

## Retail symposium

TODAY the Pharmacy Guild of Australia (NSW Branch) is hosting its Retail in Pharmacy symposium in Sydney.

More than 100 attendees will hear presentations from a range of speakers including Katherine Doric of Nielsen, Rob Barnes of Symbion Consumer Healthcare, Andrew Rule from API and Frank Sirianni, Medici Capital.

Pharmacy Guild national president Kos Sclavos will also be speaking about Guild priorities for front of store.

See tomorrow's *Pharmacy Daily* for a full wrap-up of the symposium.

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## Pharmacists honoured

TWO Australian pharmacists were given awards in the Queen's Birthday Honours List, announced in Canberra yesterday.

Ken Bickle of Greenwich in NSW was named a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for "service to the pharmacy profession through executive roles with a range of organisations and to the community as a supporter of the Return Unwanted Medicines Program."

Bickle graduated from Sydney University in 1950 and since then has made an ongoing contribution to the development of pharmacy practice in Australia.

He's been involved in the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia, and was made a fellow in 1994 in recognition of his contribution to the profession.

And he's also been a councillor of the NSW branch of the Guild.

Bickle is a past President of the NSW Pharmacy Board and in 1991 was elected the Foundation President of the Australian Council of Pharmacy Registering Authorities.

He's also been involved in the Sydney University Pharmacy

Practice Foundation and been a director of the Return Unwanted Medicines project.

The other pharmacist honoured yesterday was Valerie Austin from the outback NSW town of Walgett, who was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for "service to the pharmacy profession, particularly as an initiator of programs to improve Indigenous health care."

## Pharmacy E-Bulletin

THIS week's edition of the Repatriation General Hospital Pharmacy E-Bulletin gives an overview of how pharmacists and other health professionals can quantify fracture risk.

NPS data shows that osteoporotic fractures are a key contributor to morbidity and premature mortality, and the bulletin describes two clinical tools allowing the risks of fractures to be measured - the World Health Organisation's Fracture Risk Assessment tool (FRAX) and the Fracture Risk Calculator developed by the Garvan Institute in Australia - [info.chris.alderman@rgh.sa.gov.au](mailto:info.chris.alderman@rgh.sa.gov.au).

## Stem cell arrival

THE Australian Stem Cell Centre (ASCC) in Melbourne today announced the arrival of "human induced pluripotent" (iPS) stem cells, said to be one of the latest and most significant developments in stem cell research.

They've been brought into Australia as part of a study which aims to compare the effectiveness of iPS cells with stem cells obtained from human embryos.

iPS cells are derived from human adult cells (e.g. skin) which have been "reprogrammed to be more embryonic-like in behaviour" - possibly providing a preferable alternative to therapeutic cloning which raises many moral issues.

The iPS cells have been imported under an agreement with the University of Wisconsin in the US, with the ASCC's Dr Andrew Laskett saying: "We plan to comprehensively compare the iPS cell lines to existing human embryonic stem cell lines using the first class scientific infrastructure and innovative characterisation and differentiation strategies in place at the Australian Stem Cell Centre."

## June prescribing update

### NEW PRODUCTS

• **Duloxetine HCl** (Cymbalta) is a selective serotonin and noradrenaline reuptake inhibitor used in the treatment of major depressive disorder.

It is contraindicated in patients with liver disease resulting in hepatic impairment and co-administration with potent CYP1A2 inhibitors. The concomitant use of monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs) with duloxetine is also contraindicated, and duloxetine should not be administered within at least 14 days of discontinuing treatment with an MAOI.

At least five days should elapse after stopping duloxetine, before starting an MAOI.

The recommended dose is 60 mg once daily or 30 mg once daily in patients with end-stage renal disease. Cymbalta is available in packs of 28 capsules as a PBS Restricted item [major depressive disorders] for \$35.86

(30 mg) or \$48.89 (60 mg).

• **Pramipexole HCl** (Sifrol) is a dopamine agonist. It is indicated in the treatment of idiopathic Parkinson's disease (monotherapy or in combination with levodopa) and symptomatic treatment of restless legs syndrome.

Episodes of sudden onset of sleep without warning, during activity, have been reported with this drug, and patients should be appropriately cautioned.

Initial dose is 375 mcg/day in three divided doses in Parkinson's disease, and 125 mcg as a single dose 2-3 hours before bedtime for restless legs syndrome.

Sifrol is available a PBS Restricted item [Parkinson's disease as adjunctive therapy in patients being treated with levodopa-decarboxylase inhibitor combinations] as 125 mcg [30] (\$10.61), 250 mcg [100] (\$39.34) and 1 mg [100]

(\$151.16) tablets.

### NEW INDICATIONS

• **Bevacizumab** (Avastin) is now also indicated for first-line treatment of metastatic breast cancer (in combination with paclitaxel) where anthracycline-based therapy is contraindicated.

The usual dose is 10 mg/kg once every two weeks or 15 mg/kg once every three weeks as an IV infusion. It is recommended that treatment be continued until progression of the underlying disease.

### SAFETY-RELATED CHANGES

• **Insulin aspart (rys)** (NovoRapid) can now be used during pregnancy and by children. Clinical data supporting its use is available in children aged two years or older.

• Consistent with the vasodilatory effects of alpha-blockers and **vardenafil**

(Levitra), the concomitant use of Levitra with alpha-blockers may lead to symptomatic hypotension in some patients. Concomitant treatment should only be initiated if the patient is stable on alpha-blocker therapy.

In these patients, Levitra should be initiated at the lowest recommended starting dose of 5 mg. It may be administered at any time with tamsulosin.

