

Doctors selling state flu vax supplies: Guild

Nick O'Donoghue

DOCTORS are being accused of selling state supplies of this year's influenza vaccine, by pharmacists, because of a shortage of the vaccine.

Pharmacy Guild of Australia president Kos Sclavos described the roll out of this year's national flu vaccination program as a "disaster".

He told *Pharmacy eNews* more than 100 pharmacists had contacted the Guild to say doctors taking vaccines intended for patients covered by the program and selling them to patients.

"The flu vaccine program this year has been a disaster.

"We're having over 100 pharmacists reporting to us, almost trying to dob in their local doctor, saying supplies that are supposed to be set aside for state suppliers, because of the shortage and unavailability, they're [doctors] accessing those supplies.

"And what's worse is they're selling them when they shouldn't be selling them," Mr Sclavos said.

A spokesman for the Australian Medical Association told *Pharmacy eNews* he had not heard any reports of doctors

misusing and selling the program's vaccines.

Mr Sclavos said problems with the roll out of the national program would be reduced if pharmacists in Australia were allowed to participate in administering the vaccine as happens in other countries.

"I'm seeing how streamlined everything is in the US and how for example in other countries like the UK pharmacists are participating.

"Not only are we not participating here, we've got a complete administrative nightmare from a pharmacist's

point-of-view," he said.

Mr Sclavos added a number of issues have put pressure on the national program this year saying manufacturers had underestimated demand for the vaccine, while the Government was trying to use up its supplies of the swine flu vaccine.

Over 2,500 Australians die each year from complications caused by influenza.

Less than half the people most at risk of developing life threatening complications from influenza are being vaccinated annually.

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NSW smokers told 'not in my house'

Nick O'Donoghue

INCREASING numbers of smokers in New South Wales are being told to go outside if they want to light-up even when they are at home.

A new survey by **NSW Health** revealed more than 90 per cent of homes in the state were smoke-free, with family members showing smokers the door.

Cancer Council NSW chief executive Dr Andrew Penman said the results showed smoking indoors is becoming increasingly socially unacceptable.

"These latest figures suggest that even family members of smokers are insisting that

smokers' homes are not their castles when it comes to smoking indoors in the privacy of the home.

"In 30 years smoking has moved from an open, socially acceptable behaviour to one that sees many smokers - even in their own homes - being forced to move away from others.

"This data on homes is particularly important because it shows how many in the community now 'regulate' the smoking of their own family in private settings," he said.

The survey reported 91.9 per cent of the state's adult population aged 16 and over lived in households where

smoking indoors was not allowed in 2009.

This increase represents a 2.4 per cent increase compared with 2008 and the continuation of a trend since 1997 when less than 70 per cent of homes were smoke free.

Sydney's southwest recorded the biggest increase in the proportion of smoke free homes, rising 26.6 per cent to more than 90 per cent since the 1997 survey.

Researchers said the unofficial ban imposed in so many homes followed a process that began in 1976 when smoking on public transport was banned.

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BRIEFS

UNSAFE SEX

Young people who are failing to practise safe sex could increase the number of AIDS cases in the country a Federal Government advisor warned.

Professor Michael Kidd who chaired a ministerial advisory group on sexual disease said the doubling of the number of chlamydia cases in Australia could lead to a rise in AIDS cases.

While he said better reporting was partially responsible for the increase in chlamydia, some was due to more young people practising unsafe sex.

His warning came at today's launch of the updated national strategies for combating Sexually-Transmissible Infections and HIV.

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Single dose breast cancer treatment

Nick O'Donoghue

RESULTS from a trial of a single dose breast cancer treatment will be released at the American Society of Clinical Oncology's (ASCO's) annual scientific meeting next week.

The decade long study of Carl Zeiss Meditec's INTRABEAM system aimed to clarify if a single radiation exposure boost during surgery reduced the risk of recurrence of cancer in the affected breast as effectively as the traditional, 3-6 week method.

If the results of the trial carried out by the international targeted intraoperative radiotherapy (TARGIT) research group are positive researchers said it would be the least disruptive treatment method available to patients being treated for early stage breast cancer.

Leading British Oncologist Michael Baum, Professor Emeritus of Surgery at the University College London and principal investigator of the TARGIT trial said the results of the trial could have enormous implications for both cost effectiveness and

availability of radiation therapy for breast cancer treatment.

"The TARGIT trial challenges the existing paradigm of the treatment of breast cancer and could also establish a new collaborative team approach between the surgeon and the radiotherapist from the very outset," he said.

Dr Jayant Vaidya, principle investigator of the trial and co-inventor of the TARGIT technique said, if the TARGIT-A trial comes close to his expectations it could change two fundamental principles in the treatment of breast cancer.

"Our trial revealed that whole breast radiotherapy could be replaced by TARGIT in a substantial proportion of patients and a much smaller dose of radiation that is given with TARGIT may be adequate," Dr Vaidya said.

Meanwhile researchers have said if the INTRABEAM trial results are successful it should become the standard treatment for breast cancer, as it is less expensive to carry out than the conventional treatment.

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Keeping an eye on optical health: Comedian Jean Kittson, Minister for Disability Services and Multicultural Affairs in Queensland Annastacia Palaszczuk, Sydney based ophthalmologist, Dr Paul Beaumont, and Patron of the Macular Degeneration Foundation Ita Buttrose came together to launch Macular Degeneration Awareness Week.

Early detection key to macular degeneration

DESPITE being the leading cause of blindness in Australia, 60 per cent of people aged 50 and over and experiencing a symptom of macular degeneration dismiss the symptom as a need for glasses.

Macular degeneration symptoms may include one or more of the following: difficulty with reading or any other activity with fine vision; distortion where straight lines appear wavy or bent; distinguishing faces becomes a problem; dark patches or empty spaces appear in the centre of your vision.

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