

Primary extends Symbion deadline

PRIMARY Health Care will now take acceptances for its offer for Symbion Healthcare up until 07 Feb 08.

The \$4.10 per share offer is still being opposed by Symbion directors, but the extension gives Primary more time to build support for the deal.

Primary this morning announced it now holds 37.47% of Symbion.

Rival bidder Healthscope is prohibited from talking to Primary until 26 Jan.

CHOICE backs MJA

CONSUMER advocate CHOICE says it supports recommendations for the tighter regulation of complementary medicines advocated this month in a *Medical Journal of Australia* article (PD Thu).

CHOICE Health Policy Officer Michael Johnson said: "The proliferation of complementary weight-loss drugs in the last decade, despite limited evidence of their effectiveness, is a clear example of how the current regulatory arrangements have failed consumers."

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E-health one step closer

MEDICARE Australia has signed a contract with the National E-Health Transition Authority (NEHTA) for the development of a Unique Healthcare Identifier (UHI) service.

The UHI service will "accurately and uniquely identify people who receive healthcare in Australia and the people who provide healthcare, as well as the places where it is provided," according to a statement issued on Sat.

Minister for Health and Ageing Nicola Roxon described the deal as a "key building block" for the establishment of a Shared Electronic Health Records System (SEHR), which has the potential to "save lives and reduce costs."

She said the move would "ultimately reduce the possibility

of information being sent to the wrong health professional or being assigned to the wrong patient".

NEHTA is a non-profit company established by the commonwealth, state and territory governments to develop better ways of electronically collecting and securely exchanging health info.

Last month NEHTA released an action plan to expedite e-health reform in Australia, with initial aims to establish funding for a national system of personal electronic health records.

NEHTA said another key priority was the development of national e-medications management specifications to facilitate electronic prescribing and dispensing.

Statins for diabetes

STATINS should be automatically considered for almost all diabetes patients, according to a meta-analysis published last week which showed a drop in cardiovascular incidents even for people without evidence of heart disease.

Qld saliva update

PHARMACISTS in Queensland are being asked to reassure their patients that new drug testing systems used by the Qld Police are only designed to detect the use of illicit drugs.

In Dec the Qld Police Service began random roadside saliva testing for illegal drugs, with the technology designed to detect cannabis, methylamphetamine and ecstasy.

The Qld Guild said pharmacy medicines such as cold and flu tablets, including those containing pseudoephedrine, will not register a positive reading.

Stilnox S8 move

THE National Drugs and Poisons Schedule Committee (NDPSC) will next month consider a proposal to reschedule zolpidem to S8.

The committee is seeking submissions in the lead-up to the meeting on 19-21 Feb, with a closing date of Wed 23 Jan.

The move follows updated CMI labelling warning of possible adverse reactions to the drug, and the reduction in pack size to a maximum of 14 tablets.

UK online logo

THE Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain has launched a new "Internet Pharmacy Logo" which aims to help the public identify if a website is being operated by a bona fide pharmacy in Britain.

The move follows research which showed over 2m people across the UK regularly buy drugs online.



DISPENSARY CORNER

THE world's tallest people appear to have stopped growing.

Figures released by the Dutch Central Bureau for Statistics last week showed that since 2001 the average height of men in Holland had stabilised at just above 5'11" (1.8m).

The plateau follows regular increases from the early 1980s to 2000 when the average height of Dutch men increased by more than one inch (2.5cm).

International studies in the past have found people from the Netherlands to be the tallest in the world, citing wealth, good nutrition, genetics and the country's universal health care system for the result.

However regarding the new figures, a scientist said: "if they've reached their optimum level then there's not much more you can do."

AIRLINES are being hit by the obesity crisis once again, with a decision in Canada that even clinically obese people can't be charged extra to fly.

A new ruling by the Canadian Transportation Agency ordered that airlines must charge disabled passengers for only one ticket - even if they require more than one seat.

The move goes even further, saying that the carriers must also not charge for an extra seat required for an essential caregiver.

Local reports claim the ruling doesn't extend to obese people who are merely uncomfortable in an airline seat, nor to those who want to travel with a companion for personal reasons.

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