With other alpha-blockers, separation of dosing should be considered when Levitra is prescribed concomitantly.

• Convulsion and delirium (including symptoms such as altered level of consciousness, confusion, abnormal behaviour, delusions, hallucinations, agitation, anxiety and nightmares) have been reported in patients with influenza who were receiving neuraminidase inhibitors (Tamiflu, Relenza), predominately in children and adolescents.

These events often had an abrupt onset and rapid resolution. In rare cases, these events resulted in accidental injury, with some resulting in a fatal outcome. The contribution of the neuraminidase inhibitor to those events is unknown.

Such neuropsychiatric events have also been reported in patients with influenza who were not taking the medicine. Patients with influenza should be closely monitored for signs of abnormal behaviour.

If neuropsychiatric symptoms occur, the risks and benefits of continuing treatment should be evaluated for each patient.

*This list is a summary of only some of the changes that have occurred over the last month. Before prescribing always refer to the full Product Information.*

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## NPS on analgesics

AN article in the current issue of National Prescribing Service's *Australian Prescriber* claims that paracetamol is generally still first line analgesic therapy for children because it may have fewer adverse effects.

Dr Sean Biggs, Paediatric Clinical Pharmacologist from Royal Hobart Hospital, compares the use of ibuprofen and paracetamol, saying they're equally effective.

The article also discusses reports of liver toxicity associated with paracetamol; more info at [www.australianprescriber.com](http://www.australianprescriber.com).

## Win a copy of Travelling Well!

**DUE** to popular demand, *Pharmacy Daily* is again giving subscribers the chance to win one of two copies of Dr Deborah Mills' amazing book *Travelling Well*.

The book, valued at \$24.95 is a must have guide to a safe and healthy journey, with detailed advice about pre-trip preparation, how to look after yourself while away and what to do if you get sick.

Dr Deborah Mills, widely known as "The Travel Doctor" is one of Australia's leading travel health care providers, and has over 20 years experience in the field.

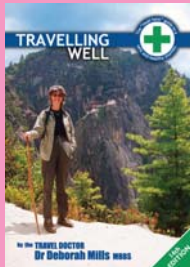
To enter today, we're asking you to email in your answer to the following question to:

[comp@pharmacydaily.com.au](mailto:comp@pharmacydaily.com.au):

**One of Dr Deb's travel tips is to 'regularly apply repellants containing DEET'.**

**What does DEET stand for?**

This fantastic prize will go to the first two correct responses, so for your chance to win, make sure you send your entry in NOW!



## NZ methadone tragedy

THE owner of a New Zealand pharmacy has been ordered to apologise to the family of a man who died after being given six times his prescribed dose of methadone.

An report into an extensive inquiry into the incident has just been released, with the details of the pharmacy's location and the dead patient suppressed.

According to the transcripts the 27-year-old had been prescribed 30mg daily which had to be taken in front of the pharmacist.

During the course of treatment one of the pharmacists confused him with another patient and dispensed 180mg.

During the investigation the pharmacist, who has since died, told the NZ Health and Disability Commissioner that "they were remarkably alike in appearance, build and mode of dress."

However a friend of the dead man, who died later that day with symptoms consistent with an overdose, also testified that he

knew he'd been given the wrong prescription.

Ordering the apology, the commissioner said: "I consider that the pharmacy did not have an adequate standard operating procedure for methadone dispensing."

## PRIME winners

ALPHAPHARM won the Pharmacist's Choice Award for Outstanding Pharmaceutical Company at last week's 2008 Pharmaceutical Research Innovation and Marketing Excellence (PRIME) awards held in Sydney last week.

The awards also named Bayer Schering Pharma in two categories for its "Potent" campaign promoting Levitra.

Other winners included Pfizer for a campaign promoting smoking cessation medication Champix, and Pfizer also took home the *GP Choice Award for Outstanding Pharmaceutical Company* for the 2nd year running.

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## DISPENSARY CORNER

SCIENTISTS working in Antarctica apparently are trying traditional ways of keeping warm.

McMurdo Station last month received a shipment of 16,488 condoms, with authorities saying the delivery should last a whole year and is for more than just the 125 staff who spend the cold winter at the South Pole.

The station's manager Bill Henriksen said "During the summertime we've got a normal population of 1100 people and this is for the year round, not just for the 125 people we have here in the winter."

He said the condoms would be freely available to staff to avoid any embarrassing purchases.

"Since everybody knows everyone, it becomes a little bit uncomfortable. We'd prefer to just provide them and do it that way so that people don't do without," he said.

PHARMACY staff come across lots of unusual baby names, but this one's very colourful.

A couple in Sweden have won the right to name their new baby son Lego after a court case.

Under Swedish law it's illegal to name children offensive, unsuitable or inappropriate names, but after an initial knock-back the parents went to the Swedish Administrative Court of Appeals, saying they thought their child would love to be named after the popular building block toy.

The judge agreed, but another couple who wanted to name their daughter Elvis weren't so lucky, with their request denied because it was "too masculine."

Unusual names are quite popular in Sweden, with other names attempted in the last few years including 'Ikea', 'Veranda' and 'Metallica'.

## RGH Pharmacy

**Due to popular demand the  
RGH Pharmacy  
Anticoagulation Handbook  
is now available to the  
pharmacy industry across Australia.**

The handbook gives patients important information about warfarin treatment and has a chart to record INR results.

**Repatriation General Hospital is making it available for purchase for \$2.80 per booklet, reduced to \$2.40 for PSA and SHPA members.**

More information  
[chris.alderman@rgh.sa.gov.au](mailto:chris.alderman@rgh.sa.gov.au)



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