

## S2 research study

THE Pharmacy Guild has engaged Healthcare Management Advisors (HMA) to undertake a project which will assess consumer perceptions on supply of and access to S2 medicines.

It's part of the Fourth Community Pharmacy R&D Program, with HMA aiming to collect some of the data required by the National Coordinating Committee on Therapeutic Goods to reassess the restrictions on access to OTC drugs in Australia.

During each of the collection rounds, in Feb, Jun and Oct this year HMA staff will be visiting 50 pharmacies across the country.

Visits will be randomised as to time of day and HMA will need about 15 min discussion with a pharmacist, about 5 min with a pharmacy assistant and a maximum of 5 min with consumers who purchase S2 medicines and are willing to participate in the survey.

Some consumers who haven't purchased an S2 medicine will also be surveyed.

Pharmacists selected for the trial are encouraged to participate in round 1 which kicks off this month - for more info on the project call 08 8168 8000.

## Double strength antispasmodic

BUSCOPAN has released its first double strength antispasmodic, Buscopan Forte (hyoscine butylbromide 20mg), to further increase compliance, and assist the 45% of stomach ache and cramp sufferers which the maker says are currently under-dosing.

Buscopan Forte is now available from all wholesalers - see [www.buscopan.com.au](http://www.buscopan.com.au).

## TGA draft 'daft' - Harvey

LA TROBE University School of Public Health senior research fellow Ken Harvey has slammed the draft guidelines on weight loss products issued by the TGA (*PD* Tue) saying the document is "yet another example of how the TGA is focused on industry, not consumer, protection."

The guidelines were developed starting in 2007 after ever-increasing complaints about complementary medicines being promoted for weight loss - incl "Xantrax High Potency Weight Loss Formula", "Fat Blaster", "Fat Magnet" and other products.

Harvey and his colleagues found that over 1000 of these products were listed on the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods (ARTG), with no evidence of their efficacy required.

Harvey said that he had understood that the TGA was to review the evidence about the

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## DISPENSARY CORNER

A CLEVER politician in Singapore has come up with an explanation for the city-state's low birth rate - people there are just not very good in the bedroom.

In 2007 just 1.29 babies were born per woman in Singapore, well below the 2.1 level which is required for a population to maintain itself naturally.

Loo Choon Yong said "We should accept that as a people, our procreation talent is not our forte - nothing to crow about."

He was responding to a govt proposal to double spending on incentives to encourage people to have more children.

ANOTHER smoking remedy has been suggested by a recent US study which found that some cigarette addicts simply respond to cold hard cash.

Researchers found that among a group of General Electric workers the smokers were more likely to quit, and stay smoke free, if offered cash incentives.

The findings run counter to previous studies, which had suggested the correlation between bribes and quitting smoking was negligible.

However lead scientist Dr Kevin Volpp of the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine suggested this could be because the sums of money involved just weren't enough.

"Incentive programs work if they're well designed and adequately funded.

"If you do a low-budget incentive program, it may have little effect," he said.

## B is for migraine

FOLIC acid and vitamin B supplements may provide relief for those who suffer migraines, according to researchers at Griffith University.

50 long-term sufferers were given the supplements for six months, and Professor Lyn Griffiths of the university's Genomics Research Centre said the results showed a "drastic improvement in headache frequency, pain severity and associated disability for those treated."

The trial was founded on the theory that the supplements reduce high levels of amino acid homocysteine, which is associated with a gene said to make people susceptible to migraines.

listed weight loss products, which would reduce the need for complaints and better protect consumers by "proscribing the use of ingredients that lacked evidence of efficacy."

However the draft guidelines allow non-randomised trials or "traditional" evidence to be used in making claims, and also "say nothing about the acceptability of product names making their own implicit claims, such as 'Fat Magnet' and 'Weight Loss Accelerate'," Harvey told *PD*.

He suggested that the best way for the guidelines to have a positive impact would be for the TGA to use them to undertake a post-market review of all listed weight-loss products - that is, to insist that all product sponsors submit the evidence that substantiates their efficacy.

"Is the TGA likely to do this? On their current form, I don't think so!" Harvey said, urging Parliamentary Secretary Jan McLucas to "hold the TGA to account" over the issue.

## Ponting hits cancer

AUSTRALIAN cricket captain Ricky Ponting is asking Aussies to mark International Childhood Cancer Day this Sun by purchasing a gold ribbon from David Jones.

100% of the proceeds go directly to the Children's Cancer Institute Australia, which is supported by the Ponting Foundation established by Ricky and his wife Rianna.

"In Australia there are still three children who die from cancer every week, but without research we cannot find a cure and give hope to families," he said.



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