

Pharmacy DAILY

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Guardian knitters

GUARDIAN Pharmacy's national charity knitting campaign *Guardian Angel* has formed a new partnership with The Salvation Army which will see garments knitted by participants passed onto the Salvos for distribution to Australians in need.

Last year 385,000 knitted items were created and donated through Guardian Angel which invites knitters of all levels to hone their skills to help the community.

Spotlight is also a new partner of the campaign, supplying patterns and wool discounts for participants.

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TGA to boost OTC, CH fees

THE Complementary Healthcare Council has slammed a decision by the Therapeutic Goods Administration which will see annual fees and charges for complementary medicines rise a whopping 14.3% in 2009/10.

The council says the move will see consumers "paying more for popular supplements designed to assist them with improved health outcomes," claiming that the 14.3% increase is an "arbitrary number" proposed by the TGA, based on its overall cost recovery obligations rather than the specific costs associated with CMs.

TGA fees for over the counter medicines will also increase by

Diabetes diagnosis

DIABETES charity The Type 1 Diabetes Network says that 33% of adults presenting with type 1 diabetes were diagnosed incorrectly when they first visited their healthcare professional.

The organisation said the "widespread misagnosis...is resulting in serious, life threatening but avoidable complications."

The Network is celebrating the fifth anniversary of the launch of its Starter Kit, a resource created especially for newly diagnosed adults with Type 1 diabetes and supported by Abbott Diabetes Care.

NT Super Clinic

THE Federal govt will provide \$10m for the construction of the Palmerston GP Super Clinic on the outskirts of Darwin, with the project also set to include a new federally funded Early Learning Integrated Child Care Centre.

The NT government has let a tender for the construction of the clinic which it says is a "significant priority" for people in the region.

Stage 1 of the Palmerston GP Super Clinic opened last Dec and is providing Urgent After Hours GP services to the community, having seen more than 3700 patients over the last five months.

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British Bonjela alert

THE UK Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency has issued "precautionary advice" about the use of topical oral pain relief gels containing salicylate salts.

The MHRA said the main products affected are Bonjela and Bonjela Cool Mint Gel, usually used as an aid to teething in babies and for the treatment of mouth ulcers.

The new advice recommends that the products not be used in people under 16 years of age, because salicylate salts have the same effect on the body as aspirin, which is already contraindicated in children and young people aged under 16.

"This is a precautionary measure only and there are no new safety concerns," a statement said.

The MHRA said there was a theoretical risk that the products could increase the possibility of a child developing the rare but sometimes fatal Reye's syndrome.

"We are not aware of any confirmed cases, but when there are alternatives available, any risk is not worth taking," the MHRA said in a statement.

"There are a number of options and alternative treatments for pain associated with teething and mouth ulcers," the agency added, urging parents and carers to consult their pharmacist, GP or dentist for further advice.

Erbix rejected again

THE Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee has knocked back Merck Serono's fifth application to have its Erbix (cetuximab) subsidised for third line bowel cancer treatment.

The rejection is on the grounds of "cost effectiveness."

The therapy targets about 65% of Australians living with late-stage bowel cancer, and has been shown to provide extended survival rates by slowing down the growth of tumours in patients carrying a particular form of the K-ras gene.

Bowel cancer is the second most common form of cancer in the community, with the latest AIHW figures showing about 13,000 new cases a year.

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\$88,000 in prizes for Sydney pharmacy students

MORE than \$88,000 has been awarded to the highest achieving students at the University of Sydney's Faculty of Pharmacy during a special awards ceremony held earlier this month.

The prizes were given in conjunction with pharmaceutical companies and professional pharmacy organisations.

Representatives from the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia, the Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia, Amgen Australia, Blackmores and Guild Insurance awarded prizes to high-performing students in the Bachelor of Pharmacy, Master of Pharmacy and Master of Herbal Medicines courses offered by the university.

Sydney University Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education), Professor Derrick Armstrong hailed the educational experience provided by the pharmacy faculty for its students, such as its innovative business skills course and the SUPA career enhancement program.

"Initiatives like these set the Faculty apart from its competitors and put it at the forefront of excellence in education whilst providing a valuable student experience for pharmacy students.

"To have students winning awards from prestigious national organisations is testament to the quality of their education at the Faculty, their own hard work and the support of Faculty staff in turning these students into competent young professionals," Armstrong said.

Picture above are six Bachelor and Master of Pharmacy students awarded prizes by the PSA, from left: Jenny Zhang, Romeo Torres, Mely, Suzanne Olding, Lisa Sommerfield and Mona Abdelnour.

And at right, Suzanne Olding receives the gold medal from PSA NSW ceo Steven Drew.



DISPENSARY CORNER

HERE'S a good way to boost your academic performance.

US researchers have found that students who chewed gum during 14 weeks of maths classes ended up with higher grades than students in the class who didn't chew gum.

108 students in four classes at a Houston, Texas school were studied, with half given sugar-free gum to chew during class, tests and homework.

After 14 weeks the gum chewers showed a 3% increase in standard test scores which the scientists said was a "small but statistically significant change."

The study, which was funded by chewing gum maker Wrigleys, is sure to put school cleaners into a large number of sticky situations.

THE good news is your asthma is cured - but the bad news is you're going to be itchy forever.

A British study of mice has shown a link between lice infestations and immunity, with rodents carrying the heaviest load of parasites having "calmer" immune systems than those which were uninfested.

They postulated that dealing with pediculosis could actually help stimulate the immune system.

The University of Nottingham researchers said the finding could have implications for allergies in humans, supporting the so-called 'hygiene hypothesis' which states that an "ultra-clean" lifestyle is the cause of the rise in the conditions in the community.

A US man has lost over 6kg in weight by eating a pure McDonald's diet for a month.

40-year-old Doug Logeais of San Diego ate sausage and egg burritos for breakfast, chicken wraps for lunch and salads for dinner, and combined the special diet with regular exercise.

"I thought if I could actually eat at McDonald's and lose weight I'd incorporate the best of both worlds," he said.

He said he exercised hard too, with an hour of cardio each day "and a lot of sit-ups as well".

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Condom controversy

PHARMACISTS in the Northern Territory have downplayed reports of a proposal which would force mandatory reporting of condom sales by people aged under 15.

Earlier this week the ABC reported comments by the NT Minister for Child Protection confirming that new underage sex laws would force the reporting to a team which is part of the NT Families and Children Department.

A range of organisations including the AMA and other groups have pointed out major flaws in the proposal, including the fact that condoms are also sold in vending machines and supermarkets.

"Exercise pills" for type 2 diabetes?

SCIENTISTS at Melbourne's Heart and Diabetes Institute have published research suggesting that HDL cholesterol could be used to control blood sugar by simulating the effect of exercise on muscles.

The report in *Circulation* said HDL activates a 'switch' which caused glucose to be absorbed into muscle cells, and raised the possibility of developing so-called "exercise pills" to treat diabetes.

The research involved a clinical trial of 13 diabetes patients, and is the first time the link between HDL and blood sugar has been proven.