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## Parental leave admin costs only problem: Guild

**Nick O'Donoghue**

PLANS for pharmacies to bare the cost of administering payments to employees on parental leave defy logic, Pharmacy Guild of Australia president Kos Sclavos said.

While the Guild said it supported the largely cost-free maternity leave plan, Mr Sclavos told *Pharmacy eNews* it made no sense for the Government make the initial payments to employees through the Family Assistance Office (FAO) only to put the burden of administering them on businesses after six months.

Under the proposed legislation, which goes before the lower house of parliament today,

the Government will pay either parent for 18 weeks parental leave at the minimum wage rate of \$543 a week, however from July 2011 businesses will have to administer the payments.

"The concern the Guild has is at the moment the legislation states that the FAO will look after payments for the first six months.

"It's strange the FAO will pay everyone for the first six months and after July next year they're going to put the burden back on to small business, which defies logic.

"If they can do it for six months, why are they stopping it after six months," he said.

While the administration costs remain an issue, Mr Sclavos said the Guild was happy pharmacists

would not have to pay employees on maternity leave.

"The key thing the Guild is pleased about is the Government is funding that process.

"Originally the Guild had differences of **opinion** with other representative groups, because we were concerned with the huge costs and we didn't want to see bizarre disincentives being put in place, where someone would say, 'I don't want to employ this person, because they're just married and we know they're going to want to have a child in the next few years and I'll be up for these costs'.

"I think the Government has removed all those risks," he said.

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## Pharmacists to put spotlight on iodine issues

**Simone Roberts**

THE AUSTRALIAN Thyroid Foundation has called on pharmacists to help address iodine deficiency in the latest of a series of health campaigns aimed at raising awareness of iodine supplementation.

The call coincides with the beginning of Thyroid Awareness Week and follows a National Health and Medical Research Council **recommendation** earlier this year that women who are pregnant, breastfeeding or considering pregnancy should take daily iodine supplements.

The foundation has sent out information packs to pharmacies around Australia to help them discuss the importance of adequate iodine intake, including supplementation, with their pregnant and

breastfeeding customers.

"As a primary point of care in the community, pharmacies play an important role in educating women around Australia about achieving good thyroid health by taking iodine supplements and consuming foods that are naturally rich in iodine, to reduce the risk of mental deficiency in developing infants," said ATF president Beverley Garside.

According to the foundation, more than 50 per cent of Australian women and children are iodine deficient.

"Iodine plays a critical role in the neuropsychological development of the foetus and in the first two years of life," said Professor Creswell Eastman, an international expert on iodine deficiency and the Australian Thyroid Foundation's principal medical advisor.

"Pregnant and breastfeeding women cannot possibly get the recommended daily intake of iodine from food alone, so it is essential that they take a supplement during this time," said Professor Eastman.

Experts recommend the average Australian child needs 120 micrograms of iodine per day for effective brain development and function, whilst adults require 150 micrograms per day. For pregnant women or breastfeeding mothers, this requirement increases to 250 micrograms per day.

Prof Eastman said compulsory iodine fortification in bread that came in last year was "totally inadequate" for pregnant women.

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## Chesty coughers told to cover their mouths

**Nick O'Donoghue**

PEOPLE with chesty coughs are being urged to show consideration for other this winter and to cover their mouths when they cough.

Launched, following the results of the Bisolvon Chesty Cough survey, the 'I hate people coughing on my head' campaign was designed to help reduce the spread of germs and minimise the social offence that can be caused from impolite behaviour.

Community pharmacist and media health commentator, Gerald Quigley said many people were unaware of how easily germs can spread and stressed the importance of managing

coughs better this winter.

"There is definitely a serious public health aspect to better cough etiquette.

"Germs generated by coughing can travel at speeds greater than 1000km per hour, almost as fast as the speed of sound.

"So not only will poor etiquette offend the people around you, but you're also increasing the risk of spreading the germs that are causing that cough in the first place," he said.

The survey found most Australians felt people with chesty coughs needed to improve their behaviour this winter, with 87 per cent of respondents saying they had been the victim of someone coughing on them without

covering the mouth or turning away.

A new [video](#) was launched today to highlight the issues raised in the survey, with recommendations on what people should do to reduce the risk of spreading germs.

The video recommends people should turn away from other people before coughing into a tissue, which they can discard appropriately or even into their sleeve to avoid coughing onto other people.

Mr Quigley urged people with chest coughs that are producing mucus to go to their pharmacists and get medicine to help clear up the cause of the cough.

To comment [click here](#).

### BRIEFS

#### VOLTAREN EDUCATION

Novartis Consumer Health has launched a new pharmacy education, training and in-store promotion campaign for its Voltaren analgesic range.

The company has invested \$15 million this year to help pharmacists and their staff to advise customers on the appropriate use of the over the counter products.

As part of the campaign Voltaren will be advertised across the print and digital media in conjunction with the television campaign that started in February.

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