

## Pharmacists banned

SIX Queensland pharmacists have surrendered their registrations after they were caught selling an "unusual amount" of medicines containing pseudoephedrine.

Another pharmacist had strict conditions placed on his registration.

All seven were from southern and central Queensland.

Two of the pharmacists were charged under the Drugs Misuse Act 1986, with one sentenced to two years' jail for production of a dangerous drug, while the other is subject to charges which are still before the courts.

Queensland Health Minister Stephen Robertson said on Fri the charges followed a crackdown on the sale of pseudoephedrine in an attempt to cut off supply for illicit drug manufacturers.

An "unusual amount" is selling more than one pack per person within a three-day period, he said, "as a packet of medicine containing pseudoephedrine should last at least three days."

Robertson said the pharmacists had been caught out by a taskforce which used data from pharmaceutical wholesalers to track the purchasing patterns of pharmacies.

Pharmacy Guild Qld president Tim Logan said: "We've got to ensure the community is protected from those very few pharmacists who do the wrong thing."

## Blackmores defends itself

BLACKMORES has denied ever ignoring a determination from the Complaint Review Panel (CRP), saying there are "several inaccuracies" in a presentation made by La Trobe University's Ken Harvey at the National Medicines Symposium (PD Fri).

Harvey used the example of Blackmores' *Weight Loss Accelerate* product to highlight what he says are deficiencies in the way complementary medicines are regulated.

Blackmores R&D director Philip Daffy said Harvey had exaggerated the timings of complaints to emphasise his point - the

complaints were made over an 18 month period from Dec 06-Jan 08, not "several years" - and also said the complaints system allows sponsors "to defend their products in response to complaints made and to appeal decisions."

Daffy said that because *Weight Loss Accelerate* is supported by a clinical trial, and contains an ingredient which is the subject of a number of clinical trials, "there was an ongoing debate on the relevance and merits of the science available."

He said Blackmores continues to have confidence in *Weight Loss Accelerate* and has "valid evidence to support our product's efficacy."

"Anyone has the right to submit a complaint on a therapeutic product, and companies are also well within their right to lawfully defend their products and intellectual property," Daffy said.

Harvey told PD on Sat that he and Daffy had had a "frank exchange of views" about his NMS presentation and had agreed to discuss the matters further.

He conceded that Blackmores had "legally" complied with the CRP determination but continued to maintain that claims made for *Weight Loss Accelerate* were based on a "discredited 30 patient Indian study that lacked statistical validity."

Harvey said: "I believe that the complementary medicine industry has much to contribute to Australia's quality use of medicine policy and I hope that my interaction with Blackmores might stimulate this process."

## Health plans face opposition

THE Coalition plans to block the doubling of the Medicare surcharge threshold, Opposition Leader Brendan Nelson said in his budget reply speech last week.

Nelson said the predicted drop-out from private insurance would see families, pensioners and retirees to face higher premiums.

The Opposition also plan to reverse a regulation increasing tax on "alcopops" drinks, which Dr Nelson said was a "tax binge" that had been "falsely presented to Australians as a health measure".



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## Two pages today

TODAY'S *Pharmacy Daily* has two pages jam packed with all the latest pharmacy industry news and information.

## CMI study contact

THE email address published in connection with the new Investigating CMI project at the University of Sydney (PD Fri) was incorrect.

Anyone wanting to receive more information on the project can contact the researchers at [icmi@pharm.usyd.edu.au](mailto:icmi@pharm.usyd.edu.au).

## Infant medicine survey

A SURVEY of 325 parents in Melbourne has found more than 40% of parents had given their sick toddlers cough syrup, and 98% had bought some type of over-the-counter medication for their child in the past year.

Almost half had given their children cough and cold medicines containing antihistamines.

The survey also showed that paracetamol was the most commonly used drug, used by 95% of parents, and half had given their kids topical teething gels.

A small number of parents said they had given their child medication to induce sleep or settle them, while two parents admitted giving their children paracetamol because they were cranky.

Last month, the Therapeutic Goods Administration ruled that 15 infant cough products be rescheduled as prescription medicines for under-2s from 01 Sep because of concerns about side effects if misused by parents.

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## 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



## QUM Awards 2008

NATIONAL Pharmacies was recognised at the National QUM Awards 2008 in Canberra last Thu.

National Pharmacies won the Media Award for its work in raising awareness about QUM among health professionals, the general community and the media through its members' publication, *Vital Health* - particularly for its regular feature, 'Generics Update'.

