

## Two pages today

TODAY'S *Pharmacy Daily* includes a full page ad for the upcoming Healthcare in Pharmacy Conference, 23-25 May at the Melbourne Exhibition Centre.

## Brand switching reminder

PHARMACISTS have been urged to be mindful of brand-switching while adjusting to the changes resulting from implementation of the PBS reform package.

The reminder comes from the National Prescribing Service, which has called for consumers' health and wellbeing and Quality Use of Medicines to remain the top priority.

NPS CEO Dr Lynn Weekes emphasised that "brand switching should occur only when it is safe and appropriate".

She reinforced best pharmacy practice, which is to offer the same brand when filling repeats.

"The decision to use a generic medicine should ideally be made when treatment begins.

"Consider the comparative cost of and patient preference for particular brands at the outset of treatment," Dr Weekes said.

The use of generic medicines must benefit the consumer without confusing them and placing him or her at increased risk of medicine misadventure, she said.

NPS asked pharmacists and GPs to help the patient become familiar with the active ingredient name and to point it out on the packaging.

The *Safe and Appropriate Use of Generic Medicines* training module to help pharmacy assistants better understand generic medicines and their place in QUM.

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## Choice glucosamine report

CONSUMER group CHOICE says it's worth taking glucosamine supplements for osteoarthritis - just for the placebo effect, despite there being little clinical evidence of its efficacy.

"There's little evidence to suggest taking products containing glucosamine offers anything other than a placebo effect," said spokesperson Elise Davidson.

The consumer group reviewed 26 different glucosamine products and found a wide variation in both price and dosage levels.

Two contained less than 92.5% of the active ingredient, with Davidson urging those who do use the supplement to "start with one of the cheapest which has a dose of 1500mg per day or more.

"As plenty of people think glucosamine works for them, and clinical trials show it is generally safe, it's worth giving it a try even if the only result is the



placebo effect," she said.

Channel 9 show A Current Affair will tonight screen a segment on glucosamine, in response to the CHOICE investigation.

Blackmores issued a statement assuring consumers that its glucosamine formulas were rigorously tested, with active ingredients in the correct range.

The company has also just launched a new vegetarian version of its glucosamine product.

## Low in Symbion bid

RETAIL magnate Solomon Lew is understood to be part of a new joint distribution proposal which would potentially carry goods for API, Sigma, Symbion as well as grocery supplier Metcash.

Details are sketchy at this stage but the plan is thought to be part of one of the bids for Symbion's pharmacy and consumer divisions.

Lew emerged as a major (11%) shareholder in API after picking up shares previously owned by former criminal lawyer and share trader Chris Murphy in the recent Opes Prime share debacle.

## Anaphylaxis lecture

THE PSA (Vic) monthly evening lecture on June 3, will focus on anaphylaxis from foods and medications.

Prof Jo Douglass will cover treatment guidelines, action plans and pharmacists' role.

## Continence in Tassie

PHARMACY staff are invited to the Continence Foundation's education forum on continence care across major conditions.

A free one-day forum will be held for all health professionals on 04 Jul, 9am-4:30pm, Wrest Point, 410 Sandy Bay Road, Sandy Bay, Tasmania.

Register your interest to Mary Trezise on (03) 9347 2522 or email [mary@continence.org.au](mailto:mary@continence.org.au).

## HOT Travel Deals

WELCOME to *Pharmacy Daily's* regular travel feature. Each week we highlight a couple of great travel deals which we're sure will be of interest to everyone in the pharmacy industry.

For those travelling solo, **Adventure World** and Australia's largest dating website, **RSVP**, have teamed up to offer an itinerary to explore the wonders of Egypt and Dubai. The 15-day itinerary is for 40 to 59 and 60 plus singles departing in November. The tour visits the famous archaeological sites of Egypt, a 4 night Nile cruise and then onto Dubai for shopping and 4WD desert safaris. The package is priced at \$6437 per person and includes airfares, accommodation, English speaking guides and an RSVP host. For more info

contact RSVP on 1300 794 192.

**Travel Indochina** is offering some great specials to Vietnam, Thailand and Borneo. They have a 7 night Hanoi & Luang Prabang deal from \$1425pp including airfares and accom.

Or a 4 night Saigon package with Royal Brunei from \$797. If you are interested in Thailand there is a great deal at Evason Phuket, stay 10 pay 5 from \$1600pp, includes airfares, accom, transfers and daily breakfast. Borneo - staying at Kota Kinabalu for 3 nights from \$670. For more great deals [www.travelindochina.com.au](http://www.travelindochina.com.au)

## DISPENSARY CORNER

A NEW poll of British workers has found that more than 33% admitted going to work with a hangover, while one in ten had been drunk at their desk.

In the BBC study staff said they had struggled to concentrate, made mistakes and sometimes left early as a result.

The worst sector was people working in media and creative jobs, where 41% said they had been drunk at work - but other occupations with high rates of workplace intoxication included the construction industry (24%), professional and business services (23%) and information technology (15%).

Union representatives said the excessive drinking could be a result of workplace stress.

A MAN who has hiccuped over 10 million times in the last 15 months is to have an operation to relieve the condition.

24-year-old Christopher Sands started hiccuping in Feb 2007 and since then has been afflicted roughly every two seconds, for up to 12 hours at a time.

"I've tried everything to stop them. I must have drunk water a hundred different ways," he said.

Sands will shortly undergo surgery to repair a faulty stomach valve, which doctors are blaming for the hiccups.

PHARMACIES in the Kashmir region of India are likely to begin stocking leeches, with therapies involving the bloodsuckers apparently making a comeback there.

Reports today say doctors in at least three "Unani" or traditional medicine hospitals in the Himalayan region have started using leeches for a number of ailments, including the treatment of chronic headaches, arthritis, skin diseases and sinusitis.

Proponent Dr Naseer Hakeem said leech saliva is known to contain "many bio-active substances which go into the body of a patient while leeches suck blood.

"Leeches are wonder-doctors," he insisted.



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