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PBAC Jul meeting outcome

THE outcomes from the Jul meeting of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee were made public on Fri, revealing a strong focus on cost management for the PBS.

Although a number of positive recommendations were made, most were linked to "cost minimisation" or "acceptable cost-effectiveness" for the respective medications.

There were a number of major submissions approved, including for a Section 100 listing of GSK's Volibris (ambrisentan) for pulmonary arterial hypertension, recommended for listing on a "cost minimisation basis to bosentan."

Listings were also approved for Janssen-Cilag's Velcade (bortezomib), CSL's Daivobet (calcipotriol with betamethasone dipropionate) for psoriasis, and for Sanofi Pasteur's new intradermal micro-injection for influenza for

patients aged 65 years and older.

Also approved was Wyeth's Relistor (methylnaltrexone bromide) injection as an authority required palliative care schedule listing for opioid-induced constipation (see RGH E-bulletin story at right).

The PBAC also recommended the listing of a new pack size of Colgout (colchicine) of 30 tablets following a number of recent reports of colchicine poisoning, including two deaths.

Interestingly, the PBAC also recommended a change from Authority required to Authority required (streamlined) for a number of chemotherapy drugs including cladribine, fotemustine, irinotecan hydrochloride trihydrate, raltitrexed and topotecan, in connection with the implementation of the now-delayed Intravenous Chemotherapy Supply Program (PD Thu).

Merck Serono's Erbitux (cetuximab) for the treatment of metastatic colorectal cancer was rejected "on the basis of high and uncertain cost effectiveness".

Also rejected was a listing of Servier's Coralan (ivabradine hydrochloride) for treatment of chronic stable angina due to insufficient evidence provided in the application.

Servier said it was "committed to ivabradine being available for some patients with stable angina and will work with the PBAC to achieve listing."

A first time listing request was also denied for botulinum toxin for the treatment of spasticity in adults with multiple sclerosis, traumatic brain injury and spinal cord injury.

FDA approves Sabril

THE US Food and Drug Administration has approved Sabril (vigabatrin) Oral Solution for the treatment of infantile spasms in children aged 1 month to 2 years.

It's the first drug approved in the USA to treat the disorder, which is characterised by a severe type of seizure that usually appears in the first year of life, typically between 4 and 8 months.

Sabril tablets have also been approved in the USA for adult use in combination with other medications to treat complex partial seizures that have not responded adequately to previous drug therapies.

A spiffing wheeze?

FIGURES released by the National Asthma Council of Australia today show that laughter triggers asthma in 39% of Australians who have the condition.

CEO Kristine Whorlow said that while people are generally told to avoid things that trigger their symptoms, "it's really very difficult to avoid laughing - and you wouldn't really want to."

She said the research emphasised the need for people whose asthma is triggered by laughing to keep the condition well managed.

The survey also found that 74% of asthma patients live with the "false belief that their asthma is well-managed" when in fact they're just avoiding parts of life which trigger the symptoms.

The Council has launched a new online 'Asthma Life Balance Check' assessment tool, which aims to give people insight into how they are living their life and how well they're managing their condition.

The simple questionnaire has been developed in partnership with leading respiratory clinicians, and respondents are encouraged to print out the results and discuss them with their GP.

The online tool can be found at www.nationalasthma.org.au.

CSL, Baxter in court

ANOTHER court case has been lodged in the USA, with allegations of price-fixing in the blood plasma market between CSL Behring and Baxter Pharmaceuticals.

A hospital in Missouri has been joined by the JFK Medical Centre in New Jersey in filing claims that there was a conspiracy between the suppliers to fix the prices of plasma products, restricting supply and pushing up prices by coordinating production.

RGH E-Bulletin

THIS week's edition of the Repatriation General Hospital Pharmacy E-Bulletin gives an overview of methylnaltrexone (Relistor) which is indicated for use in opioid-induced constipation in patients with advanced illness who are receiving palliative care, when response to laxative therapy has not been sufficient.

Anyone can subscribe to receive the E-Bulletin each week without charge by sending an email to chris.alderman@health.sa.gov.au.

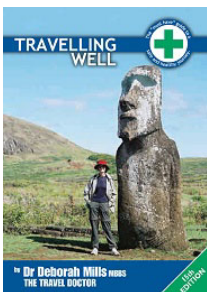
Competition winner

CONGRATULATIONS to Gerald Lian of United Discount Chemists in Alice Springs, who was the final winner in last week's Phytonail competition.

Today we launch another great daily giveaway, in which readers can win a copy of Dr Deborah Mills' latest book *Travelling Well*.

See below for details.

Win a copy of *Travelling Well!*



EACH day this week *Pharmacy Daily* is giving readers the chance to win a copy of Dr Deborah Mills' latest book, *Travelling Well*.

The book is a must have guide to a safe and healthy journey, with detailed advice about pre-trip preparation, how to look after yourself while away, and what to do if you get sick.

Dr Deb, known as "The Travel Doctor" is one of Australia's leading travel health care providers, and has over 20 years experience in the field.

The 15th edition of *Travelling Well* has been updated to include new vaccines, current recommendations for treatment of travellers' diarrhoea and much more!

For your chance to win your very own copy of *Travelling Well*, valued at \$24.95, simply be the first reader to correctly answer the following question:

What two other versions has the 15th Edition of *Travelling Well* been translated into?

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

Hint! Visit www.travellingwell.com.au.

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OTC Update Oral Health

Continuing our series on Oral Health care, today we focus on **General oral care.**

Good oral hygiene is the most important factor in preventing gum disease and tooth loss. Good oral health is also essential to overall wellbeing.

