



**The Pharmacy  
Guild of Australia**

## This week's update from the Guild Guild welcomes postponement of chemotherapy changes

**THE** Federal Government has done the right thing in delaying by two months the implementation of Budget savings measures affecting the supply of chemotherapy medicines (**PD** 15 Apr).

The 2008 Budget measures were to take effect from July 1, but will now be subject to more discussion with pharmacists, doctors and patient groups.

This follows concerns expressed by the affected pharmacists and the Guild that the measures were unworkable as proposed by the Department of Health and Ageing.

The basic change involves paying for chemotherapy medicines per milligram, instead of per vial, in a bid by the Government to avoid paying for so-called "wastage" of these expensive drugs.

The trouble is that the drugs are only sold in vials, and therefore the wastage is almost always unavoidable.

By trying to transfer the cost of the unused "wastage" to the pharmacists, the Department expects those pharmacists to dispense certain chemotherapy drugs at a loss of up to and beyond \$400 per dose.

That was never fair or viable, and it is good to note that the Government has now recognised that it needs to go back to the drawing board to find savings in this area.

One area it may well look at is the practicality of encouraging the sale of the drugs in a wider variety of vial sizes, so that supply can more effectively meet demand.

## Don't panic over influenza

**OFFICIALS** are cautioning the community against panic purchasing of influenza antivirals, in the face of widespread reporting of the swine flu outbreak.

The advice is that antivirals should not be prescribed for healthy people, with Roche issuing official guidance saying that there is plenty of stock of its Tamiflu available.

"Roche will continue to ensure that pharmaceutical wholesalers have sufficient stock to meet pharmacy supply," the firm said.

This morning the World Health

Organization raised its pandemic alert level to phase 4, meaning the infection can potentially "spread between humans to cause community-level outbreaks."

The government has reacted swiftly, with Health minister Nicola Roxon this morning confirming there were 19 suspected cases being tested, including 5 with an unidentifiable type A strain.

She said that WHO raising the alert level means "they have made the decision that it is not going to be possible to contain this disease."

A further 300 travellers may have come into contact with the disease, with medical staff now stationed at airports to detect incoming cases.

## \$10k Rural allowance

**RURAL** and remote pharmacies are being urged to take on young pharmacists and gain extra funding under the Rural Pharmacist Pre-Registration Incentive Allowance.

Each eligible pharmacy can receive up to \$10,000 for every pre-registrant employed for 12 months.

The application form is online at [www.ruralpharmacy.com.au](http://www.ruralpharmacy.com.au).

## Sydney symposium

**THE** University of Sydney Alumni Association will hold its first public symposium on Tue 12 May.

Consultant clinical pharmacist Debbie Rigby will be joined by Alphapharm ceo John Montgomery and the uni's pharmacy faculty Pro-Dean, Professor Jo-Anne Brien, "to share their candid views on the future of the pharmacy profession."

The symposium will take place along with a cocktail reception following the Alumni Association's annual general meeting.

RSVP required by 01 May; see [www.pharm.usyd.edu.au/alumni](http://www.pharm.usyd.edu.au/alumni).



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## Knife attacker capture

**POLICE** have arrested a man who allegedly robbed a pharmacy in Adelaide's western suburbs at knife-point yesterday.

Staff at the Addison Rd, Pennington pharmacy gave the assailant a small amount of cash and he fled on foot, with officers charging a man two hours later.



## DISPENSARY CORNER

**POLICE** in the UK were called in to rescue an elderly man last week after his mobility scooter ended up on a major motorway.

Drivers raised the alarm after spotting the 89-year-old crawling along the shoulder of the highway near Kent, as trucks and other vehicles roared past at speeds in excess of 130km/h.

A police spokesman confirmed the incident, saying the gentleman had "taken a wrong turn, travelling by mistake on the M20. He was stopped at junction 11a and driven home with his scooter."

**HEALTH** and safety officials in Britain have banned a circus clown from wearing his large floppy shoes because of safety concerns.

Valerik Kashkin is part of the Moscow State Circus, and fell from a 3m high wire during a performance in Liverpool.

Doctors confirmed he'd broken his metatarsal, with the health officials telling him his brightly coloured size 18s had to go.

A spokesman for the circus said the move "will definitely detract from the visual aspect of the performance."

**IT'S** a tough job, but someone has to do it.

A group of Qld researchers are conducting studies into tequila - or at least its raw ingredient, the agave tequilana plant.

Agave is one of the most water-efficient plants in the world and the scientists are speculating that it could be refined in the state's sugar mills to produce ethanol.

They say that unlike other biofuel sources, agave would not deplete existing food production.