Australia

Regulators Gather to Discuss Medical Cannabis Treatments

Maintaining a balance between access and safety of medicinal cannabis is a key priority for health regulators across Australia amid a growing number of prescriptions and the emergence of telehealth, online prescribing, and direct-to-consumer health services.

Ahpra and several National Boards convened a forum in Melbourne on February 16, 2024, that brought together health regulators to share information and regulatory intelligence, discuss any current risks to the public, and determine how all regulators can best work together.

Australia's medicine regulation system is complex, with different agencies responsible for overseeing the medicines themselves, the health professionals who prescribe and provide them, and the premises where they are stored and dispensed.

The use of unregistered medicinal cannabis products has spiraled in recent years, from around 18000 Australian patients using products in 2019 to more than 1 million patients using medicinal cannabis up to January 2024.

The number of prescribers accessing the Authorized Prescriber and the Special Access Scheme has also risen sharply to more than 5700 medical and nurse practitioners using these schemes to prescribe and dispense medicinal cannabis products that have not been evaluated by the Therapeutic Goods Administration for safety, quality, or efficacy.

The forum, hosted by Ahpra, is the first step to ensuring our current regulatory systems are adequate and flexible enough to deal with the challenge of protecting the public from harm and inappropriate prescribing while still allowing for legitimate access to medications.

The forum attendees agreed to continue discussions with the aim of monitoring issues and identifying any gaps in the regulatory and wider health response to this rapidly growing industry.

Further information is available at https://www.ahpra.gov.au/News/2024-02-20-medical-cannabis-treatment.aspx

Source: Ahpra Press Release, February 20, 2024

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IAMRA

Memorandum of Understanding Signed

The International Association of Medical Regulatory Authorities (IAMRA) signed a historic Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) February 19, 2024, with the World Health Organization (WHO) in a ceremony in Geneva. The MoU was signed by Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director General of the WHO, and Joan Simeon, Chair of IAMRA. The ceremony was also attended by IAMRA secretary Dr. Humayun "Hank" Chaudhry, President and CEO, and Dr. Jeffrey Carter, Chair of the Federation of State Medical Boards of the US.

The MoU sets out a framework for collaboration between the WHO and IAMRA on a range of strategic projects and common goals including:

- The identification of priority evidence gaps and related research in health workforce regulation
- The inclusion of regulatory perspectives into areas of development by the WHO
- The provision of technical support for capacity building in medical regulation in countries and assistance in identifying appropriate technical advisers
- Closer collaboration on sponsored participation of low and middle-income countries at IAMRA global meetings
- The development of a webinar series with a focus on issues for medical regulators in low and middle-income countries
- Support for the implementation and uptake of the WHO Guidance on Health Practitioner Regulation

Further information is available at https://www.iamra.com/resources/Documents/Media%20Release.pdf

Source: IAMRA Press Release, February 19, 2024

Ireland

Medical Workforce Intelligence Report Released

On March 8, 2024 (International Women's Day), the Medical Council of Ireland is published its 2022 Workforce Intelligence report. The report analyzes and presents data provided by doctors on the Medical Council's medical register (the 'Register').

The data reveals the growing number of female doctors registering with the Medical Council for the first time. It also provides insights from doctors as to why they chose to withdraw from the Register in 2022. This includes doctors who have registered for the first time or retained registration with the Medical Council, and those who have voluntarily withdrawn from the Register throughout 2022.

The number of doctors on the Register has been increasing year on year, with the number of young female doctors having risen steadily over the past decade.

The report is available at https://www.medicalcouncil.ie/news-and-publications/reports/2022-medical-workforce-intelligence-consolidated-report.pdf

Source: Medical Council of Ireland Press Release, March 8, 2024

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