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OTC Update

Sun Care

With summer now here, and plenty of people getting into the sun, many customers will be asking for advice on sun care. This week we will look at:

Choosing a Sunscreen.

Choosing a sunscreen can be a daunting task, with so many options available to consumers to protect them from exposure to ultraviolet radiation (UVR) from the sun - the cause of sunburn.

UVR can be classified into three groups: UVA, UVB and UVC.

UVA accounts for 80% of radiation that reaches the earth's surface.

It penetrates through the dermis to the subcutaneous tissue and causes oxidation of melanin resulting in a tan.

UVB rays are 20% of the UVR reaching us. They penetrate the lower epidermis levels and over exposure leads to pain and redness, i.e. sunburn.

UVC rays are absorbed by the ozone layer and are the most carcinogenic UVR.

When choosing a sunscreen it is important to look for one that offers broad-spectrum UV protection, i.e., against all UV rays.

Sunscreens also carry an **SPF** rating.

SPF stands for Sun Protection Factor - it is a measurement used to give a guide to the effectiveness of a sunscreen e.g., SPF 15 means it will take 15 times longer for skin to burn than unprotected skin.

Choosing a sunscreen with a higher SPF will mean it offers greater protection if applied correctly.

Most sunscreens contain a combination of ingredients to offer the best protection.

They may contain zinc oxide or titanium dioxide, which offer a physical barrier to the sun by scattering and reflecting the UV rays.

Sunscreens may also contain a chemical blocker such as a cinnamate, which absorbs UVR thus preventing the skin from burning.

Customers should also always be advised to reapply sunscreen regularly.

New herb-drug database

A **NEW** searchable database of interactions between prescription and herbal medicines has been launched as the result of a project at the University of Sydney.

The interactive database, released in conjunction with medical information provider UnityHealth, enables pharmacists and other health professionals to retrieve evidence-based information on clinically significant interactions, via an interface on [IMgateway.net](#).

It contains data from over 3000 sources including 700 medical

journals, with users able to search a herb or supplement against a drug and quickly obtain a recommendation on whether the combination should be avoided or requires caution.

Professor Basil Roufogalis from the Sydney Uni Faculty of Pharmacy said the database was unique because it is based on the Australian market, and is also regularly updated with the most recent research data "delivering accurate and up-to-date clinical recommendations."

He said it was also different from other sources because it makes recommendations based on the NHMRC's levels of evidence scale.

UnityHealth director, Peter De Lorenzo, said the database had been trialled with a number of GPs, adding that it was "a badly needed resource for health professionals and good news for patients safety".

ATO clarification

THE Australian Taxation Office has provided the Pharmacy Guild with a clarification on "exactly what constitutes a small business under the Income Tax Act," in response to queries about the deferral of the Dec Business Activity Statement.

Possible deferral is based on annual turnover, and the Guild says members must include dispensary sales of NHS prescriptions including any patient contributions when making the calculation, with deferral decisions made on a case by case basis.

Turkish protests

PHARMACISTS across Turkey closed their doors on Friday as part of a protest against government cuts to drug prices.

The Turkish Pharmacists' Association said price cuts for more than 3000 items became effective on Fri, with the pharmacists concerned at the instant devaluation of their stocks without any compensation from the government.

The Association has threatened "radical measures" if the govt fails to address pharmacists' concerns.

Sanofi appointment

SANOFI-AVENTIS has appointed Luke Fitzgerald as its new director of Consumer Healthcare business.

Luke currently holds the position of sales director with Sanofi-aventis, and will take over from current general manager Rob Barnes in January 2010.

APC seeks member

THE Australian Pharmacy Council's Accreditation Committee is seeking a new member.

Functions of the committee include the evaluation and accreditation of pharmacy schools and Intern Training Program providers and the authorisation of organisations to accredit continuing professional development.

Applications close on 22 Dec; more details on 02 6262 9628.

Cyberchondriacs rise

A **NEW** study has found that one in four Australians will search the internet for medical advice to self diagnose and treat themselves, a trend which the report's authors suggested is leading to a "nation of cyberchondriacs".

Undertaken by research agency, TNS, the report took into account survey results from 1000 Aussies, and found that 57% of respondents had accessed health information via the internet over the past month alone.

"Our research found that 27% of those searching for health information online felt that they were able to diagnose and treat ailment without the need of a health professional," said Cheryl Reed, TNS director of social research.