Dentists recommend the following practices:

Teeth cleaning: Cleaning teeth removes plaque and tartar from teeth to prevent cavities and other gum diseases. Teeth should be cleaned using a small soft toothbrush and a fluoride toothpaste at least twice a day.

This fights the decay process and helps the enamel on the teeth to resist acid attack.

Flossing: Flossing removes plaque and decaying food that may be stuck between the teeth. Food impaction is the most common cause of dental pain. Dentists recommend flossing once a day. There are several different types of dental floss available.

Waxed - better for people with teeth that are closely spaced.
Unwaxed, Ribbon and, flavoured and unflavoured - to cater for different patient preferences.

Also available is **Super Floss** for people with dental appliances such as bridges or orthodontic appliances, or patients with wide gaps between teeth.

There are also stronger shred-resistant varieties for people with teeth with rough edges.

Flossing forks are good those who find regular flossing difficult
Interdental woodsticks: massage the gums and remove plaque from in between the teeth. Good for patients with wide spaces.

Interdental Brushes: are designed to clean the difficult to reach spaces in the mouth. These are gentle on the gums, and come in different sizes according to the size of the interdental space.

Mouthwashes: usually contain an anti-bacterial so can help kill any bacteria not removed by brushing and flossing. They can also reach deeper into the throat to help oral health.

Stop complaining - APESMA

THE union representing employee pharmacists has responded to a Guild call for intervention by deputy Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, in the new Pharmacy Industry Award (PD Fri).

Jacki Baulch, who's a senior industrial officer with the Association of Professional Engineers, Scientists and Managers Australia, said "the Pharmacy Guild is delivering the same old message of doom and gloom - threats of job losses and reduced hours" when the new award becomes effective next January.

She's alleging that Guild submissions to the Industrial Relations Commission relating to the award involve "statistically very small samples" to make the impact on the industry appear larger.

The Guild's submission quotes 3 pharmacies in WA (out of 509), 5 from Queensland (out of 987), 3 in NSW (from 1708), four from South

New API cfo

AUSTRALIAN Pharmaceutical Industries today announced that Graeme Fallet will become its new Chief Financial Officer on 07 Sep, succeeding Ashley Killick who's leaving the company for personal reasons.

Fallet was most recently as chief financial officer of listed company Ventracor Limited.

Strong interest in prescribing project

NATIONAL Prescribing Service says it's been overwhelmed with applications for its new Prescribing Data in General Practice Demonstration project, with 37 GP networks wanting to take part.

The quality improvement program is a collaboration between NPS and the Australian General Practice Network, aiming to help GPs review their prescribing practices and management of patients with chronic heart failure and hypertension.

The project uses a data extraction tool so GPs can receive immediate feedback on their prescribing practices against clinical indicators.

The pilot project, which runs for two years, will involve 20 general practice networks, and will begin next month.

Australia (out of 400) and two from the Northern Territory (out of 26).

Baulch claims that rather than focusing on the "very small selective sample," detailed analysis by each pharmacy of their wage costs needs to be taken into account.

"Stop complaining and let's get on with the planning for the implementation of the Award.

"Overall, the new Award is a fair legal minimum to work from, when employees are negotiating with employers," she insisted.

Rural conference

A NUMBER of pharmacy students represented the profession at the recent National Universities Rural Health Conference, which was held in Cairns last month.

The conference, sponsored by the Department of Health and Ageing, aims to bring together students with a common passion for rural, remote and Indigenous health care.

About 15 of the 300 attendees were pharmacy students, taking part under the Allied Health portfolio of the conference.

Topics discussed included a lack of scholarships for Allied Health students seeking placement in rural communities, with a suggestion that perhaps HECS reductions could be implemented.

Spokesperson Elise Taylor said the Allied Health Portfolio would welcome any suggestions from the profession relating to the NURHC - pharmacy@nrhsn.org.au.

NSW Guild surplus

THE NSW Branch of the Pharmacy Guild of Australia has released its financial report for the year to 30 Jun 2009, revealing a surplus for the year of \$541,616.

Total revenue was \$9.78m including \$2.57m in membership subscriptions, \$1.37m in methadone incentive scheme funding and \$870,000 in needle and syringe exchange funding.

Major outflows of funds included salaries, payments relating to the various incentive schemes passed on to pharmacies, rent, salaries and national council dues of \$1.37m.

The surplus was more than double the \$202,000 for last year.



DISPENSARY CORNER

AN INITIATIVE from the Brazilian Health Ministry has been launched to make it easier for people with sexually transmitted diseases to inform their partners that they may be infected too.

It's a special website where electronic "postcards" can be created and emailed to break the unhappy news.

A spokesman for the department said many people have difficulty in telling partners they are infected, with the site aiming to "tackle these diseases directly and with minimum exposure."

A ROMANIAN man was lucky to avoid serious injury after falling from a fourth floor window while sleepwalking this week.

32-year-old Marius Purcariu was found wrapped in a curtain on the bonnet of a car parked under his bedroom window, telling rescuers he had no idea how he got there.

"I remember turning off the TV and going to sleep around 2am.

"Then I heard noises and my wife was calling my name from the window. I was very lucky, I guess," he said.

Purcariu suffered a broken leg in the 20m fall, with doctors saying he probably avoided more serious injuries or even death because his body was totally relaxed as he plummeted.

EMERGENCY services were forced to undertake a rather embarrassing rescue at the Cairns Central Shopping Centre over the weekend, after a 70-year-old man became super-glued to the seat of a public toilet.

Fire crews, police and ambulance officers responded to the alarm which was caused when a prankster smeared the glue on the toilet seat.

The man was taken to the Cairns Base Hospital, where the toilet seat was successfully removed.

Cairns police superintendent Brent Carter said he was "ropeable" about the incident, and appealed for help from the public to identify the culprit.