

## DIA postpones conference

DUE to the terrorist attacks in Mumbai, the Drug Information Association has postponed its annual conference on drug discovery and clinical development in India.

Originally planned for Dec 7-10, the event is expected to take place in February 2009.

## Expo '09 filling fast

THE Pharmacy Guild (NSW Branch) says exhibitor and sponsorship spots at the Pharmacy Expo 2009 are filling fast.

See [pharmacyexpo.com.au](http://pharmacyexpo.com.au).

## 1st-born pharmacists

ONE in two pharmacists is the first-born of their family, a poll has revealed.

The AusPharmList survey found 52% of respondents were the eldest, 25% were middle children and 22% were the youngest of the family.

Interestingly, 58% of respondents came from families of three or more children, 33% from families of two kids, and 9% were only children.

## Problems with rego model

CONSUMER and advocacy groups have voiced concerns that a new complaints handling model for nationally-registered health professionals, proposed by the Australian Health Ministers Advisory, will be a "backward step for consumer protection."

The Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC), the Council of Social Service of NSW (NCOSS) and CHOICE said that while they welcome the plan to establish a national registration system, the

proposed model lacks independence, accountability and transparency.

Under the model, complaints are overseen by professional registration boards, which could erode public confidence by creating a "perceived bias" in favour of health professionals.

According to PIAC ce, Robin Banks, independent bodies are required to remove this bias.

CHOICE says another problem with the proposed model is the lack of consumer involvement in the complaints process, which would make it too hard to complain or to seek independent review of the board's decision.

## Biotech disparity

SUBSTANTIAL disparity exists in the number of ongoing clinical trials for the top 20 biotech companies, according to a report in Good Clinical Practice Journal.

Leader of the group, Genentech, is involved in nearly twice as many trials as the number two, Amgen.

The top three companies, also including Celgene, cumulatively account for 50% of the total number of ongoing trials for this set of 20 companies.

Oncology accounts for 65% of the total ongoing trials, the article said.

## ACHS president

THE Australian Council on Healthcare Standards has elected a new president, Associate Professor Peter Woodruff.

Based at Princess Alexandra Hospital, Queensland, Prof Woodruff is the representative of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons on the ACHS Board.

Karen Linegar, director of nursing at the North West Regional Hospital, Burnie, Tasmania, was elected as vice-president.

## Kids on anti-depressants

NEARLY 4,000 children aged under 10 years were prescribed antidepressant drugs in the 2007-08 financial year, according to reports in yesterday's media.

The unpublished figures, from the Australian Department of Health, include prescriptions for 48 babies and 553 children under the age of five.

The figures were obtained by the Citizens Commission on Human Rights, a lobby group opposed to antidepressant therapy, and are based on Pharmaceutical Benefits Schedule data.

Currently, no antidepressant is approved in Australia for the treatment of depression in children or adolescents.

## West wins award

PHARMACY historian Radley West has won PSA (Qld)'s 2008 Bowl of Hygieia.

The award, introduced in 1980 to commemorate the centenary of the PSA Queensland branch, recognises pharmacists who have shown exceptional standards or service to the profession.

# MIMS December prescribing update

### SAFETY-RELATED CHANGES

- Additional drug interactions with **verapamil** (Anpec, Anpec SR, Cordilox SR, Isoptin and Isoptin SR) include erythromycin and telithromycin (increase verapamil serum levels).

Verapamil may increase serum levels of everolimus, sirolimus, tacrolimus, buspirone, imipramine and glibenclamide.

- Long-term safety data are lacking for use of **reboxetine** (Edronax) in children and adolescents concerning growth, maturation and cognitive and behavioural development. Currently, data are insufficient to quantify an increased risk of suicidal thinking and behaviour associated with reboxetine treatment in young adults (ages 18-24) with major depressive disorder (MDD) and other psychiatric disorders. Nevertheless, anyone considering the use of reboxetine in young adults must balance this potential risk with the clinical need.

- Concomitant use of **piroxicam** (Feldene) with other NSAIDs, including COX-2 selective NSAIDs and aspirin at analgesic doses, are contraindicated.

