condition is often associated with factors such as the use of hearing aids and cotton buds.¹⁴⁻¹⁵ Earwax is a natural and essential substance produced by ceruminous and sebaceous glands, along with exfoliated squamous epithelium. It serves as a self-cleaning agent with protective, lubricating, and antibacterial properties.^{15,16} Normally, earwax undergoes a slow and orderly movement from the eardrum to the ear opening, where it dries, flakes, and falls out, aided by chewing and jaw motion.^{15,16} However, disruptions to this self-cleaning mechanism can cause wax accumulation and impaction. Factors contributing to cerumen impaction include anatomical variations, infectious or dermatological diseases causing narrowing or obstruction of the ear canal, as well as irritation from foreign objects like cotton tips, hearing aids, and ear plugs.¹⁵ The aging process also plays a role, as ceruminous glands atrophy with age, producing a drier wax that migrates more slowly, resulting in a higher prevalence of cerumen impaction in older individuals compared to younger, healthy adults.¹⁶

PRESENTATION

Cerumen impaction can cause a range of symptoms, including partial hearing loss, ear pain, itching, or a feeling of fullness in the ear, as well as episodes of dizziness, tinnitus, or reflex cough.^{15,16} These symptoms can significantly impact an individual's auditory experience and overall well-being. There is a consensus among healthcare professionals that symptomatic cerumen typically necessitates removal, even though, in up to one-third of cases, the cerumen may clear within five days without specific intervention.^{15,16} Nevertheless, removal is often recommended not only to alleviate immediate symptoms but also to enable a clear view of the tympanic membrane for diagnostic purposes and to facilitate audiometry.^{15,16}

MANAGEMENT AND PREVENTION OF CERUMEN IMPACTION

The management of cerumen impaction involves several approaches aimed at safe and effective removal of earwax. The first-line treatment for symptomatic patients includes the use of cerumenolytics, ear wax softening agents. These include aqueous compounds such as carbamide peroxide, docusate sodium, sodium bicarbonate, water or saline, or oil-based agents such as almond or olive oil.^{15,16} These agents enhance the likelihood of successful cerumen clearance compared to no treatment. It is noteworthy that there is no significant difference in efficacy between water-based or oil-based drops and between proprietary and simple agents such as water or olive oil.¹⁶ In cases of hard impaction or ear canal disease, irrigation or manual removal performed by a trained doctor or an ear, nose, and throat (ENT) specialist may be necessary.¹⁶ Prior use of a cerumenolytic can enhance the success of subsequent irrigation.¹⁶

Importantly, to prevent cerumen impaction, patients are strongly discouraged from using cotton buds for cleaning the ear canal, as this can exacerbate the impaction.¹⁶



Tinnitus

Tinnitus is a prevalent condition characterised by the perception of ringing or other sounds in one or both ears, which are not generated by external sources and are typically inaudible to others. It is frequently associated with peripheral vestibular disorders, such as Ménière's disease or cochleitis, and often occurs concurrently with hearing loss or vertigo.¹⁷⁻¹⁹ The primary cause of tinnitus is often attributed to damage to the hair cells in the inner ear.¹⁹ It is crucial to investigate cases of unilateral tinnitus or hearing loss to rule out potential focal pathologies. Identifying and treating the underlying cause of tinnitus is essential whenever possible. In cases where the cause remains unidentified, patients should be reassured, and the use of drugs known to exacerbate tinnitus, such as nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), should be avoided.¹⁸⁻¹⁹ Consideration should be given to screening and management of associated conditions, such as depression, anxiety, and insomnia.¹⁷

MANAGEMENT OF TINNITUS

While there is limited evidence supporting drug therapy for tinnitus, cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) has shown promise in reducing tinnitus-related distress.^{17,18} Additionally, masking techniques may provide relief for individuals affected by tinnitus.¹⁷⁻¹⁸ These include hearing aids, which can be beneficial for those with and without significant hearing loss, and sound therapy, which can be prescribed alone or with hearing aids.¹⁸ There is no evidence to support the use of antidepressants, anticonvulsants, anxiolytics, or any of the suggested complementary medicines for the treatment of tinnitus other than for treating associated anxiety and depression.¹⁸

Lifestyle management plays a crucial role in preventing certain types of tinnitus. Hearing protection is essential in loud environments, as prolonged exposure can damage ear nerves, leading to hearing loss and tinnitus.¹⁹ Controlling the volume when exposed to amplified music or using headphones is also important to prevent long-term hearing damage. Additionally, maintaining cardiovascular health through regular exercise, a balanced diet, and overall well-being can help prevent tinnitus associated with obesity and blood vessel disorders.¹⁹ Furthermore, limiting the consumption of alcohol, caffeine, and nicotine is advised, as excessive use of these substances can impact blood flow and contribute to tinnitus.^{17,18}

If someone is experiencing hearing loss, dizziness, anxiety, or depression due to tinnitus, it's important to refer them to a medical practitioner for early intervention. This will help identify any underlying issues and guide appropriate management strategies.

Other Ear-Related Infections

Other more serious ear-related infections may occur and can have significant consequences if not diagnosed and managed appropriately. These include infectious myringitis, acute mastoiditis, cholesteatoma, labyrinthitis, vestibular neuritis, and Herpes Zoster Oticus. All these conditions require a prompt referral to a medical practitioner; hence, it is important for pharmacists to take a detailed history when patients present with ear issues and refer patients with persistent, unusual, or severe symptoms.

