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Guild Update

This week's update from the Guild

Do you employ a pharmacy assistant who is a cut above?

Why not send them to a conference that will enthuse them, expand their career horizons and help them to do an even better job for your pharmacy and your customers?

The Pharmacy Assistant National Conference will be held from 29 to 31 October at the Gold Coast in Queensland.

The conference features fantastic educational and social programs, with a range of learning, networking and social activities to ensure delegates make the most of the opportunity to learn and develop.

This year's conference features a multi-stream format, which will allow delegates to find topics to suit both their level of experience and interests.

Topics covered include infection control; diabetes care; dehydration; human resources issues and wound care.

The program also features a number of motivational sessions to assist pharmacy assistants to maintain perspective on their career; improve the way they perform daily tasks; and help them set and achieve goals.

The highlight of the social program will be the Halloween-themed Conference Dinner, which includes prizes for best Halloween costume on the night.

For those concerned about attending the conference on their own, the Welcome Reception includes a number of ice-breaker and networking games to allow delegates to make new friends and make valuable pharmacy connections.

For more information, view the event website at www.pharmacyassistants.com.



The Pharmacy Guild of Australia

Lots more electronic scripts

THE addition of Health Communication Network's Medical Director software to the eRx Script Exchange partnerships (**PD** yesterday) has been hailed as a breakthrough in extending e-script functionality to prescribers.

But that's not the only new e-script vendor, with the rival GP-backed MediSecure also yesterday announcing the successful integration of its system with the Zedmed clinical and practice management software system.

MediSecure said this move would allow 5500 Zedmed users, in around 3000 medical practices, to "enjoy the benefits and efficiencies of e-prescriptions for the first time."

Zedmed is the third clinical system to offer MediSecure e-script compatibility, and three dispensing software systems also now offer the functionality.

The MediSecure announcement is dwarfed by the eRx pact with Medical Director, which is used by more than 17000 subscribers including 2100 specialists - but the HCN product won't have the system integrated for some months.

"HCN has the utmost confidence in the eRx solution and strongly believes that it is the most robust and reliable form of ePrescribing currently available in Australia," said HCN ceo John Frost.

"By delivering this functionality to our Medical Director subscribers, we will ensure that our customers can be confident that the ePrescribing component will be supported and maintained by HCN directly."

eRx Script Exchange chairman, Graham Cunningham, said: "Taking an industry-wide and vendor-wide approach has been a vital step in ensuring that the

maximum number of health and pharmacy professionals around Australia will be able to use online prescriptions as quickly as possible."

And Guild President Kos Sclavos also praised the HCN move, saying it was "a significant example of industry driving e-health initiatives to improve patient outcomes."

MEANWHILE Microsoft's e-Health Architect, James Kavanagh, has responded to comments about the eRx system not being based on established standards.

Kavanagh said the project had always focused on achieving open interoperability with a wide range of software systems.

"eRx has required a technology platform that can deliver open standards based integration, even when those standards are only emerging, and this announcement strongly endorses the pragmatic and flexible approach taken."

He said the eRx platform, which is based on the open-source Microsoft Health Connection Engine, "is already consistent with the national secure messaging specifications and can be flexibly extended to support future national health standards for medication and terminology."

New drug processes

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration has published more details on the proposed new submission process for prescription medicines, as part of its business improvement project (**PD** Thu).

A new pre-submission process will help the TGA plan its internal and external resources, and provide sponsors with expected milestone dates relating to the evaluation.

More details www.tga.gov.au.

Primary profit soars

PRIMARY Health Care today announced a \$108.5m profit for 2008/09 - up from just \$7.8m last financial year.

The company, which won a protracted takeover battle for Symbion, said its integration of the acquisition was on track, with "continued extraction of Symbion synergies in line with original forecasts."

Initiatives have included the merging of 19 Symbion medical centres and the introduction of co-payments into a number of centres.

The annual report confirms that the Symbion Consumer and Pharmacy divisions were sold to Zuellig last August for \$748 million, incurring a loss of just over \$2.5m for Primary.

The figures also reveal that Symbion Consumer and Pharmacy made a pre-tax profit of \$29.1m from 01 Jul 08 until the settlement of the sale to Zuellig - less finance costs of \$36m which combined with the \$2.5m disposal cost meant Primary booked an overall loss for the year from these discontinued operations of about \$7.6m.

Christmas giftware?

PHARMACIES thinking about Christmas stock may be interested in some soft toy items available from CA Australia, which is offering a 23cm Santa for \$9.55 trade, with a RRP of \$19.95.

There's also a Rudolph as well as a range of nursery items including chime balls and photo frames - more info www.caastralia.com.au.

Queanbeyan clinic

HEALTH minister Nicola Roxon has announced that a contract has been signed for the \$5m Queanbeyan GP Super Clinic.

The agreement is with Queanbeyan GP Super Clinic Pty Ltd, an existing practice in the Queanbeyan CBD which will be "expanded into a modern facility designed to meet the health needs and priorities of the community and deliver multidisciplinary integrated care," Roxon said.

Initially including GPs, practice nurses, a podiatrist, dietitian, audiologist, exercise physiologist and asthma and diabetes educators, "pharmacy and pathology services may also be provided on site as the clinic develops."



