

## Vytorin victory

MERCK Sharp & Dohme and Schering-Plough say that Vytorin (simvastatin/ezetemibe) will definitely not be delisted from the PBS.

Yesterday reports claimed that MSD and SP were standing firm against the 25% government-imposed price cut, but News Limited newspapers reported today that a spokesman for Federal Health Minister Nicola Roxon said the drug companies had informed her office that it will accept the price cut, and Vytorin will therefore remain on the PBS.

The decision means 40,000 cholesterol patients will be saved from paying between \$60 and \$140 a month for their Vytorin prescriptions.

An official statement from MSD and Schering-Plough said the companies had been in now-concluded discussions with the govt over the price cut, and emphasised that the product "will not be de-listed from the PBS and there will be no interruption in supply to patients."

## New orphan drug

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration has added Celgene Pty Ltd's azacytidine (Vidaza) to its list of designated orphan drugs.

The medication, a powder for suspension for injection, is indicated for the treatment of myelodysplastic syndrome.

## 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.

The BEST DEAL this week for travellers is HALF PRICE on holiday packages to New Caledonia. On sale now until 14th July, packages include airfares, transfers and accommodation. Choose from a variety of hotels and resorts, with prices starting from \$649pp for 3 nights. This tropical paradise is only two and a half hours from Sydney and two hours from Brisbane, a great place for a getaway this winter. For more information go to [www.newcaledonia.com.au](http://www.newcaledonia.com.au).

For something really different Active Travel is offering an 18-

## CSU rural health blueprint

PROFESSOR of Rural Pharmacy at Charles Sturt University, Patrick Ball, is one of three CSU academics who have devised a new "human rights"-based blueprint for rural health.

"To date, health services in rural or remote areas have been based on a negative or deficit model of health," he said, being provided on a historical basis on "what a community has had or for

### Email for BP control

BLOOD pressure monitoring at home, supported by emails from a pharmacist, can improve BP control in hypertensive patients, a new study has found.

In a randomised controlled trial involving more than 750 patients, US researchers compared usual care with home BP monitoring with or without regular email communication by a pharmacist.

In the pharmacist-care group, after 12 months, target BP control was achieved by 56% of patients.

Target BP control also increased to 36% in the group doing home monitoring but this was not significantly higher than that achieved by the group receiving usual care (31%).

An accompanying editorial in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* said online health information and intervention are "the next big thing in medical care".

day trip to Malawi, Africa in November 2008. The tour is in conjunction with THRIVE, an organisation that assists underprivileged communities in developing countries. Participants will spend a week in a small village working alongside the local villagers and getting involved at every level including working at the orphanage and assisting teachers. The balance of the tour is spent enjoying the beautiful sights of Malawi, with time to fish, kayak and snorkel. Price is \$6719pp ex Sydney. For more: [www.activetravel.com.au](http://www.activetravel.com.au)

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## DISPENSARY CORNER

HEALTHY food probably isn't really necessary at the world's first "death-themed" restaurant, in remote Truskavets in Ukraine.

The eatery, appropriately named 'Eternity', consists of a series of tables fitted inside a gigantic 30m-long coffin.

Diners can choose from dishes including "Nine Day" and "Forty Day" salads (named after local mourning rituals) and there's also apparently a popular dish called "Let's meet in paradise."

It's the brainchild of a local funeral parlour, with the undertakers saying they hope the restaurant will be confirmed as the world's biggest coffin.

TALK about flying high.

A pro-marijuana lobby group in the US is advocating the use of "medication" to help prevent incidents of air rage - saying cannabis has many advantages over alternatives such as alcohol.

The group, called SAFER, held a press conference in Denver outside the offices of the Federal Aviation Administration to "propose a solution to the rash of in-flight disturbances on airplanes in the last year."

The move followed a court appearance by a passenger, Christina Szele, accused of punching a flight attendant in the face last week.

Szele's defence is that she has no memory of the incident because crew gave her too many vodka drinks during the flight.

"Szele's outbursts wouldn't have happened if she'd been inhaling instead of imbibing," said a SAFER spokesman, who issued calls for "pot-smoking lounges in the nation's airports."

He said smoking marijuana could also help generate revenue for struggling airlines.

"From what I understand, marijuana tends to lead to the munchies, so if more passengers smoked pot before they flew, airlines could, you know, charge for snacks instead of for baggage," he said.

## Diabetes assistance

PHARMACY assistants will have the opportunity to learn about ways in which they can advise, support and assist patients with diabetes later this year.

The Pharmacy Assistants Conference, to be held in October, will feature a session covering insulin treatment, side effects of diabetic medication, blood glucose tests, glucometers and other aspects of diabetic care.

The session will be led by community pharmacist Ben Basger, a lecturer and tutor in pharmacy practice at the University of Sydney - more info at [www.pharmacyassistants.com](http://www.pharmacyassistants.com).

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