



**The Pharmacy
Guild of Australia**

This week's update from the Guild

Fight not over...

THE forced sale of Pharmacy Direct to a group of pharmacists this month was a major victory in the battle to ensure pharmacy ownership is reserved to pharmacists – but it is not the end of the fight.

We know that supermarkets and other interests will continue to do anything they can to attack the present community pharmacy ownership model, and that is why we must remain vigilant.

It reinforces the importance of maintaining a strong level of Guild membership across Australia's pharmacy owners, so that when important prerequisites of a strong and viable community pharmacy sector are challenged, we have the resources to respond.

The successful outcome in the Supreme Court of NSW in the Pharmacy Direct proceedings demonstrated the resolve of the Guild to prevent supermarket chains, such as Coles and Woolworths, seeking ownership or pecuniary interests in pharmacies in contravention of the law.

Though there is legislation in all States and Territories which reserves pharmacy ownership to pharmacists, when the Coles Group subsidiary acquired the interest in the Pharmacy Direct business in 2006, it was only the Guild which took action to redress it.

If the Guild had not urgently committed to devote significant funds, by way of legal costs, to challenge the acquisition by the Coles Group, a large pharmacy business would have remained in the hands of a supermarket chain – an outcome not in the best interests of the provision of quality pharmacy services.

The experience of the acquisition of the Pharmacy Direct business by a supermarket chain demonstrates that legislation and even commitment by governments is not enough; without the vigilance, determination and financial support of the Guild, a large pharmacy business would have remained in the hands of a supermarket chain.

Orlistat goes OTC in UK

WEIGHT loss medication orlistat 60mg will now be available over the counter in Britain, after authorities there reclassified it from 'prescription-only medicine' to 'pharmacy medicine'.

The strength is half the 120mg which is available OTC from pharmacists in Australia under the Xenical brand, and the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain has hailed the approval, saying "the reclassification of this product provides an ideal opportunity for pharmacists to promote healthy lifestyle interventions."

In Australia orlistat has been surrounded by controversy, with Xenical reclassified as S3 in 2003.

In 2006 CHOICE complained that the manufacturer Roche was inappropriately targeting young women in its television advertising

for the products and ultimately authorisation for direct to consumer advertising was withdrawn.

About 12 months ago the Guild's Gold Cross weighed in by officially endorsing Xenical as "the proven product that will help boost your customers' weight loss."

In the UK pharmacists are now able to dispense orlistat after conducting a comprehensive consultation with a patient.

"With orlistat, pharmacists have another service which they can offer to complement existing weight management advice and treatments," said RPSGB spokesman David Pruce.

He added that pharmacists were highly visible in their communities and, given they were able to reach people who did not regularly see a GP, were ideally placed to tackle the UK's growing obesity problem.

Milk protein move

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration has listed preparations containing *alpha-casozepine enriched hydrolysed milk protein* as a therapeutically active ingredient on the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods.

Product labels must include advisory statements saying they are 'Derived from cow's milk' and 'Not suitable for use in children under the age of 12 months except on professional advice'.

Alpha-casozepine is said to be the compound in warm milk which has a calming effect on babies.

Flu vaccine launch

THE government yesterday launched its annual free influenza vaccination program for people aged over 65.

Record supplies of vaccinations have been distributed to prepare for this year's flu season, with 2.8m Australians aged 65 and over - a number expected to triple over the next 40 years.

Minister for Ageing, Justine Elliot, urged seniors to get the free injections in the lead-up to winter.

Last year there were 9,129 confirmed cases of influenza reported to the National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System, slightly less than the previous year when there were 10,043 cases.

In 2007 pneumonia and influenza were the 13th leading cause of death in Australia, being blamed for 2623 fatalities.

This year's free flu vaccine program is being funded by the government to the tune of some \$27.5m across the country.

Symbion/TWC donate \$200k



SYMBION Pharmacy Services joined forces with Terry White Chemists to jointly donate \$200,000 to the Red Cross in support of the 2009 Victorian Bushfires appeal.

Two \$100,000 cheques were handed over at a function during the recent APP conference, with Terry White saying members of the group had "instantly responded" to a call for assistance.

The Terry White Chemists contribution was matched by Symbion Pharmacy Services.

"The terrible events of February gave us an opportunity to repay the communities of Victoria for their support in the hope that our donation may go some way to helping them recover," said Symbion Chairman Stuart

McGregor.