Pharmacy Women's Congress

14 - 16 August 2009 Surfers Paradise Marriott Resort & Spa, Gold Coast

Discuss the future of pharmacy - Learn more about owning your own pharmacy - Meet like-minded women - Beat the winter chill

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For more information contact Kim Thorne on 07 3831 3788
or email womenscongress2009@guild.org.au



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New flu treatment

AUSTRALIAN biotech company Biota has confirmed that its "next generation" influenza treatment, laninamivir, has been found to be safe and effective in Phase III clinical trials in Asia.

Laninamivir is a long-acting neuraminidase inhibitor developed by Biota, and is co-owned by Japanese firm Daiichi Sankyo.

In the trials a single inhaled dose of laninamivir was shown to be as effective as Tamiflu (oseltamivir) administered orally twice daily for 5 days, with about 1000 adult patients involved.

A successful parallel trial in paediatric patients was also undertaken, with Biota md Peter Cook saying "Laninamivir offers a new therapeutic agent in the treatment of influenza with particular advantages for stockpiling applications."

The company said pre-clinical tests had shown laninamivir to be effective against influenza A & B virus, as well as against the H5N1 avian influenza strain.

A recent University of Tokyo paper also indicated that the drug is active against the swine originated influenza A H1N1 virus.

Qld medication mix-up

THE Pharmacists Board of Queensland is reportedly investigating an incident in which an Ipswich pharmacy mistakenly dispensed sleeping pills instead of heart medication.

The error appears to have followed a generic substitution for Minax, and highlights possible problems which can occur when patient medications are switched.

68-year-old John Hawkins says he spent four "disoriented days" on the incorrect pills, before realising there was a serious problem when he nearly fell asleep at the wheel of his car, according to today's *Courier Mail*.

"I couldn't even remember

driving to work last Thursday, and that afternoon when I was on the Ipswich Motorway, I realised I shouldn't be driving. I couldn't keep my eyes open," he said.

The report says Hawkins surmised that the only thing that had changed was his medication.

"When I went to fill my prescription for Minax I was offered a generic brand, which I accepted."

After realising that the tablets were making him doze off, he returned to the pharmacy where the pharmacist identified them as sleeping pills.

US pricing move

LEGISLATORS in the US state of Augusta have proposed a new law which would require chain pharmacies to publish their cash prices for the top 20 selling medications in the state.

The 'Act to Increase Consumer Awareness of Prescription Drug Pricing' would force pharmacies with more than four locations to report to the government the retail price of the 20 top drugs - as well as have the list on display in stores.

Representative Elaine Makas presented a pricing snapshot which showed that the cash price for 13 medications varied on average by 30% between stores.

Pharmacies have opposed the bill, which is still under consideration, saying the move would create an unnecessary burden, which was more likely to confuse consumers than help them.



DISPENSARY CORNER

THERE'S a looming crisis in Cuba, where economic problems mean the country is running short of toilet paper.

An official at government-run company Cimex warned that citizens may have to hold on for several months, with insufficient raw materials currently available to produce toilet paper in Cuba.

"The corporation has taken all the steps so that at the end of the year there will be an important importation of toilet paper," he reassured citizens.

The Cuban economy is suffering due to the global economic downturn as well as the effects of three hurricanes last year, and the government is helping out by lowering the prices on a range of goods including personal hygiene products and some pharmaceutical items.

SCOTTISH scientists at the University of Edinburgh have found a curious correlation between facial symmetry and age-related mental decline.

They mapped the faces of subjects from the 1932 Scottish Mental Survey, and found that those who had symmetrical faces were less likely to lose their memory in later life.

Facial symmetry could indicate that a person has experienced fewer "disturbances" such as diseases, toxins or malnutrition, the researchers said.

HEALTH professionals were standing by in the northern Finnish town of Heinola last weekend, for the hosting of the World Sauna Championships.

Heinola, is about 180km north of Helsinki, with hundreds of spectators in attendance.

Finnish champion Timo Kaukonen out-sweated 150 fellow-sweaters from around the world to take the title, withstanding 110° Celsius for three minutes and 46 seconds.

Unconfirmed reports cited Kaukonen boasting to the runners up: "If you can't stand the heat, stay out of the sauna."

WIN LASH ME MOUSSE MASCARA



CONGRATULATIONS to Melita Jensen from Wheatbelt, who was yesterday's lucky winner of an Australis Lash Me Mousse Mascara.

Australis has teamed up with **Pharmacy Daily** this week, giving readers the chance to win an Australis Lash Me Mousse Mascara in Blueberry. Valued at \$17.95, the revolutionary new mascara defines and separates lashes like never before! The difference lies in the patented German designed brush which separates and targets hard-to-reach lashes.

The superior 3-in-1 mousse formulation also coats every lash for maximum thickness, curl and extension while the bamboo extract and vitamin E nourishes the hair cuticle and prevents breakage.

This mascara is also great for sensitive eyes.

For your chance to win your very own Australis Lash Me Mousse Mascara, simply send through the correct answer to the following question below:

How do you create curlier, more defined lashes?

Email your answer to: comp@pharmacydaily.com.au.

The first correct entry received each day will win!

Hint: Visit the Australis website at: www.australiscosmetics.com.au.

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