

Sigma decision

SIGMA Pharmaceuticals is expected to announce by the end of the week whether it will proceed with a joint venture with Metcash (PD 22 Apr) to purchase Symbion's pharmacy assets.

Rural challenges

THE Health Department has completed a new audit of Australia's rural and regional health workforce, saying the previous govt had relied on 17-year-old population figures to develop rural policies.

The audit confirmed that the current supply of health professionals, including pharmacists, in regional areas is not sufficient to meet current needs and will get worse as the population and the workforce age.

New initiatives include the establishment of an Office of Rural Health within the department to drive reform in the sector, as well as examining all existing programs supporting rural health professionals over the next twelve months.

ADEC ticks bird flu drug

THE Australian Drug Evaluation Committee has recommended two new vaccines manufactured by CSL and GlaxoSmithKline, said to be the first inoculations available for the "prevention of influenza caused by a pandemic strain of influenza virus."

CSL's Panvax vaccine and GSK's Pandemrix are both suspensions for injection, containing the new biological entity influenza virus haemagglutinin [H5N1].

ADEC made the decisions at its meeting on 21 Apr, but the resolutions were only gazetted yesterday.

Other products recommended following the meeting included:

- Pfizer's Eraxis (anidulafungin) powder for injection, for the treatment of invasive candidiasis
- Aclasta/Osteovan solution for injection (zoledronic acid) from Novartis for the treatment of osteoporosis - with a maximum of three annual doses



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DISPENSARY CORNER

A NEW grooming trend at a school in the USA is razing eyebrows.

That's right, razing, not raising - because any students found with their eyebrows shaved with vertical lines are being told to shave them off completely or go home.

Centennial High School in Portland, Oregon, has instituted the strict policy because the mark looks like a gang symbol.

Shaving vertical lines into the eyebrows has been popularised at the school by a musical performer called Soulja Boy.

A MEDICAL team in Israel has started using party drug Ecstasy as a treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder.

The researchers at the Beer-Yakov psychiatric hospital near Tel Aviv, claim that psychotherapy is a vital therapy and that Ecstasy can play a key part in patients' recovery.

A MONKEY at a zoo in Utah, USA can now see his peanuts much better after doctors performed cataract surgery and replaced the lenses in his eyes.

The howler monkey at Hogle Zoo in Salt Lake City can apparently now see clearly for the first time in years - although reports don't say whether he was able to prove it by reading from an eye chart.

RED wine - full of antioxidants and good for the environment!

That is, if you buy it in Norway, where an alcohol importer is promising to buy carbon credits for 18kg of CO₂ for every cask of wine sold.

That's almost six times the estimated amount of greenhouse gases emitted to make and transport each box of wine.

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 the traveller who has been there done that, Gateway Tours is offering a fantastic special on their 14 day Trans Siberian Train journey, also with stop-overs in St. Petersburg, Beijing and Singapore. Priced from \$12,789pp including airfares. More info call 1800 700 333.

For skiers the season in the Canadian Rockies is far from over with resorts operating until May. Alberta's ski areas are also already offering 2008/2009 season deals. The Earlybird packages start from \$3525 pp including return airfares, 7 nights accommodation and 6

days skiing at Banff, Lake Louise or Sunshine Village on a tri-area ticket. For more info call Value Tours on 1300 361 322.

Cycling fans will love this 11 day package from Flight Centre. See the Alpine stages of the Tour de France, as well as the Final Time Trial and the finish on the Champs Elysee. Travellers who bring their own bikes will be able to ride some of the famous sections of the race. Prices start from \$4748pp and include 10 nights bed and breakfast accomm, guided bike rides and much more. For details go to www.flightcentre.com.au

- Bristol-Myers Squibb's Abilify (aripiprazole) solution for injection for the treatment of agitation associated with schizophrenia
- Humira (adalimumab) from Abbott Australia for the treatment of plaque psoriasis
- Novartis' Enviage/Rasilez (aliskiren) for the treatment of hypertension
- Oraquix (prilocaine) fixed combination gel from Dentsply, for dental anaesthesia
- Merck Sharp & Dohme's new fixed combinations Fosamax Plus containing alendronate sodium and cholecalciferol for the treatment of osteoporosis.

Asthma on air

THE Rural Health Education Foundation is presenting a live TV program to update pharmacists about asthma and combination therapy.

The one-hour program outlines the best practice use of asthma combination therapies, including the appropriate selection of medications and different management regimens, in the context of latest research.

The program will be broadcast on Channel 4 of the Foundation's satellite network Tue 20 May at 8pm in ACT, NSW, VIC, QLD & TAS; 7.30pm in SA & NT; 6pm in WA.

It will also be available on DVD, video, web-streaming or post.

Pharmacy robbery

A PHARMACY was robbed in Sydney's Newtown yesterday afternoon.

About 4.35pm a man armed with a knife, and who had his face covered, entered a pharmacy on King Street and demanded money from a staff member.

The offender left the store with a sum of money and escaped in a dark-coloured car.



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