The cheques were accepted by Red Cross Group Manager of Regional and Corporate Services, Sonya Keep, who assured "all the pharmacists who helped make this possible that although you may never meet any of the people you're helping, this money will help make a big difference in their lives."

Pictured above at the ceremony are, from left: Andrew Vidler, Symbion Pharmacy Services GM Retail Services; Terry White, Terry White Chemists Chairman; Sonya Keep, Red Cross Group Manager of Regional and Corporate Services; Stuart McGregor, Symbion Pharmacy Services Chairman; and Patrick Davies, Symbion Pharmacy Services Chief Executive.

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Mental health launch

HEALTH minister Nicola Roxon has launched two new DVDs on post-traumatic stress disorder and acute stress disorder which will be distributed to bushfire-affected communities in Victoria to help assist with the healing process.

One is a resource for health practitioners, while the other is for people affected by trauma, and were produced by the Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health in collaboration with the Rural Health Education Foundation.

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NPS welcomes PSR report

THE National Prescribing Service has welcomed Medicare Australia's latest Professional Services Review report, which urges prescribers to refer to evidence-based sources of information when making decisions about medicines.

The PSR scheme provides a peer review mechanism to deal with "possible inappropriate practices" in relation to Medicare and the PBS.

During 2007-08 the PSR was asked to investigate 50 cases, with a common feature in referrals being apparent inappropriate prescribing, mostly relating to narcotic analgesics and benzodiazepines.

PSR director Tony Webber's

QCPP fast track

THE archived presentation of Units 1 and 2 of the Quality Care Pharmacy Program Fast Track assistance program (PD 19 Feb) is now online.

Pharmacies wanting to implement QCPP 2nd edition can access last Wed's webcast online at www.guild.org.au/qcpp.

The second live webcast, covering units 3 and 4, will be online Wed 29 Apr from 7pm.

Pharmacy E-Bulletin

THIS week's edition of the Repatriation General Hospital Pharmacy E-Bulletin addresses the use of Complementary and Alternative Medicines for patients with rheumatoid arthritis.

It covers a recent evidence based report on oral and topical complementary medicines published by the Arthritis Research Campaign UK, which found that two thirds of the products targeting rheumatoid arthritis had "little or no effect."

However "there is good evidence that fishbody oil reduces joint pain and stiffness", the bulletin says.

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DISPENSARY CORNER

THE US woman who famously gave birth to octuplets during Jan has lodged an application with the US Patent and Trademark Office to trademark the name "Octomum".

33-year-old Nadya Suleman is now the mother of 14 children under seven, and her lawyer says a number of people have approached her with suggestions that she could endorse products such as children's clothes.

"She doesn't particularly care for the name but she thinks it's a good idea to protect it," he said.

INBREEDING led to the downfall of Europe's Hapsburg dynasty, which ruled much of the continent for more than six centuries.

Spanish researchers analysed health problems of King Charles II alongside genealogical charts, and concluded the monarch may have suffered from rare genetic conditions including distal renal tubular acidosis and combined pituitary hormone deficiency.

'BEER goggles' don't exist, according to researchers at the UK's University of Leicester.

Also known as "alcohol myopia", the terms are used to describe a supposed phenomenon where people affected by alcohol aren't able to accurately estimate a person's age.

It's sometimes been used as a defence by men accused of unlawful sex with a minor.

However the study published in the *British Journal of Psychology* found that most people overestimated ages no matter how much they had drunk.

The research also found that young girls wearing make-up could mislead both sober and drunk observers about their age.

\$18m drug campaign

THE Health Department has launched a new range of "hard-hitting ads targeting ice, ecstasy and marijuana" as part of an \$18m national campaign.

The govt says the rates of illicit drug use in society are still too high, with the campaign particularly targeting young methamphetamine users by "portraying in stark and confronting terms the real harms and risks associated with drugs like ice and ecstasy."

The campaign also directs drug users to points of support, treatment and counselling services available in the community.

Hairy female alert

THE Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists in the UK has warned that rather than just being a cosmetic problem, excessive hairiness in women is likely to be a sign of an underlying medical condition.

In a report published last week the college said between 5% and 15% of women have excess hair, with polycystic ovary syndrome the cause in up to 80% of cases.

The report said the numbers of affected women is likely to be underestimated because women can be reluctant to seek help.

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