

No causal asthma-paracetamol link

AUSTRALIAN Self-Medication Industry has responded to widespread reports last Fri of a study which suggested a link between use of paracetamol in infancy and asthma in later years.

ASMI scientific director Deon Schoombie said "Paracetamol has a very long history of safe use in children. The authors themselves say that a causal link between paracetamol and asthma could not be established."

The *Lancet* report found that there was insufficient evidence to change current guidelines.

Pharmacy academic Prof Peter Carroll said "I think you might find a correlation between paracetamol use and many things in childhood because its use is just so widespread."

"It's very difficult to be definitive about links to conditions like asthma," he said.

Sigma sales down \$30m

DE-STOCKING by pharmacists in the lead-up to the 01 Aug PBS reforms is being blamed for a slump in sales by Sigma Pharmaceuticals for the six months to 31 Jul.

The company today reported a \$30.7m net profit after tax for the period, up 1.2% and in line with analyst expectations.

But total pharmaceutical sales of \$276.5m for the period was 10.7% less than the prior corresponding period, with ceo Elmo de Alwis saying "our retail

pharmacy customers significantly reduced their inventory holdings."

However he said Sigma hadn't had any loss of market share, adding that the business is well positioned to enjoy growth.

The company said its pharmacy customers were seeking deeper discounts, while compliance with the Embrace loyalty scheme "continues to improve" and generic volumes are increasing, driven by legislative changes, Sigma and the Pharmacy Guild.

Pharmacy e-Bulletin

THIS week's edition of the RGH Pharmacy E-Bulletin deals with anticonvulsants and behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia (BPSD).

The bulletin is available free: chris.alderman@rgh.sa.gov.au.

Drug reactions under-reported

LESS than 2% of adverse drug reactions are reported by GPs to the TGA, a new study has found.

And in Australian hospitals, only 3% of cases were reported to the TGA last year.

The massive under-reporting was revealed by Curtin University pharmacy researcher Con Berbatis who analysed Australian Institute of Health and Welfare data.

His research shows that reports by GPs to the TGA halved between 1999 and 2007, while reports from other sources, including pharmacists, have grown.

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DISPENSARY CORNER

"STICK 'em right up!"

A man in the USA has been arrested after stealing Viagra from a pharmacy at gunpoint.

The man apparently told all the employees at Morristown Pharmacy in Knoxville, Tennessee, to get down on the floor, before making off on foot with a "large quantity of medication."

Reports say authorities were finally able to track down the hardened criminal at his home, thanks to several tip-offs.

FURTHER evidence that smoking can be bad for your health.

A woman from Mount Gambier in South Australia last month issued her local community with some sage advice: don't clean lawnmowers in your bedroom while smoking.

Lauren Goldsworthy was speaking from experience, having just been treated for smoke inhalation after a lawnmower exploded in a spare bedroom at her home.

Ms Goldsworthy said that when she tipped the mower over to clean it, some fuel spilled out and was ignited by a cigarette she dropped from her mouth.

"The flames...spread all over the room and burned my vacuum cleaner, the walls, the ceiling and some photos," she said.

Since issuing her warning, no further incidents have been reported.

She said that although she had previously been convicted of arson, this time it was an accident. "I swear, this time I did not do it," she said.

Robots in SA

NATIONAL Pharmacies is the latest group to convert to dispensary automation technology.

Its larger South Australian stores will install Consis robotic selectors over the next 12 to 18 months after a successful trial at Ascot Park pharmacy in Adelaide.

Willach+Heise recently appointed a consulting pharmacist and dispensary designers as part of its plans to increase sales of Consis machines in the Australian pharmacy market.

Eczema relief

A NEW product for the relief of eczema has been launched.

Dubbed Eclogite, the cream includes six plant extracts that address the symptoms of eczema.

The new cream was formulated based on research suggesting that a defective skin barrier is the primary cause of eczema, not the immune system, as was previously thought - to find out more see www.eclogite.com.au.

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