

PSA elections

THE branch committees for the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia have been declared for Qld, Tas and SA following the recent PSA elections.

Members of the new Branch Committees will serve for a period of three years.

The Qld committee is: Debbie Rigby, Geraldine Moses, Gilbert Yeates, Lisa Nissen, Warren Blee, Bruce Elliot, Sue Scott, Karalyn Huxhagen, Peter Mayne, Nerida Smith, Julie Stokes & David Gath.

In Tasmania the members are Graeme Holloway, Lorraine Smith, Shane Jackson, Luke Berznicki, Helen Howarth, Robert Scanlon, Anne Todd, Kathryn Law and Brad Turner.

And the new SA branch committee is: Lyn Banner, Peter Bayly, Sia Hassouras, Grand Kadarchi, Mark Naunton, Andrew Sluggett and Joseph Waterhouse.

FDA pregnancy labelling proposal

THE US Food and Drug Administration has issued a proposal which would change the way prescription labels in the US present pregnancy and breastfeeding information.

Currently there are "letter categories" in the pregnancy section, which would be changed to three sections, the first of which is a 'Fetal Risk Summary' providing a "risk conclusion based on the available data".

The 'Clinical Considerations' section would give dosing info, discuss risks to mother and baby and cover potential complications, while the third 'Data' section would give more background on the data used in the Fetal Risk Summary section.



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ASMI McLucas submission

THE Australian Self-Medication Industry is recommending that some measures regarding regulation of complementary medicines be fast-tracked to "reassure the public and to maintain confidence in the regulatory framework."

ASMI consulted with its members before last week handing a submission to Senator Jan McLucas, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and Ageing.

The submission argues that from a risk management perspective the current two-tiered scheme for regulating complementary medicines is sound, and consistent with the relatively low level of risk associated with the substances in complementary products.

ASMI says that although some recommendations of an expert committee which reported in 2003 have been adopted, others were put on hold when the proposed joint Australia/NZ regulatory agency fell by the wayside last year.

The group is pushing for revision and legislative underpinning of the Guidelines for Levels and Kinds of Evidence to Support Indications and Claims as well as an ongoing review of

the registration pathway for complementary medicines.

It's also recommending that the National Prescribing Service disseminate information about complementary products, and "increasing the level of targeted assessment of 'problem' categories e.g. weight loss."

The submission is timely given the recent controversy generated by Dr Ken Harvey in his presentation at the National Medicines Symposium (PD 16 May).

Like Harvey, ASMI is also pushing for adequate resourcing of the complaints handling mechanism, adding that "appropriate sanctions are also required to act as a deterrent against breaches of the Therapeutic Goods Advertising Code and repeat offences."

The submission also notes recent international developments in the area of product claims, including the introduction in the UK of "stronger legal safeguards against products that claim, without any identifiable scientific evidence, to provide physical and mental health benefits such as tackling obesity or depression."

No issue on Mon

THE next edition of *Pharmacy Daily* will be published on Tue 10 Jun, due to the Queen's Birthday Holiday in NSW on Mon.

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DISPENSARY CORNER

DOING medical research in Switzerland is probably quite difficult, given a recent decision which protects the "dignity" and "autonomy" of all creatures - including plants.

A govt Ethics Committee on Non-Human Gene Technology declared last month that all vegetation has "inherent worth" and that humans must treat it in a morally correct manner.

The committee gave some helpful guidance on what its ruling means - apparently it's OK to mow a lawn, but you can't arbitrarily pick a wildflower growing in the fields.

Genetic engineering of flora is all right too, since plants would "still retain the autonomy to reproduce on their own."

SCIENTISTS in New Zealand are close to developing an injection which can stop farting.

NZ trade minister Phil Goff told a conference in Paris this week that "a solution is in sight" for the massive amounts of greenhouse gases emitted by flatulent cows and sheep.

"Our agricultural research organisation just last week was able to map the genome that causes methane in ruminant animals and we believe we can vaccinate against flatulent emissions," he said.

COULD this be a new giftware line for pharmacies?

Exclusive Swiss watchmaker Romain Jerome has introduced a new US\$300,000 "Day&Night" watch which uses a complex measurement of gravity to tell the wearer whether it's "day" or "night" wherever they are around the globe.

Unfortunately it doesn't give much more information, and in particular doesn't give a reading of the hours or minutes.

The company said research shows that two thirds of its (rather wealthy) customers don't use their watch to tell what time it is anyway.

"Anyone can buy a watch that tells time," said ceo Yvan Arpa, "but only a truly discerning customer can buy one that doesn't".