

UK pill prescribing

HEALTH authorities in Britain have announced a pilot scheme in which oral contraception will be made available without prescription.

The move would make the pill available via so-called Patient Group Directions (PGDs), which are "written instructions for the supply or administration of medicines to groups of patients without an individualised doctors' prescription".

A statement from the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain said that "supply of oral contraception via PGDs would widen and improve patient choice, access and convenience".

The proposals would extend the role of pharmacists in providing information and advice to women to ensure the appropriate use of the medications, with the RPSGB saying "the necessary health checks such as blood pressure testing and healthy lifestyle checks are already part of a pharmacists's extended role".

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Crikey! it's inappropriate

PHARMACY is in the public eye for all the wrong reasons after a My Chemist advertising campaign was highlighted by the popular Crikey! news service.

An article by Dr Stephen Downes (who lectures in advertising at RMIT University) published online last week described the sales flyer distributed to thousands of homes in Melbourne as the "least appropriate Christmas promotion of 2007".

The brochure shows Santa exposing himself to two apparently naked 'Santa's helpers' with a warning that the catalogue contains "obscene prices that may offend our competitors".

Downes slams the use of the image in promoting pharmacy, with the catalogue containing female and family-focused products such as cosmetics and toddler sunscreen.

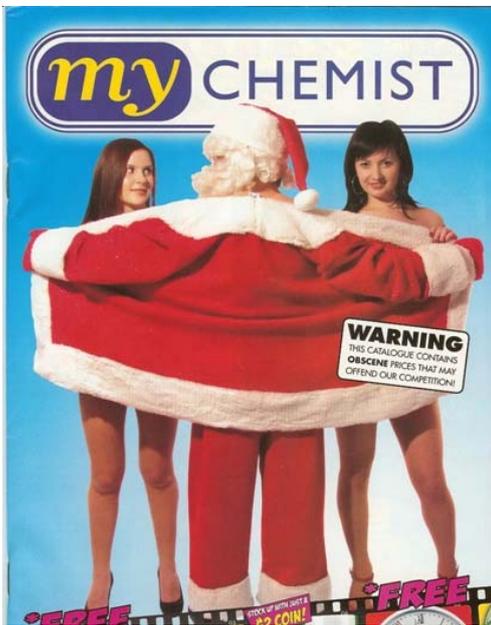
He said the promotion could "easily damage the My Chemist Brand".

But that's not the

only inappropriate pharmacy promotion under way for the festive season.

PD's local Priceline Pharmacy, in Carlingford NSW, was spotted on Sat selling a range of alcohol-related dart games with names like "Shoot 'n' Shot".

It's difficult for community pharmacy to promote its care and concern for public health while at the same time selling products which encourage binge drinking.



GenRx zolpidem

APOTEX has announced that all major wholesalers now have stock of its GenRx zolpidem 10mg 14 tabs, one of the first brands to be available under the new TGA guidelines.

Last month the TGA mandated updates to CMI and PI for zolpidem products, and also ordered that no packs containing over 14 tablets be available from 31 Dec.

NPS on ONJ

NATIONAL Prescribing Service last Fri released a new fact sheet on Osteonecrosis of the Jaw, following recent publicity about the use of bisphosphonates.

The NPS advises that there's no need for people to stop taking their osteoporosis medicines as "this is a rare adverse effect" but warns patients to notify doctors of any dental symptoms.



DISPENSARY CORNER

AN elderly Indian man's claim to have a magical healing leg backfired somewhat, after thieves amputated the limb and ran off with it.

80-year-old Yanadi Kondaiah, who lives in a village near the Indian city of Tirupati, had spent his life claiming to cure illness and bring good luck to people who touched his leg.

Police said the octogenarian was approached by two men who asked him to help them with their magical powers.

Apparently they took him to a deserted spot in the outskirts of the village and offered him alcoholic drinks.

"After the old man had passed out under the influence of liquor, they cut off his right leg from the knee," the police said.

Reports say the victim was found bleeding heavily by villagers and taken to hospital.

AN EXPERT has been called in to assess the psychological state of worms living in a composting toilet in New Zealand.

The inventor of the so-called "wormator" said he was stunned when a council inspector told him she was concerned about the mental state of the worms.

The device, which is an alternative to septic tanks, uses a colony of tiger worms to filter solids from waste, with the council worker feeling it was unfair for the creatures to deal with human faeces.

A vermiculture consultant was called in to report that the worms were "in excellent health and breeding happily".

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