"It is concerning to think that people are adopting treatments for self diagnosed conditions that might not be appropriate or safe," Reed added.

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Online doping check

A NEW website launched by the Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority (ASADA) includes an online tool allowing pharmacists, athletes, doctors and support personnel to find out whether particular medications are acceptable under the World Anti-Doping Code list.

Users can select the relevant sport, gender and medication to be checked, returning instant results and generating a document detailing the relevant regulations for health professionals.

In the event that a medication used to treat a legitimate medical condition is banned, the athlete must apply to ASADA for a Therapeutic Use Exemption.

The site doesn't include details of supplements because they're not comprehensively regulated here.

For more information see the site at www.asada.gov.au.

Pharmacist selenium error

PHARMACISTS have been cited in a coronial inquest into the death of a cancer patient from a self administered selenium overdose, as reported in the latest newsletter from the Pharmacists Board of Qld.

The matter involved a Queensland pharmacist who was asked by a patient's family to dilute bulk (500g) sodium selenite (30% selenium) as an experimental cancer treatment.

The first batch was successfully prepared by the pharmacist and delivered by a pharmacy intern, however problems arose when a second order was placed for 200g of sodium selenite to be sent via the Qld pharmacist to an interstate pharmacist for preparation there.

The inquiry found that confusion over the dosage amounts - caused

in part by the therapeutic dose instructions not being attached to medication container when sent to the interstate pharmacist - was in part to blame for the death.

Another fatal mistake that the coroner found was that, in making up the therapy, the pharmacist wrongly assumed that when diluted selenium would change from its usual Schedule 7 poison rating, to a Schedule 3.

In actual fact, when used in therapeutic doses, selenium becomes a schedule 4 poison, only available to patients on prescription.

The Board is reminding all pharmacists that "assuming a substance falls within a particular schedule at all without double checking, and incorrect labeling, are fundamental errors of which all registrants should take careful note".

Takeda's expansion

ASIA'S largest drug maker, Takeda Pharmaceutical has released details of plans to enter into the Indian market.

The Japanese drug manufacturer has confirmed that the move is part of its continued bid to claim a market share within several emerging economies, which will also see Takeda establish a new commercial subsidiary in Brazil.

Pharmacy E-Bulletin

THIS week's edition of SA's Repatriation General Hospital Pharmacy E-Bulletin is titled *Anaphylaxis with iodinated contrast media* and gives an overview of the possible adverse effects of the use of this diagnostic aid.

The bulletin is available free from chris.alderman@rgh.sa.gov.au.



DISPENSARY CORNER

EAGER 81 year old US marathon runner, Jerry Johncock, was almost forced to quit the 'Twin Cities' marathon recently when he was struck down with an unfortunate urinary blockage.

Four-fifths of the way through the epic 41.90 kilometre journey, Johncock stopped to inform officials that he would need to quit the race so he could get to hospital in time- before his bladder burst.

Little did he know, a kindly spectator was eavesdropping on the conversation, and upon hearing of the plight the erstwhile helper offered Johncocks the use of his "spare catheter" that he kept in his car for emergencies.

Johncocks took the spectator up on his kind, albeit unorthodox offer, retiring to a nearby restroom to self-administer the catheter before triumphantly returning to the tarmac to finish the race.

AN ancient southern Indian ritual is set to be banned by authorities who believe it's just too risky.

The ceremony involves tossing babies from the top of a 10m-high temple in order to confer good health and a long life, as well as bringing prosperity to the child's family.

The infants land (hopefully) in a blanket held by a jubilant crowd below as they sing and dance.

It has reportedly taken place for centuries in the rural district of Bijapur, but an official who's new to the area, deputy commissioner R. Shantharaj, says he intends to prevent it in future.

"The unusual ritual is inhuman and terrifying for babies," he said.

COULD this be a record?

A US woman has been arrested for shoplifting more than 400 items from a pharmacy in repeated raids one day last week.

The 51-year-old allegedly took more than US\$2200 worth of items, taking the contraband to her vehicle in bags before returning to the store for more.

Police found 418 items ranging from books to jewellery in the car.

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THIS week OnlyPapaya has teamed up with *Pharmacy Daily*, giving readers the chance to win an Only Papaya Starter Pack.

The foundation of OnlyPapaya's products is its 'Optimised Fruit Extract', obtained by using a patented process that preserved the enzymes and attributes of fresh paw paw fruit.

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