

12 months supply

THE Health Department has confirmed that budget measures to extend the period of supply for repeat prescriptions for some medications became effective last Sat 01 Nov.

From that date patients with chronic conditions whose care is managed under a GP Management Plan or Team Care Arrangements will be eligible to receive up to 12 months supply of certain drugs - double the previous time limit.

An official statement said the move will "lead to efficiencies in the Medicare Benefits Scheme by reducing the overall number of visits that some patients with chronic conditions will need to make with the GP to obtain a prescription medicine."

Initially the measure covers medicines used for the treatment of severe dry eyes and ulcerative colitis, with "subsequent listings to be introduced over the next two months."

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TGA investigates SSRIs

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration has launched an investigation into the harmful effects of SSRI anti-depressants, a widely-prescribed group which includes brands like Prozac, Zoloft and Aropax, in response to growing community concerns.

The *Weekend Australian* reports that the TGA has now established a panel of psychiatrists and epidemiologists to review a number of cases involving adverse reactions to the drugs.

There have been almost 10,000 reports of potential adverse reactions to SSRIs since 1990, and while the TGA says the number of events has not jumped, they recognise that there has been "community concern about

potential overuse."

Last year the PBS subsidised over 12 million scrips for SSRI anti-depressants.

The panel will reportedly announce its results at the end of this year, but according to critics of the investigation, the fact that there has been no opportunity for people to make submissions means the results may be skewed.

In the meantime, the TGA has requested that drug companies update the wordings of their suicide warnings on SSRI anti-depressants to emphasise the risks to children and to people under the age of 24 who being prescribed the drugs.

Sprycel listing

SPRYCEL (dasatinib) has an expanded listing on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme for the treatment of chronic myeloid leukaemia.

The PBS change permits earlier access to potentially life-saving treatments for CML patients who fail first-line treatment (imatinib) due to intolerance or resistance.

The request for the change to the PBS listing was the result of a collaboration between Bristol-Myers Squibb, Novartis, the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee, the Haematology Society of Australia & NZ, the Leukaemia Foundation, Medicare Australia, the Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia, and Professor Timothy Hughes from the University of Adelaide.

Arteries campaign

THE Australian Atherosclerosis Society has launched a new education program in a bid to address low levels of awareness of the condition in patients with cardiovascular disease risk factors.

According to a Newspoll survey, nearly three in four smokers have not heard of atherosclerosis, and two-thirds of all adults are not aware that atherosclerosis can lead to an increased risk of a heart attack.

Age of Your Arteries includes pharmacy dispensing bags, and pharmacy staff can also order patient support materials including brochures, posters, magazines and a heart health checklist pad.

Win a Shimmering Mineral Bronzer

EACH day this week *Pharmacy Daily* is giving you the chance to win a Shimmering Mineral Bronzer from Designer Brands, courtesy of Total Beauty Network.

The Mineral Bronzing Crème goes on smooth, dries instantly and looks deliciously natural.

What girl doesn't love the idea of instant healthy tan - no sun, no smelly fake tanning potions, simply a nourishing natural way to get an instant dose of sun-kissed colour with a scent of fragrant frangipani.

For a chance to win, send your answer to the below question to: comp@pharmacydaily.com.au.

Name the four main ingredients in the Bronzer.

The first person to answer correctly each day will win.

HINT: Go to www.tbn.com.au each day and click on the Designer Brands logo at the top of the page.



DISPENSARY CORNER

FARMERS in New Zealand are being urged to capitalise on a major global demand for easy-to-eat meat for older people.

Henry Zerby of Ohio University was in Christchurch last week to brief scientists on the "diet fad" currently sweeping the US - geriatric designer food.

"They need meat which is easy for them to chew and swallow as their salivary glands start to wear out," a report on stuff.co.nz quoted Zerby.

"The meat needs to be easily masticated but still desirable in appearance and flavour."

Dietitian Sarah Crawford said eating more meat would have many benefits for older people.

"They will boost their iron and protein levels, which means they will have more energy and will be able to function a lot better," she said.

VOTERS in America are being offered a unique way to show their political colours.

The frenzy of the US presidential election has seen some entrepreneurs develop Republican and Democrat-themed condoms (pictured below), which are being offered to attendees at political rallies of both parties.



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