

Free myeloma drug

A NEW treatment for the blood cancer multiple myeloma has been approved for marketing in Australia by the TGA.

The medication, named Revlimid (lenalidomide) is manufactured by Celgene, which has announced the product will be made available free to suitable patients through a compassionate supply arrangement.

"The provision of Revlimid on a compassionate basis is a very significant commitment to people afflicted with this incurable disease," said Celgene gm George Varkanis.

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1. "A brief review of the use of honey as a clinical dressing". Molan, P.C. Primary Intention (The Australian Journal of Wound Management; 6:4), 146-158 (1998).

2. White, R., Cooper, R. and Molan, P. (2005). Honey: A modern wound management product. Wounds UK Limited, Aberdeen, United Kingdom.

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Stilnox link with Ledger

ZOLPIDEM has hit the headlines again, with suggestions it may be implicated in the death of actor Heath Ledger.

Ledger is believed to have died yesterday from a drug overdose, although the results of an autopsy are yet to be revealed.

According to media reports, police found prescription drugs, allegedly including Ambien (the name under which zolpidem is marketed in the US), and other unidentified substances in the Australian's New York apartment.

Friends and family members are split over whether his death was accidental or suicide, and the link with his use of Ambien is also unclear.

The 28-year-old had complained recently of insomnia and told an

American magazine that he had taken two of the sleeping pills but woke up an hour later.

The National Drugs and Poisons Schedule Committee will meet next month to decide whether zolpidem should be changed to Schedule 8.

In Nov, the TGA reduced pack sizes of Stilnox and updated its safety warnings to warn patients of its side-effects.

PCA NU expands

PHARMACY IT specialist PCA NU Systems has purchased Sydney-based Vertikis Business Solutions.

PCA NU ceo Paul Naismith said the deal would enable pharmacies to become more competitive, due to Vertikis' specialist knowledge in business planning software.

Vertikis will maintain its existing management team and continue to focus on general retail solutions, while PCA NU will aim at the pharmacy market.

The companies said they would be able to share resources and expertise across industries.

Pulse Health deal

AUSTRALIAN Ethical Investment Ltd is to become a substantial shareholder in integrated health care company Pulse Health with a 10.75% holding.

Pulse md Peter Mangles said the move "endorses our strategy to build a major position in the healthcare sector."

HOT Travel Deals

WELCOME to *Pharmacy Daily's* new 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 sun worshippers, the Gold Coast's newest Luxury hotel, Artique Surfers Paradise, opens on the 1st February 2008.

Comprising one and two bedroom apartments there is an opening special rate from \$129 per night - for bookings and information ph 1800 65 65 65.

Also in sunny QLD, Coral Seas Resort, Whitsundays is offering accommodation from \$146 per night with 4th night free.

And Shantara Resort & Spa, Port Douglas has rooms from \$161 per night with the 4th night free + a bottle of sparkling wine

- bookings www.zuji.com.au.

Or how about a shopping spree in China?

Harvey World Travel has spaces available on a ten-day tour to Beijing and Shanghai especially for shopaholics.

The price of \$4468 per person includes return Qantas fares, four star accommodation including breakfast, transfers and even excess baggage so participants can 'Shop Till They Drop' - with the tour led by a shopping expert who knows all the best places!

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Business plan comp

THE Pharmacy Guild today launched the second National Student Business Plan competition at the Pharmacy Student Congress in Sydney.

The challenge is open to all pharmacy schools in Australia, offering \$15000 in cash and prizes.

This year the top six teams will compete via video conference, with major finalists to then make presentations live on stage at the Pharmacy Womens' Congress in Melbourne during August.

Guild President Kos Sclavos said the competition "helps pharmacy students approach the idea of business ownership and management confidently."

It's sponsored by Pharmacy Defence Limited and Gold Cross.



DISPENSARY CORNER

A DUTCH pharmaceutical firm has announced plans for the development of the world's first cannabis pill, called Namisol.

Echo Pharmaceuticals claims the market for such a medication is worth €4 billion each year, citing studies showing cannabis-based drugs could be effective for diseases including Parkinson's, multiple sclerosis and Alzheimer's.

"The big advantage of administering cannabis via a pill is that the drug is adopted easier by the body compared to alternatives," the firm said.

The raw materials will come from a Dutch grower, with the permissive Dutch government encouraging the plan.

Cannabis is already sold in Netherlands pharmacies for the treatment of chronic pain, cancer-related nausea and loss of appetite, HIV and MS.

PHARMACISTS who collect medical paraphernalia could be interested in a UK auction this week - a prosthetic leg worn by British war hero Douglas 'Tin Legs' Bader.

Bader was famous after continuing to fly for the RAF despite losing both legs in a plane crash.

Other items up for sale include Red Cross parcels sent to Bader when he was a prisoner of war in Colditz Castle.