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Food or therapy?

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration has clarified the definition of a "Section Seven" declaration made under the Therapeutic Goods Act on its website.

A section 7 declaration is submitted by a sponsor and is designed to provide clarity for consumers, industry and regulators in the determining whether an item is a food or a therapeutic good.

A section seven declaration does not mean that the product has Australian supply approval, the TGA said, with the website also providing a list of complementary medicine section seven declarations, including shark cartilage and fibre as a therapeutic good when used in capsule or tablet format.

Early drug access

THE UK Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency has published an outline of a proposed new scheme which would provide earlier access to some medicines before they are formally licensed.

The framework could provide "significant potential benefits for patients for whom there are currently no, or very limited treatment options available."

It would apply to medicines representing a significant advance in treatment in an area of unmet need, and data would be required that shows the benefit:risk profile of the medicine is positive and that it's likely to offer advantages over any existing treatment options.

It's estimated that the scheme would probably equate to only one or two new authorisations a year.

HACC funding boost

SOUTH Australia's Home and Community Care (HACC) has been boosted by 8%, with the federal govt putting in \$7.7m and the SA govt contributing \$4.8m extra bringing total funding to \$162m.

HACC is a joint initiative which provides affordable and accessible care for elderly and disabled Australians and their carers.

No new products

OUR regular Wednesday Health, Beauty and New Products feature will return in the new year after the upcoming holiday break.

Holiday medicine warning

THE National Prescribing Service is reminding patients and pharmacists to be aware of potential medicine interaction problems related to the summer holiday season- such as sun and alcohol.

"Alcohol can increase side effects of many medicines in particular antidepressants, sleeping tablets, some pain medicines and some antihistamines and come cough and cold medicines," said NPS ceo, Dr Lynn Weekes.

"It can also worsen some conditions that may be treated with medicines, such as depression

Vaccination 'unlikely'

TWO thirds of Australians who haven't already been vaccinated against H1N1 influenza are unlikely to have the jab in the next year, according to a survey carried out by MBF Healthwatch last week.

Reasons cited by respondents as to why they would not have the vaccine included that it "was unnecessary," "the threat has passed" or that they were "not in the 'at risk' category."

The survey also found people were confused over mixed messages from experts and worried about potential vaccine side effects.

MEANWHILE the *Journal of the American Medical Association* has published a report which confirms "robust immune responses" to CSL's H1N1 vaccine after just one dose in Australian children aged 6 months to 9 years.

One 15mcg dose saw antibody levels reach protective levels in 92% of subjects, and a second dose given three weeks later lifted this to 100% of participants.

"Vaccinating children is a significant component of reducing influenza transmission in the community," the study's author said.

New UK health no.

AUTHORITIES in the UK have launched a new "non emergency" phone number for the public, which is aimed to help people find local health services including pharmacy.

The free '111' number is available across Britain and callers who need help from a pharmacist will be directed to their nearest pharmacy for help and advice.

and anxiety.

"If you're using medicines that can increase sensitivity to the sun avoid spending large amounts of time outdoors.... (and) if you are outside ensure you wear sunscreen and protective clothing as your skin is likely to burn much faster than normal," Weekes added.

In relation to its warning, the NPS has released a 'Consumer Medicine Information' leaflet, which deals with alcohol and sun medicines interaction.

The NPS is recommending that patients read through the leaflet, and if they have any questions or concerns to consult their local pharmacist.

The leaflet can be downloaded from www.nps.org.au/cmi.

Pharmacy cricket

FORMER cricket test player and Australian state captain, John Inverarity, has been announced as the guest speaker at Pharmacy Cricket's Carnival Presentation Dinner, set to be held in January at Claremont Yacht Club in Perth.

The National Cricket Carnival (20-23 January) will feature four days of play between teams from each state at the grounds of the University of Western Australia and Scotch college - for more details see www.pharmacycricket.com.au.

Genetic cancer map

SCIENTISTS at the Wellnes Trust in England have mapped the complete genetic codes of two of their patient's tumors.

Experts are now saying that the cancer maps - which catalogued every DNA mutation found within the tumors - could lead to new individually targeted therapies.

"These catalogues of mutations are telling us about how the cancer has developed, so they will inform us on prevention," said research head Mike Stratton.

"They tell us about all the processes which are disrupted in cancer cells, which we can try to influence through our treatments."

"So this is a really fundamental moment in the history of cancer research...I can envisage a time or a decade hence when every cancer patient will have one of these charts," Stratton added.



DISPENSARY CORNER

A 47-YEAR-OLD Chinese woman is set to be relieved of a major burden after doctors agreed to work for free to remove a 25kg tumour from her back.

Sun Fengqin from Inner Mongolia is known locally as the "Tortoise Woman" because of the unsightly growth, which is known as a 'nerve fabric tumour'.

Sun said the growth started as a birthmark but "by the time I was 20 years old, it had grown into the size of a rice bag."

"It is now so big and heavy that I have to lean forward when I walk."

The doctors said the major risk from the surgery was haemorrhage, saying they would have 10 litres of blood on hand - around three times the blood in the patients' body - for transfusion during the procedure.

THREE wise men indeed!

It seems that the three myrrh, frankincense and gold-carrying Magi who visited the baby Jesus were onto a good thing- low levels of bad cholesterol.

Researchers have discovered a that myrrh - made from the resin found in Middle Eastern trees - when used in conjunction with other plant materials may help lower bad cholesterol.

Throughout the study, rodent subjects were given a potent mix of myrrh resin and plant fodder, the result of which was a lowering in bad cholesterol and an increase in good cholesterol levels.

HERE'S another example of active ageing.

A 100-year-old Brazilian woman is set to become the world's oldest parachuter when she dives out of a plane next weekend.

The skydive is a present from her grandson, who arranged it as a special Christmas present for his beloved granny.

Aida Mendes says she's looking forward to taking the plunge, and doesn't expect any problems.

"Because I did a lot of sports as a young woman, I can really say that I am a 100-year-old with the body of a 50-year-old," she said.