

Keep an eye out

PHARMACY staff should remind parents to take their kids to the optometrist following the release of Medicare figures that reveal only one in five children had their eyes tested in the past year.

"Many parents don't realise that undiagnosed vision problems can result in learning or behavioural difficulties for children," said Shirley Loh of the Optometrists Association Australia.

Symptoms that may indicate a child has a vision problem include frequent blinking, excessive eye movements, books being held very close to read, confusion of similar words, squinting or frowning to see objects in the distance, complaints of headaches or sore eyes and excessive tilting of the head.

Pain input wanted

THE Royal Australasian College of Physicians is calling for comments on a new policy on *Improving management of people with chronic non-malignant pain and opioid drug dependence*.

The document, which can be viewed at www.racp.edu.au, addresses areas including improving prescription of opioids for these people, managing pain in people with pre-existing dependence, and reducing diversion of prescription opioids.

Comments wanted by 30 May.

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Health IT adoption push

NEW technologies should be widely adopted by healthcare providers to improve communication between pharmacists, GPs and aged care homes, says Minister for Ageing Justine Elliot.

Speaking at yesterday's Annual Nursing and Management Issues Congress, Mrs Elliot praised the trial of *TeleMedCare* - a mobile point-of-care device which

FRED links to MIMs

PHARMACY software package Fred Dispense now offers a direct link into medical reference eMIMs and/or eMIMs for Pharmacy.

MIMs spokesperson Dinah Graham said giving pharmacists direct access to MIMs from the FRED dispensing page was a response to longstanding requests from customers.

When a medicine name is typed into FRED Dispense and the eMIMs link is clicked, eMIMs will open with the medicine selected and the product information shown.

More information and a simple online training program can be found at www.mims.com.au.

National symposium

NATIONAL Prescribing Service and PHARM will next week present the fifth biennial conference on Quality Use of Medicine.

The National Medicines Symposium 2008 will cover the proposed PBS reforms, stricter controls of complementary medicines, medicines use by children, and Indigenous health.

A panel discussion will be facilitated by Rhonda Galbally, ceo of Our Community, with a range of experts incl Dr Karen Peachey, Qld Pharmacy Guild and and Dr Janette Randall, NPS.

Australian and international speakers will also present seminars on QUM at the event on 14-16 May at the National Convention Centre, Canberra.

measures blood pressure, temperature, pulse, heart rate and lung function.

"The increase in monitoring helps improve the communication between staff in aged care homes, GPs and pharmacists, helping to save lives and make treatment more responsive," she said.

The program also uses biometric fingerprint recognition to identify staff administering residents' medication.

"This helps GPs with the remote management of residents as they are able to use the data offsite to monitor a resident's clinical status," Mrs Elliott said.

"Doctors, pharmacists and providers who may be geographically apart can now work closely in 'real time'."

Health renovation

A REPORT released yesterday by Health Minister Nicola Roxon has described Australia's healthcare system as "a renovator's opportunity".

The first report from the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission, which was set up to address change in the system, suggested states and territories should be accountable for their own public hospitals and mental, maternal, child and public health services; while aged care, indigenous health, disease prevention and primary care were federal responsibilities.

The commission proposed 44 benchmarks to rate performance, such as waiting times, and recommended financial penalties for not meeting these targets.

TBN Universe deal

TOTAL Beauty Network has signed its Naked Kiss and Designer Brands as cosmetic sponsors of the Miss Universe Australia pageant, which is expected to see the products exposed to a TV audience of more than 7 million.

DISPENSARY CORNER

A NEW system has been launched which allows consumers to brew their own ethanol at home.

No, it's not aimed at moonlight alcohol or creating ingredients for home remedies, but a move to help address the global fuel crisis.

The so-called "MicroFueller" is being touted as the first device to allow homeowners to make their own petrol.

Sugar and water are the main ingredients, and although the machine costs US\$10,000 the manufacturer claims it will pay for itself in two years, with the ethanol costing about 30c a litre.

It's the brainchild of a California inventor called Tom Quinn, who said the use of sugar could also help improve the health of US citizens.

"There's no mother in America crying that their kids aren't getting enough sugar," he said in an interview.

PHARMACIES are likely to be selling non-stick chewing gum soon, after a British firm raised £10m (A\$25m) to bring its new invention to market.

Revolymers new 'Clean Gum' adds a special polymer to modify the properties of the synthetic latex currently used in most gum, making it much less sticky.

Chewing gum removal from pavements, shoes and the undersides of school desks across the globe is estimated to cost billions of dollars a year.

GREAT news - having a big bum could be good for your health!

Recent Harvard research published this week in the *Cell Metabolism* journal found that subcutaneous fat mostly found on the buttocks and thighs may actually help reduce the risk of developing type 2 diabetes.