Piroxicam should not be

administered to patients with a history of previous severe allergic drug reactions of any type. Those who have had cutaneous reactions such as erythema multiforme, Stevens-Johnson syndrome and toxic epidermal necrolysis, or to those who have exhibited a previous skin reaction (of any severity) to piroxicam were highlighted.

Evidence from observational studies suggests piroxicam may be associated with a higher risk of severe cutaneous adverse reactions than other non-oxamic NSAIDs. Patients appear to be at highest risk of these reactions early in the course of therapy. The onset of the reaction occurs within the first month of treatment in the majority of cases.

Piroxicam should be discontinued at the first appearance of skin rash, mucosal lesions or any other sign of hypersensitivity.

Patients taking concomitant oral corticosteroids, SSRIs or antiplatelet agents such as low-dose acetylsalicylic acid are at increased risk of serious GI complications. Patients and doctors should remain alert for signs and symptoms of GI ulceration and/or bleeding during

piroxicam treatment. Patients should be asked to report any new or unusual abdominal symptom.

If a GI complication is suspected during treatment, piroxicam should be discontinued immediately and additional clinical evaluation and treatment considered.

- Glucovance (**metformin/glibenclamide**) is contraindicated in major surgery. Glucovance must be discontinued 48 hours before elective major surgery, and may not be reinstituted earlier than 48 hours afterwards, and only after renal function has been found to be normal.
- Elderly patients with dementia-related psychosis treated with antipsychotic drugs (including **haloperidol** [Haldol]) are at an increased risk of death. Analyses of 17 placebo-controlled trials, largely in patients taking atypical antipsychotic drugs, revealed a risk of death in drug-treated patients 1.6 to 1.7 times higher than in placebo-treated patients.

Over the course of a typical 10-week controlled trial, the rate of death in drug-treated patients was

about 4.5%, compared to a rate of about 2.6% in the placebo group.

Although the causes of death were varied, most of the deaths appeared to be either cardiovascular (e.g. heart failure, sudden death) or infectious (e.g. pneumonia) in nature. Observational studies suggest that, similar to atypical antipsychotic drugs, treatment with conventional antipsychotic drugs may increase mortality.

The extent to which the findings of increased mortality in observational studies may be attributed to the drug as opposed to characteristic(s) of the patients is not clear.

Very rare reports of QT prolongation and/or ventricular arrhythmias, in addition to rare reports of sudden death, have been reported with haloperidol. They may occur more frequently with high doses and in predisposed patients.

Caution is advised in patients with QT-prolonging conditions (QT-syndrome, hypokalaemia, drugs known to prolong QT). The risk of QT prolongation and/or ventricular arrhythmias may be increased with higher doses or with parenteral use, particularly intravenous

administration. ECG monitoring should be performed for QT interval prolongation and for serious cardiac dysrhythmias if haloperidol is administered intravenously.

- Hyponatraemia may occur as a result of treatment with SSRIs or SNRIs, including **sertraline** (Zoloft). In many cases, hyponatraemia appears to be the result of a syndrome of inappropriate antidiuretic hormone secretion (SIADH). Cases of serum sodium levels lower than 110 mmol/L have been reported.

Elderly patients may be at greater risk of developing hyponatraemia with SSRIs and SNRIs. Also patients taking diuretics or who are otherwise volume depleted may be at greater risk.

Discontinuation of sertraline should be considered in patients with symptomatic hyponatraemia and appropriate medical intervention instituted.

*This list is a summary of only some of the changes that have occurred over the last month. Before prescribing always refer to the full Product Information.*

## J&J expands to breast implants

JOHNSON & JOHNSON is moving into the market for cosmetic surgery with its purchase of breast implant manufacturers Mentor Corp.

J&J's tender offer of \$US1.07 billion (\$A1.65 billion) was announced this week.

Last week J&J struck a deal to acquire Israel's Omrix Biopharmaceuticals for \$US438 million to expand its line of products used to control bleeding during surgery.

J&J plans to run Mentor as a stand-alone business under its Ethicon division, Reuters reported.

