

# **Meet the Singapore Specialist: Medical Oncologist Dr Tan Yew Oo**

He was one of Singapore's first medical oncologists and now in his late seventies, Dr Tan Yew Oo is one of the oldest practising oncologists, seeing cancer patients daily and striving to make a difference.

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## **MedNews: 9 March, 2022**

At homegrown pharma company Specialised Therapeutics, 82 per cent of employees are women, three in every four employees is aged over 40, and nine of the 12 executive team members is female.

Age, gender, and ethnicity are not a consideration when hiring, says CEO Carlo Montagner, who instead employs people that best fit with the values of the business he co-founded with his wife, Bozena Zembrzuski.

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## **Pharma in Focus: 10 February, 2022**

### **PHARMA IN FOCUS**

By Christine Spiteri 10 February 2022

# Who's Mandated a Third Jab?

**Specialised Therapeutics has made a third COVID-19 vaccine compulsory for all staff, to ensure a safe office environment for employees returning to work.**

The team was told on Christmas Eve last year that booster shots for those who were eligible would be compulsory for going back to the office in 2022.

“We’re in the pharma industry, we understand how to interpret data and it was really becoming very obvious early in December that a booster was required – not only to protect against the emerging Omicron but also to protect against Delta,” CEO Carlo Montagner said.

“What I’ve said to all our staff is that we want to offer you the most controlled and safe workspace to operate in – much safer than you being at home, or going out to the supermarket.”

The mandatory third jab applies to all staff, including those working in the company’s offices located overseas, as well as visitors.

In addition, the Melbourne-based pharma is supplying employees with RAT tests, the results of which must be photographed with a timestamp and sent to HR prior to attending the office. Twice weekly tests are required of those in the office five days a week, once for those attending three days.

As well, social distancing has been increased by three to four times the minimum 1.5 metre rule and masks must be worn indoors at all times.

## **Mandatory office days**

The Covid safety measures support a second mandate by the company that all core staff – about 20-25 employees – work from the office on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of every week.

Montagner said working remotely had slowed the company down. “Not having people together – at least the core group – makes communication difficult,” he said.

“I would say it’s 30 to 40 per cent harder to achieve the same outcome as working

in the office together.

“It’s the simple things - you call somebody because you need to talk to them about something and you can’t reach them for whatever reason, then you need to follow up that call.



***“Those sorts of incidental occurrences, every day of the week, happening multiple times in the day - soon you have this snowball effect and you have to work harder to reach the same outcome.”***

“It’s time-consuming and tiring and fatiguing.”

Montagner said while staff were still allowed flexibility with their working hours plus Thursday and Fridays working from home, a complete ‘laissez faire’ approach to office attendance doesn’t work for pharma. “I think it’s a very short term philosophy to leave it up to staff to decide whether they come into the office or not,” he said.

“Yes, in some industries that would work. But in our industry where the logistics required to get a drug physically available in a chemist for a patient to access - it’s enormous.

“We need to remember we are working to produce an outcome that impacts people’s lives. For us we’re in the cancer space predominantly - and at the end of the day we have to make sure we have these drugs available for patients.

“That’s what it comes down to.”

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## World Cancer Day 2022



Rare Cancers Australia CEO Richard Vines discusses affordable access to specialist medicines. [Click for more.](#)

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# **Skylark - WA oncologist Dr Andrew Dean shares his passion for aviation**

As a young boy, Andrew Dean was fascinated with aeroplanes. But the son of Liverpool publicans quickly realised that flying lessons were a lofty pursuit his family probably could not afford. It was many years later, after training first as a palliative care and internal medicine physician that the medical oncologist decided his sky-high ambition was finally within reach.

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# **Professor John Zalcborg reacts to the QINLOCK® (ripretinib) PBS listing**

ST is delighted to announce that our therapy QINLOCK® (ripretinib) was reimbursed for eligible Australian GIST patients from December 1 2021. International GIST expert Professor John Zalcborg reacts to the listing. [Click for more.](#)

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# **Pharma in Focus: 21 December, 2021**

# PHARMA IN FOCUS

By Christine Spiteri 21 December 2021

## Job Boom Hits Growing Pharma

**Specialised Therapeutics is experiencing a mini-jobs boom, with the company's growing portfolio and expansion across South East Asia requiring a boost to its workforce.**

The company currently has a staff of about 40 but is actively looking to fill five new positions with more roles opening up in the next 24 months.

"We're going through quite an expansion at the moment - our portfolio is continuing to grow and we have several more partnerships we're close to announcing for branded specialised therapies," CEO Carlo Montagner said.

"What we've projected over the next two to three years is probably an increase of another 50 to 60 per cent of staff."

Jobs currently up for grabs include Head of Quality Assurance; Scientific Medical Advisor - Oncology/Haematology and Pharmacovigilance Manager South East Asia.

Although the company is headquartered in Melbourne, its Singapore office is about to move to bigger premises as the company expands its footprint in Asia.

In addition to licenses to supply approved products to Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and Malaysia, Specialised Therapeutics also has regulatory applications under evaluation in Thailand, Vietnam and the Philippines.

"Our goal is always to partner with two new companies a year or two new products per year - that's our minimum threshold, so we have very active business development discussions continuously," Montagner said.

"We have new products for the portfolio but we are also starting to ramp up our south-east Asia operations."



### **Tough jobs market**

Montagner said seeking regulatory approval and offering access programs in multiple countries had created logistical challenges and demand for more staff.

“These are all below the commercial line functions - so not a lot of visibility to the general public - but these are key functions to operate efficiently as a pharmaceutical company,” he said.

The jobs market is hot, according to Montagner who said medical roles, particularly, can be a challenge to fill. But he said Specialised Therapeutics, a company he started with his business partner and wife in 2008 has the edge on

traditional Big Pharma when it comes to landing top talent.

“What we offer is variety,” he said. “The benefit of our company is that we choose who we partner with and the products that we take on board.

“So, with pharmaceutical companies that have a pipeline of drugs, you really just accept whatever comes down that pipe and you’re beholden to the quality of that pipeline and the therapeutic areas that the company wants to strategically invest in.

“We have an amazing pipeline of drugs, companies would kill for the pipeline that we have already.

“And we know what we’re doing. We have the expertise, the infrastructure, the resources and the planning in place to ensure we optimise the commercialisation of these products.

“We partner with multiple companies - European based, US-based and we’re hopefully close to doing our first China deal.

“We have this breadth of partnerships over multiple geographies, multiple product therapeutic areas, we’re dealing with lots of different people. We’re launching in multiple countries with new products.

“It’s a really exciting time to be in our company.”

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## **Renee’s GIST Experience**





Melbourne mother of two Renee Van Beelan was diagnosed with GIST (Gastrointestinal Stromal Tumours) almost five years ago. Her baby daughter was just eight weeks old and the devastated new mother did not know what the future held. New therapies provide hope for the future. Click on the video above to hear Renee speak about her life changing diagnosis.

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**Comment: Rare Cancers Australia  
CEO Richard Vines**



Rare Cancers Australia CEO Richard Vines says Australian GIST patients were determined to help achieve a PBS listing for a new therapy to treat the disease and their persistence has paid off with QINLOCK® (ripretinib) now reimbursed. [Click for more.](#)

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## **Medical Oncologist Professor John Zalcborg explains gastrointestinal stromal tumours - GIST**



What is GIST? We are passionate about making a difference for patients living with rare cancers. Here, Professor John Zalcborg provides an overview of Gastrointestinal Stromal Tumours. [Click for more.](#)