Conclusion

Pharmacists play a crucial role in addressing common ear conditions in the community, with a focus on recognition, referral, and appropriate interventions. As community pharmacy roles continue to evolve with an extended scope of practice, pharmacists' competence and confidence in addressing ear health concerns will become increasingly vital, ensuring optimal patient outcomes, and reinforcing the indispensable position pharmacists play in the broader healthcare landscape.



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Succeeding with Pharmacy Services in 2024

01 Which of the following contributes to forming pharmacy consumer expectations?

- a) Understanding of products or services available at the pharmacy.
- b) Previous visits to other pharmacies for other reasons.
- c) The health-related question that they have for the pharmacy staff.
- d) All of the above.

02 Which of the following are important considerations when exploring new service options for your pharmacy:

- a) Brand of nearest competitor pharmacy and number of competitor pharmacies within a 5km radius.
- b) Who your patient group comprises of, does the proposed service address an unmet need within this cohort and how you could attract patients to the service.
- c) Would your advertising budget allow for TV advertising of the service and which staff would have a starring role in the filmed commercial.
- d) Will staff allocated to delivering the service require different uniforms.

03 Which of the following is considered one of the most important factors in business success today?

- a) Understanding what price your customers are willing to pay.
- b) Being located in a convenient tenancy with ample parking and providing extended trading hours.
- c) Having an online presence, including an e-commerce offer that provides the equivalent to your in-store experience.
- d) Providing your customers with a positive experience when interacting with your business.

04 When using the S.M.A.R.T. goal-setting template as a guide to developing your new service goals, which of the following would you consider?

- a) Choosing a realistic service option with your team that is relevant to your business objective and one that you can track and measure.
- b) Being specific about the goal and how it will be measured but leaving the timeframe for full implementation flexible based on how the project evolves.
- c) Involving the whole team to define the goal and when they would like to reach it, however retaining information on measurements and performance tracking only with the management team.
- d) Building your new service goal with reflection on what the nearest three pharmacies in your area are offering.

05 Which TWO of the following options best describe the purpose of a task-based action plan?

- a) An alternative approach to setting the service goal which may work better for some pharmacy teams.
- b) Clarifies the steps and specific tasks that need to be completed to take the service from a goal to actual launch on 'day 1'.
- c) A set of parameters that will assist with measuring and tracking the success of the service uptake in the pharmacy.
- d) It provides a good tool to assist in communicating the service implementation project to your team, assigning key responsibilities, and getting the team on board with the project.



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After completing this CPD activity, pharmacists should be able to:

- Understand consumer expectations and the significance of consumer experience in the context of pharmacy business success.
- Recall key elements to consider when exploring new service options for a pharmacy.
- Understand how to create a goal-orientated action plan for implementing a new pharmacy service.



SUBMIT YOUR ANSWERS TO EARN CPD CREDITS

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Navigating Ear Health: A Guide to Managing Common Ear Conditions in Community Pharmacy

01

A concerned mother brings her 14-month-old infant to your pharmacy, reporting irritability, fever, and the child repeatedly tugging at their ears. What is the most appropriate initial management for this infant?

- Recommend cerumenolytic ear drops as the child likely has impacted ear wax.
- Refer the patient to a medical practitioner and provide oral analgesia if necessary.
- Recommend anaesthetic ear drops (e.g., Auralgan®) for immediate relief and refer to GP
- Advise the mother to monitor the symptoms, as they may resolve spontaneously.

02

An 80-year-old individual visits your pharmacy complaining of hearing loss, mild ear pain, and a feeling of fullness in one ear. He says he has had ear wax build-up before, and the symptoms feel the same. What is the most appropriate management for this patient?

- Immediate referral to their GP for manual removal of ear wax.
- Administer cerumenolytic ear drops for several days and see their GP if symptoms do not resolve or become worse.
- Recommend anaesthetic ear drops.
- Recommend to patient to gently remove the ear wax with a cotton bud

03

A mother comes into the pharmacy to pick up some pain relief for her 3-year-old child who has a middle ear infection. She is disappointed that the doctor has not prescribed antibiotics. Which of the following statement regarding antibiotic use in OM is NOT correct?

- Acute otitis media is commonly due to a viral infection and antibiotics may not be effective.
- Spontaneous resolution occurs in more than 80% of children within 2 to 3 days.
- Taking antibacterials nearly doubles the incidence of side effects such as diarrhoea, vomiting, and rash in children.
- Antibiotics should be prescribed for all children with middle ear infections to prevent hearing loss and she should see another doctor for a second opinion.

The following non-pharmacological measures can be used to reduce the risk of swimmer's ear (select two correct answers):

- Keep ears dry during treatment and for 2 weeks after.
- Use cotton earbuds to dry out the ears after swimming once treatment is finished.
- Consider regular, weekly use of ear candles.
- Consider using an antiseptic or drying agent such as acetic acid after swimming once treatment is finished.

05

Which of the following treatments is appropriate for a 10-year-old patient with ADOE and a perforated tympanic membrane

- Dexamethasone, framycetin, gramicidin ear drops,
- Triamcinolone, neomycin, gramicidin, nystatin ear drops,
- Desonide lotion
- Flumetasone, clioquinol ear drops OR ciprofloxacin, hydrocortisone ear drops



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After completing this CPD activity, pharmacists should be able to:

- Recall the symptoms and differential diagnosis of common ear conditions.
- Recall appropriate OTC and prescription medications indicated for common ear conditions.
- Understand the importance of providing education around the prevention and management of common ear conditions.



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