California-based Mentor also sells equipment used in liposuction procedures, and is developing facial wrinkle fillers to compete with Botox.

## Win The Lift Serum

EACH day this week PD is giving subscribers the chance to win a bottle of The Lift Serum from Naked Glow, courtesy of Total Beauty Network.

The Lift Serum delivers instant tightening, line filling, line softening and skin firming.

Long term it works to improve skin health and firmness and soften deep wrinkles.

To be in the running to win a bottle, simply send your answer to the below question to: [comp@pharmacydaily.com.au](mailto:comp@pharmacydaily.com.au).

**What can the serum do long term?**

The first person to answer correctly each day will win.

**HINT:** Go to [www.tbn.com.au](http://www.tbn.com.au) each day and click on the Naked Glow logo at the top of the page.

**Congratulations to Rosa Slaiman of The Pharmacy Guild of Australia (NSW) who was yesterday's winner.**



## NAPSA names top student

NATALIE Tasker of the University of Sydney was last month named as the national winner of this year's Pharmacy Student of the Year Competition, facilitated by the PSA and sponsored by Alphapharm.

The finals of the counselling competition were held at the Pharmacy Australia Congress in

Perth, with Tasker winning a travel prize towards flights and registration at a pharmacy conference of her choice.

NAPSA President Lisa Goldsmith urged all students to get involved in the 2009 competition, which will return to the east coast, hosted by PSA NSW and held in Sydney.



ABOVE: Natalie Tasker, winner of the Pharmacy Student of the Year 2008 is pictured with, from left: NAPSA Vice President Samatha Corrigan, NAPSA President Lisa Goldsmith, and John Bell of the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia.

## HOT Travel Deals

WELCOME to *Pharmacy Daily's* travel feature.

Each week we plan to highlight a couple of great travel deals which we're sure will be of interest to everyone in the pharmacy industry.

For Harry Potter enthusiasts Travel Associates has on sale a 3 day Harry Potter tour. Starting in London, visit the Roald Dahl Museum, then head to Oxford University and look around the set of Hogwarts. Then its on to Cheltenham via steam train, and a visit to Chepstow Castle. Tours depart on selected Wednesdays from April 8 2009. Priced from \$1075pp includes 2 nights accomm. guides, breakfasts and dinners. Call 1800 044 066 for more info.

Comfort Resort Club Croc Airlie Beach is offering a 'Managers Madness' rate of \$85

per night to show off the new restaurant starting from 28th Nov. 2008. To book call 1800 075 151.

Singapore Airlines Holidays has a fabulous 'Beach Delights' package to Penang. Priced from \$949pp plus taxes for 7 nights, the deals include return economy airfares with Singapore Airlines to Penang, transfers, accommodation and daily breakfasts. Valid for travel from 16 Jan 09 to 31 Mar 09. A range of accommodation packages are available. For more details contact Pinpoint Travel Group on 1300 658 544.



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## DISPENSARY CORNER

TEACHERS in Queensland have been warned not to mark their students' work using red pens, because of alleged risks to mental health.

A kit issued by the government has prompted a debate about education priorities, according to a *Daily Telegraph* report.

"Don't mark in a red pen (seen as aggressive) - use a different colour," suggests one tip, with reasons including a fear of teen suicide.

A DOCTOR in Africa has performed a life-saving amputation using instructions received by text message.

Dr David Knott, a British surgeon volunteering in the Democratic Republic of Congo, was faced with a dilemma after a patient presented with his arm bitten off by a hippopotamus.

"I knew the procedure that was right for him was to have a forequarter operation, which is an enormous operation," he said.

However the general surgeon had never carried out such an operation before, so he sent an SMS to a colleague in London.

"He texted back step-by-step instructions on how to do it."

The 16-year-old patient has now recovered successfully.

AN ELDERLY woman in Italy called police this week after her 82-year-old husband took viagra.

Giovanni di Stefano, from Palermo became so excited that his wife thought he was going to have a heart attack and called emergency services.

"I thought so much love could have lethal consequences," she said.

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