

Protect asthma patients from flu

THE National Asthma Council Australia (NAC) and the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) are urging health professionals to talk to their asthma patients about why they need to get the flu vaccine without delay.

Predictions of a horror flu season for 2025 (**PD** 27 Mar) have made this even more critical, with between 60-70% of asthma attacks due to viral infections such as the common cold or influenza.

Clinical Associate Professor Debbie Rigby, Clinical Executive Lead at the NAC, said pharmacists play an important role in encouraging patients to get their influenza vaccine and make sure they are protected.

"Each year, 25-30% of influenza vaccines are delivered by community pharmacy, so when patients come in to fill their asthma medication script, it is the perfect time to speak to them about also getting their flu vaccine," A/Prof Rigby said.

She also pointed out that higher risk Australians, including children and adults with asthma, now have access to free influenza vaccinations under the National Immunisation Program (NIP).

PSA National President Associate Professor Fei Sim added it is important to stress that patients should act before the flu season peak.

Driving for mental health

HEAVY rain and challenging conditions did not dampen the spirits of the Life Pharmacy Group (LPG) and Independent Pharmacies of Australia (IPA) team that hit the road for the 10th annual Beyond Bitumen Rally, raising funds and awareness for Beyond Blue.

The entourage of 72 vehicles travelled almost 2,000 kilometres from Taree to Port Stephens via Grafton and Armidale over four days.

Led by IPA Group founder and Executive Director Michael Flannery, The Cavaliers raised more than \$34,000 for the charity this year, taking the fundraising honours for an individual participating car.

"We've been taking part in the Beyond Bitumen Rally for seven years now," said Founder and Executive Director of IPA Group, Michael Flannery (**pictured** right, with IPA's CTO Warwick Marx, left).

"It all started after a mate of mine shared his mental health battles and the role Beyond Blue played in supporting him during his darkest times," Flannery shared.

"It didn't take us long to find ourselves a car, and The Cavaliers was formed."

Men are three times more likely than women to take their lives in Australia, with remoteness a major contributing factor.

Growing up in regional Australia, The Cavaliers understand the importance of checking in on friends and seeking appropriate support if sad or anxious.

"Most of us grew up in the bush



and this rally is a great opportunity to hit the road with our mates, see parts of the country we may not have experienced previously, support communities along the way, and raise money for Beyond Blue," Flannery said.

"Our industry peers have always been very supportive and without them, we wouldn't have reached our fundraising target."

Flannery thanked major sponsors Life Pharmacy Group, Chemists Own of the DBG Health Group, and the Independent Pharmacies of Australia Group.

"As a team, we're very proud to have raised more than \$200,000 for the rally over the past seven years, and we're thankful for the support we've received from our colleagues, friends, and families along the way," Flannery concluded.

Since its inception, the Beyond Bitumen Rally has raised more than \$3.5 million for the charity. **KB**

Advocating for rural healthcare

RECOGNISED as Australian Pharmacist of the Year 2010 and with numerous other awards and accolades, Karalyn Huxhagen is a highly experienced community and consultant pharmacist dedicated to rural and regional healthcare.

In the latest episode of Raven's Recruitment's *Your Pharmacy Career Podcast*, Huxhagen shares her exceptional career journey, insights and experiences, which extend beyond community pharmacy to include writing and academic roles.

She discusses real-world experiences and challenges in rural pharmacy and her advocacy efforts to improve First Nations healthcare.

Having experienced burnout herself, Huxhagen gained credentials in mental health first aid and talks about the critical role pharmacists play in mental health support.

She also provides practical advice for pharmacists seeking leadership roles.

"Karalyn's extensive experience and passionate advocacy for regional healthcare are incredibly inspiring," said Heidi Dariz, GM of Raven's Recruitment.

"Her insights are invaluable for pharmacists looking to make a meaningful impact in their communities," she added.

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