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## Guild Update

This week's update  
from the Guild

### Codeine education program launched

The *Manage Pain – effectively, safely, responsibly* codeine education program developed by the Pharmacy Guild of Australia and Pharmaceutical Society of Australia is being launched across Australian pharmacies this month.

The aim of the program is to ensure over-the-counter (OTC) codeine combination analgesics are taken correctly by all Australians.

The *Manage Pain – effectively, safely, responsibly* education pack is being mailed to all member pharmacies, and contains:

- **Sticky notes:** To be placed on a pack of codeine containing analgesic for the customer to read. The message is: '3 things to remember when taking these medications – dosage; side effects; and where to find further information'.
- **Pharmacy information card:** A reference tool for the pharmacist and pharmacy assistants when consulting with customers purchasing or requesting analgesics with codeine. The card also provides the Pharmacy Guild of Australia's Ask - Assess - Advise protocol.
- **Magnet:** Contains a series of contact numbers for Alcohol and Drug Information Services in each state and territory for pharmacy staff to access quickly. A new website has been developed:

[www.managepain.com.au](http://www.managepain.com.au) for pharmacy staff and customers to find out more about OTC codeine combined analgesics; the type of pain they are suitable for; side effects and contact details for various alcohol and drug services

For more information, contact:  
Linda Duffy on 02 9291 3366 or  
[linda.duffy@edelman.com](mailto:linda.duffy@edelman.com).



**The Pharmacy  
Guild of Australia**

## Pharmacists ease GP loads

THE Pharmaceutical Society of Australia has urged patients to utilise the professional services of pharmacists when "seeking advice for many medical conditions which do not necessarily require treatment by a doctor".

PSA ACT President, Associate Professor Gabrielle Cooper, was responding to a survey which found that patients in Canberra can wait for up to a week for a doctor's appointment, while others sometimes have to travel to Sydney to see a GP.

The study found that with the huge shortage of ACT doctors, nearly 70% of the city's residents have turned to the internet for medical advice.

Cooper said the PSA also

supports calls for more ACT GPs, with current doctors facing an enormous workload.

"Consumers can help ease that workload by going to their pharmacist to seek advice for many ailments and conditions.

"There is no need to make a booking and certainly no need to wait up to seven days which seems to be the case for many Canberra patients trying to get in to see their GP," Cooper said.

She emphasised that pharmacists are trained in primary health care, and if symptoms are minor and self-limiting they will give advice and support to patients and their carers to look after themselves at home and reduce the strain on the already overstressed health system.

## 5000th iTherapeutics member



**ABOVE:** The iTherapeutics online pharmacy training system is celebrating its first birthday - but pharmacy assistant Kate Cupper of Mountain Creek Chemmart got the presents.

She's pictured above with pharmacist Jill Nissen, receiving some lovely Champagne and chocolates after being the 5000th person to sign up for iTherapeutics.

The website launched on 01 Sep 2008, with UnityHealth saying it's been a "resounding success for both pharmacy staff and suppliers" since its inception last year.

About 2300 Australian pharmacies have signed up to utilise the online training portal which currently offers 30 different training modules covering a broad

range of products and health categories.

Users may also become eligible for certificates of completion, product samples and prizes after successfully completing modules.

Training on the pharmacy-only training portal is free, and allows staff to build their knowledge when and where they like.

The modules are developed by the product suppliers and contain information in accordance with approved TGA indications.

Companies which currently support the system include Heinz, Inovail, Roche Diagnostics, Sandoz, BioCeuticals, BioRevive, Galderma, Swisse, MG Nutritionals, Nestle Healthcare Nutrition and Omron.

See [www.itherapeutics.com.au](http://www.itherapeutics.com.au).

## Pharmacists sue Pfizer/Wyeth

A GROUP of US pharmacists has filed a lawsuit hoping to block the proposed US\$68 billion buyout of Wyeth by Pfizer.

Golden Gate Pharmacy Services, which operates seven California pharmacies, is basing its claim on the fact that banks which are financing the deal were beneficiaries of the US gov't's Troubled Asset Relief Program funds - which the pharmacies say shouldn't be used to pay for job losses.

An estimated 22,000 jobs will be cut as a result of the takeover.

The pharmacies say that the deal will also lead to less competition for certain drugs and give pharmacies fewer choices of suppliers.

A spokesperson for Pfizer said the company hadn't been served with the lawsuit yet, but believes it's "without merit," according to a Bloomberg new service report.

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 Guild

## PA conference

**THE** Pharmacy Assistant National Conference will take place on the Gold Coast 29-31 Oct this year.

It's the 11th year that the event has been run, and this year the traditional Friday night conference dinner will be held on Saturday night, with the program starting later on the Friday to allow delegates more time to travel.

