

## QUM Award entries

PHARMACY staff are being invited to enter the National QUM Awards 2008, which are an initiative of National Prescribing Service Limited and the Pharmaceutical Health and Rational Use of Medicines (PHARM) Committee.

The biennial Awards recognise the outstanding contribution to Quality Use of Medicines (QUM) in Australia, with six categories: Health Professional, Community, Health Organisation, Media, Student and NMS 2008 Poster.

Entries in the first five categories close on 15 Mar - more info [www.nps.org.au/events](http://www.nps.org.au/events).

## MSD md retires

WILL Delaat has announced his retirement from Merck Sharp & Dohme after 11 years as the company's managing director.

He'll also resign his directorship of Medicines Australia but will continue as its independent non-voting chairman.

## Pressure leads to errors

AN INVESTIGATION into the US pharmacy industry has found evidence that corporate policies and pressure on pharmacists are leading to dispensing errors.

The probe by major US daily newspaper *USA Today* looked at policies and alleged errors at the two biggest pharmacy chains in the USA - Walgreens and CVS.

Together the companies fill nearly a third of all retail prescriptions, and the study correlated lawsuits and pharmacy board disciplinary actions.

Common factors cited included "too many prescriptions, too few pharmacists" which required pharmacists to work long shifts with few breaks.

A demand from consumers for fast dispensing was also a problem with Walgreens guidelines suggesting that two minutes is all that is required to fill a script - including counselling time.

Walgreens also pays pharmacy

managers and pharmacists bonuses based on increases in prescription volume.

State records showed citations of both companies for failing to offer or provide counselling.

Walgreens and CVS both defended their operations, claiming that "no pharmacist ever has to fill a single prescription more during the workday than they feel is safe."

## New vitamin website

A NEW website has been launched to help health care professionals find the best vitamins for clients' conditions.

Healthy Comparisons is categorised by health condition and allows pharmacy staff to compare Australia's leading vitamin brands and product information side-by-side.

No products are sold on the site and the creators say the info is entirely independent - see [www.healthycomparisons.com.au](http://www.healthycomparisons.com.au).

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## SHPA abstracts

THE Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia is calling for abstracts for papers to be presented at its conference, to be held 04-07 Sep 08 at the Adelaide Convention Centre.

The conference theme is Medicines Management 2008, with submissions of abstracts to be made by 30 May - see [shpa.org.au](http://shpa.org.au).

## TGA listings

THE Therapeutic Goods Authority has issued two listing notices for new substances to be included in the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods.

The listings cover pastes, powders or gels for dental hygiene containing sodium fluoride in concentrations of under 1000mg/kg, as well as oral preparations containing *Euphausia superba* oil.

The TGA also issued a draft compositional guideline for *Euphausia superba* oil, which is derived from Antarctic Krill.

### LESCOL XL, A NEW PROLONGED-RELEASE STATIN IS NOW AVAILABLE ON THE PBS<sup>1,2</sup>

Lescol XL (fluvastatin sodium) 80mg, is a new, effective and well tolerated statin.<sup>2</sup>

A recently published study comparing the efficacy and tolerability of fluvastatin sodium, ezetimibe and the combination in patients with a history of statin-related MRSEs\* showed that 83% of the patients treated with Lescol XL monotherapy were free of MRSEs at 12 weeks and showed a 33% reduction in LDL.<sup>3</sup>

Lescol XL 80mg has been available on the PBS on restricted benefit since 1 May 2007 for use by patients who meet the criteria set out in the General Statement for Lipid Lowering Drugs, and presents an option if a patient experiences myalgia on existing statin therapy.

For more information about Lescol XL, contact Novartis Pharmaceuticals on 02 9805 3555. Please refer to the TGA-approved Product Information before prescribing.

\*Muscle-related side effects

\*\*Randomised, double-blind, comparative trial of 199 patients with a history of MRSEs with other statins, treated with Lescol XL 80mg, ezetimibe 10mg or a combination of both agents.