Other winners at the QUM Awards 2008 were:  
**Community QUM Award - Good Medicines Better Health Pilot Project**, run by the Aboriginal Health Council of SA, NACCHO and NPS

**Health Organisation QUM Award**  
*The Veterans' Medicines Advice and Therapeutics Education Services (Veterans' MATES)* quality use of medicines program.

**Trade media QUM Award**  
*Australian Pharmacist*

**Knowledge in Practice section Student QUM Award** - Lisa Kouladjian, for *The Importance of Weight for Calculating Doses of Renally Excreted Drugs*, Clinical Pharmacology Dept Royal North Shore Hospital and University of Sydney.

**NMS 2008 Poster Award** - *Medication management issues for the older person - focusing on three non-English speaking backgrounds* from Diversity Health and Community Health Services at the Prince of Wales Hospital, Sydney.

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## PSA clarifies clinic stance

THE Pharmaceutical Society of Australia has issued a statement summarising its position on pharmacist involvement in GP Super Clinics (PD Fri).

The move follows a letter sent by acting Guild president Patrick Reid, requesting the PSA withdraw a position paper saying pharmacists at the clinics could be remunerated via a Medicare provider number.

PSA president Brian Grogan said the PSA "fully supports and would actively encourage local community pharmacies to link to a GP Super Clinic."

Options endorsed by the PSA include co-location - as in a local pharmacy or pharmacies providing a pharmacist for a GP Super Clinic.

However "in those situations where it is not feasible for local pharmacies to create linkages to

### Heparin guidelines

THE Health Department has issued guidelines for clinicians aiming to conserve limited supplies of anti-coagulant drugs.

TGA chief Rohan Hammett said the action aims to manage a possible shortage of medicines containing heparin, after the withdrawal of five batches of Clexane (PD 23 Apr).

Although there have been no reports of adverse events in Australia associated with Clexane or any other heparin based products, an impurity was detected and the TGA quarantined the affected batches as a "precaution to protect patient safety."

The TGA said it's exploring all options to secure supplies and clarify future availability, with the new guidelines a precaution aiming to extend the availability of heparin based products by "prioritising their use according to clinical need."

The guidelines are available for download at [www.tga.gov.au](http://www.tga.gov.au).



a GP Super Clinic, PSA's position paper also explores other ways to ensure the profession is represented as part of the primary health care team," Grogan said.

He said the PSA had "quite properly" focused its submission on ensuring government regarded pharmacy as a vital component of the primary health-care team to be located in GP Super Clinics.

### Who wants \$2500?

PHARMACY Cricket is currently seeking applications for two scholarships valued at \$2500 each, available for pharmacy students across Australia currently in the 3rd or 4th years of their course.

The scholarships, available through the support of Pharmacy Cricket's sponsors including Johnson & Johnson, PDL, Guild Insurance and Vittoria Coffee, are part of the organisation's mission statement.

There's no requirement for recipients to have any involvement with cricket, and applications close 02 Jun.

Students interested in applying should contact Pharmacy Cricket President Greg Hodgson as soon as possible for a copy of the application criteria, on [hodgsong@bigpond.com](mailto:hodgsong@bigpond.com).

### STOP milestone

MORE than one million transactions for pseudoephedrine based products around Australia have now been processed through the Project STOP anti-diversion initiative.

The Pharmacy Guild said that at the moment about 60% of all pharmacies around the country are voluntarily using the tool, with more than 4500 transactions processed every day.

Guild Qld president Tim Logan strongly encouraged all pharmacies nationally to sign up for the project "or risk becoming a target."

### DISPENSARY CORNER

DOCTORS in Greece have found an embryonic twin in the stomach of a nine-year-old girl.

The child presented at hospital complaining of abdominal pain, with surgeons investigating and removing a growth which contained a 5cm-long embryo.

"They could see on the right side that her belly was swollen, but they couldn't suspect that this tumour would hide an embryo," said a spokesman from the Larissa General Hospital.

The embryo had been absorbed into its twin in utero - a phenomenon which apparently happens about one in every 500,000 live births.

CLIMATE change can be partly blamed on obesity, according to the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

A recent study there calculated that fat people consume 18% more calories than average, with the increased demand meaning farmers use more oil, both for production and transport.

*The Lancet* said this in turn sees poor nations struggle to afford food, while greenhouse emissions also increase.

Overweight people are also more likely to rely on transport rather than walking, which again increases emissions, the article said.

HAIRDRESSERS are being recruited in India as part of a major health initiative.

About 4000 barbers are needed in the Indian state of Jharkhand to help boost hygiene and improve childrens' looks, according to a state official.

"There are many poor children who can't afford to have regular haircuts and attend school with long hair which looks funny...neat hair is also hygienic for students," he said.

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