More information and registration at [www.pharmacyassistants.com](http://www.pharmacyassistants.com).

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## FDA issues orlistat warning

**THE** US Food and Drug Administration today issued an "early communication" about an ongoing safety review of weight loss drug orlistat, sold in Australia under the Xenical brand.

The FDA said it's reviewing adverse event reports of liver injury in patients taking the drug, after receiving 32 serious adverse event reports between 1999 and 2008.

Of those cases, 27 reported hospitalisation and 6 resulted in liver failure, with thirty of the adverse events occurring outside the USA.

The most commonly reported adverse events included yellowing of the skin or whites of the eyes, weakness and stomach pain.

The FDA said it's reviewing additional data submitted by orlistat manufacturers on suspected cases of liver injury, adding that its analysis is ongoing.

"No definite association between liver injury and orlistat has been established at this time," the FDA said, adding that "consumers taking Xenical should continue to take it as prescribed."

In Australia Xenical has had a controversial history, with Roche promoting it in direct to consumer TV advertising before a CHOICE mystery shop survey claimed that the medication was being given out inappropriately.

The Appendix H listing was eventually withdrawn, with the Guild later stepping in and now endorsing the medication under its Gold Cross brand.

The FDA is advising health professionals and consumers to report suspected side effects, with consumers urged to seek help if they experience symptoms including weakness or fatigue, fever, jaundice or brown urine.

## US flu vaccine trial

**CSL** Limited has begun testing its Influenza A (H1N1) vaccine on children and adults in the USA, with the company saying it would test 1300 adults and 450 children to determine the best dose.

The clinical trials of CSL's candidate vaccine will be the first to use a "thimerosal-free formulation of the H1N1 vaccine antigen," said one of the scientists in charge of the trial, Dr Pedro Piedra of Baylor College of Medicine in Texas.

Sanofi-Aventis is also trialling a swine flu vaccine in the US.

## Low carb diets "damage arteries"

**RESEARCHERS** in Israel have found that eating high protein, low carbohydrate diets can be damaging to arteries.

The Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center tested the diets on mice, finding that rodents fed with a low carb, high protein diet developed 15% more fatty plaque deposits, or atherosclerosis, than mice fed with a normal diet.

The effect was seen despite the mice on the high carb diet gaining less weight than the other rodents.

Another group of mice fed with a high fat "western diet" developed 9% more atherosclerosis than those on a normal mouse diet.

Low-carb diets have become highly fashionable since the 1990s publication of the Atkins diet.

The scientists concluded that a balanced diet was much healthier.



## DISPENSARY CORNER

**A NEW** type of health retreat has opened its doors in the USA, but instead of helping guests detox from overindulgent lifestyles, this property aims to reconnect cyber-junkies and internet addicts with the land of the living.

The reStart Internet Addiction Recovery Center has six rooms, with a 45-day stay costing US\$14,500 - plus activity expenses such as renting camping gear.

Don't expect to be able to check your email during your stay - "We are a cold-turkey place - no technology," said a reStart spokesperson.

Activities for inpatients include conversation classes, as well as re-education about everyday tasks including cooking, household chores and bathing.

**OBESITY** is hitting air travel, with European low cost carrier easyJet being sued by a 55-year-old passenger after check-in staff refused to let her board because she was too fat.

Staff asked the 98kg woman to step on a baggage scale in front of a queue of other travellers and said she could only fly if she bought two tickets.

The carrier has issued an apology, saying it does expect very large passengers to buy two tickets so they can fly comfortably.

"But we don't ask them their weight, let alone have them weighed in front of the other customers," easyJet said.

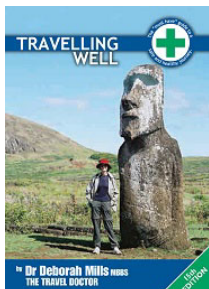
**HAIR** care is clearly high on the agenda of the world's richest man, the Sultan of Brunei, who earlier this month spent about \$30,000 to fly his favourite barber from London to Brunei so he could have a trim.

Ken Modestu runs the barber shop at the Dorchester hotel in Mayfair, central London - which also happens to be owned by the wealthy Brunei royal.

The Sultan was reportedly so worried about catching swine flu that he booked out the whole first class cabin for the hairdresser so he didn't have to mix with other passengers on the plane.

## Win a copy of *Travelling Well!*

**CONGRATULATIONS** to Robyn Hedges of Pymble Pharmacy in NSW who's won a copy of *Travelling Well* by being the first person yesterday to tell us that the book has been translated into Braille and Vietnamese.



**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:

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