1. Schedule of Pharmaceutical Benefits. Available at <http://www.pbs.gov.au/html/healthpro/home> accessed January 2008
2. Lescol XL, Australian approved prescribing information
3. Stein EA, et al. Am J Cardiol 2008, Epub ahead of print 20 December 2007, doi:10.1016/j.amjcard.2007.09.099



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## Organ donor push

THE govt has announced that it will "immediately begin work" on a range of possible activities to increase the rate of organ and tissue donation in Australia.

The move coincides with the launch yesterday in Melbourne of Organ Donation Awareness Week by Senator Jan McLucas.

## Pharmacy R&D requests

THE Pharmacy Guild is seeking tenders for three research projects funded under the fourth community pharmacy agreement.

The first RFT covers the feasibility of a national funding model for the delivery of pharmacotherapy treatment for opiod dependence via community

pharmacies in Australia.

There's also a project looking at the alignment of community pharmacy with the National Palliative Care Strategy, as well as another aiming to identify the primary health care role for pharmacy in assisting people with mild to moderate mental illness.

Applications for the projects close early in Apr, with funding coming from the \$19m allocated for the R&D program under the fourth agreement.

Final reports to the Guild on the projects are due by early 2010.

## PSA Vic calendar

THE Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (Victorian Branch) has published a calendar of professional development events which will be held across the state this year.

The full list can be downloaded from [www.psa.org.au](http://www.psa.org.au).

## Baby brain research

BABIES' brains are helping Australian scientists understand the causes of diseases such as strokes and Alzheimer's.

Researchers at the Queensland Brain Institute have looked at what causes babies' brain cells to live or die.

They found it is the electrical signals that brain cells use to communicate with each other that keeps the cells alive, while unstimulated cells die.

The institute's Dr Elizabeth Coulson says the discovery is an important step in treatment for strokes and Alzheimer's.

"If you are using the parts of the body that are connected in the brain that have been damaged, for example after a stroke, then you may be able to stop some of the degenerative processes that happen in the long term in a stroke," she said.

filling spheres to fill fine lines for instant results, and also contain vitamin E for skin health.

Colours are inspired by cocktails, with the range including Mai Tai, Peach Daiquiri, Pink Lady, Sangria and the delicious Berry Martini.

Marita also launched *The Lift Serum*, an age defying treatment which instantly tightens skin and fills in lines.

She said the product is "for women like myself, of a certain age, who do not want to resort to invasive surgical procedures."

More info from Total Beauty Network 1300 765 332.

## Hail to the Lipstick Queen!



ABOVE: She created the lip plumping craze, and now Marita Taberman Coccaro has done it again with a new range of lip glosses.

Marita was in Sydney last week to launch the products which will be coming into pharmacies, day spas and salons later this month.

She's pictured with the eye-catching point of sale display for her new Lip Lift Glosses, which have a plant base rather than petroleum or parabens - with Coccaro telling *PD* she likes to call the substance 'plantrolatum'.

The glosses include marine

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## DISPENSARY CORNER

MEDICAL certificates are very much in the news, with a sudden realisation in the media that under the new rules it's not just pharmacists and doctors who can issue them.

According to reports in Sunday newspapers yesterday the Workchoices laws allow any medical practitioner to issue medical certificates - including chiropractors, podiatrists, naturopaths and acupuncturists.

One story probably went a little far by also suggesting they could be issued by veterinarians.

A MAJOR fraud was uncovered in Italy last week with the arrest of a 70-year-old man as he drove his car.

When police officers stopped the man's vehicle during a routine traffic check he wasn't able to produce a driver's licence, and upon further investigation it was discovered that the man's medical records claimed he was completely blind.

It turns out he'd been pretending to be blind for more than 40 years in order to receive social security payments.

A CHANCE meeting has saved the life of a man in the UK, after the doctor who shook his hand diagnosed a rare condition.

36-year-old Mark Gurrieri was working at a restaurant when he greeted one of the patrons, local gp Dr Chris Britt.

Britt noticed Mr Gurrieri's spongy-feeling hand and large facial features, and recalled them as symptoms of a brain tumour called acromelagly.

Doctors removed the growth last month, with Britt saying "It's the sort of diagnosis you might make once in a career if you're lucky."



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