

Alvesco for kids

ALVESCO (ciclesonide) has been approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration for use in children six years and older as a once-daily treatment for asthma.

As a new preventer option for children, Alvesco's small molecule size increases delivery to smaller peripheral airways in the lungs.

According to the manufacturer, Nycomed, the unique mechanism of action minimises cortisol side effects, with its lung-specific activation aiming to reduce the incidence of thrush around the mouth and a hoarse voice.

The company said the once daily dose of the inhaled corticosteroid could also improve compliance in children and adolescents.

Bowel book

A NEW book, *The Other Women's Movement*, has been launched today to help female constipation patients.

The author, bowel specialist and colorectal surgeon Dr Michael Levitt, said he believes the medical profession has let sufferers down, leaving them feeling "frustrated, guilty and ashamed".

Dr Levitt explores a treatment strategy that extends beyond the usual advice about a fibre-rich diet, exercise and laxative use.

The book costs \$19.95 and is on sale now at all major bookstores as well as online at

www.michaellevitt.com.au.

Bigger role for pharmacy

COMMUNITY pharmacists were yesterday championed as major players in reducing the pressure and costs of the nation's overburdened health system.

Pharmacy Guild president Kos Sclavos, in his first speech to the National Press Club in Canberra, made a bold push for an enhanced role for community pharmacists.

Stopping short of calling for pharmacists' prescribing powers, Mr Sclavos used the term 'medication continuance'.

"Pharmacists, as the medicine experts in our health system... should be the first to be considered for an increased role, because we can provide a number of efficiencies at no additional cost to Medicare," he said.

He pointed out that just 20 medicines, used to treat various chronic conditions, make up 45 million prescription (or 25% of all claimed PBS items) each year.

"For these medicines, once a doctor has initiated therapy, it is our view that a pharmacist should be able to continue that therapy for up to 12 months," he said.

"Some would view this proposal as pharmacist prescribing, but we see it as medication continuance."

Sclavos said the patient would continue to see their doctor as needed, and the doctor would still be the key coordinator of care.

He said pharmacists should also be able to continue all medicines

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supply for six months for patients in nursing homes or high-care residential facilities, "whether or not there are repeat prescriptions on the items".

Another major change proposed by Mr Sclavos was a new scheduling sub-category called Pharmacist Only Medicines Notifiable.

"There are a number of medicines that should move from the Prescription Only category to Pharmacist Only Medicines Notifiable, which is what now occurs with pseudoephedrine sales in Australia.

"As the name suggests, notifiable means relevant agencies can be notified of sales to monitor misuse," he said.

The contraceptive pill and low-dose statins, as well as products for minor ailments, could come under this category, he said.

End to 'secret discounts' suspicion

IN his speech to the National Press Club, Guild president Kos Sclavos also outlined the impact of major reforms to the PBS next month, and reassured consumers that they - and the Government - would save money by buying generic medicines, which are "a safe, effective and quality alternative to branded pharmaceuticals".

Mr Sclavos said the industry welcomed the greater price transparency introduced by the reforms, with mandatory price disclosures by manufacturers.

"The increased transparency... will put to rest once and for all, the misinformed - and sometimes mischievous - claims that pharmacists chase secret 'discounts' on generic medicines.

Mr Sclavos said the initiatives would save the Federal Government \$6 billion over 10 years - twice the amount predicted by the Government in 2006, as the Guild has taken into consideration that 40% of the PBS (by value) will come off patent in 2012 and 2013.

Price decreases on more than 1000 safety net medicines will range from 20 cents to \$4.65 with an average decrease of over \$2, he said.

DISPENSARY CORNER

A DIFFERENT type of trafficking in human body parts has been proposed by a New Zealand man, who's listed his left leg on the internet for \$1m.

24-year-old James Stewart, described as a 'digital entrepreneur' says his limb has about 2000 square centimetres of skin, and is selling advertising space for \$500 a square centimetre.

"It's a fun and cool way of advertising," he said, claiming there's enough space to tattoo at least 200 ads on the leg.

Stewart plans to use the money raised to support his art website as well as make a \$50,000 charity donation.

He said if he runs short of cash in the future he would also consider 'selling' his right leg.

COULD this be considered a performance enhancing drug?

The New Zealand Olympic team is taking its own barista to Beijing, saying it's very important to satisfy the caffeine cravings of its athletes.

One of the sponsors is paying for 21-year-old Julianne Frith to be part of the team, and she's expected to make up to 500 cups of coffee a day.

"The feedback we got from the last couple of games is that athletes want good coffee," said chef de mission Dave Currie.

He said there was little likelihood that performance would be enhanced, saying "we have no concerns that somebody will drink 55 cups of coffee, or whatever it is, before competing."

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.

Escape the winter chill with this great deal in Fiji. **Treasure Island** has a FREE Meal Deal for guests booking a minimum 4-night stay before 31 August - for travel between 15 October and 24 December 2008. Receive free full buffet breakfasts, lunches and dinners. As a bonus the resort is offering free return transfers to/from Nadi Airport. For more info contact your Travel Agent.

If you love Big Band and Swing, then this cruise is for you. **Cruiseabout** has a 16-night music-themed cruise and tour from Lisbon to Miami. Departing

Nov 18 2008, the package includes afares, 2 nights accom in Lisbon, 10 night cruise onboard the Crystal Serenity (includes all meals and entertainment) and 2 nights accom in Miami. Priced from \$10,575 per person. For more details call 1300 363 428 or see www.cruiseabout.com.au.

Jetstar have just released a great range of Airfare and accommodation packages for spring, from short breaks to beach getaways. On sale now until 30 July 2008, unless sold prior. For full range on sale and prices see www.jetstar.com.au.

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