



## Eli Lilly says sorry

ELI LILLY has apologised for making misleading claims about Cymbalta (duloxetine).

In a letter mailed to doctors, the company apologised for "any unintentional confusion" over its marketing of the anti-depressant, *The Age* reported.

A Medicines Australia review found that Eli Lilly had attempted to promote "off-label" use of Cymbalta, at twice the approved dose, as a treatment for physical pain associated with depression, when it was PBS-listed last July.

The company was fined \$100,000 and ordered to withdraw all promotional material containing the claims.

Its appeal against the decision, on the basis that the campaign was "educational", was dismissed.

## Bikers wanted

SYDNEY pharmacist Jack Leigh is considering starting a group for pharmacists who ride motorbikes.

He said the group might take day and weekend rides together and even perhaps help charities as they do so.

Leigh is asking anyone who's interested to contact him on 02 9516 2373.

## National rego progresses

HEALTH ministers from across Australia yesterday reaffirmed their commitment to a national registration and accreditation scheme for health professions - including pharmacists.

They met in Melbourne for the Australian Health Ministers' Conference, and noted that "substantial progress" had been made in developing the scheme.

Yesterday they agreed on safety elements which would deliver "important protections to patients" including mandatory reporting of professionals who are placing the public at risk of harm, as well as mandatory criminal history and identity checks for all health professionals registering for the first time in Australia.

All other registrants will be required to make an annual declaration on criminal history matters when they renew their registration, the ministers said.

Other matters included privacy considerations relating to the e-health proposal that will see all residents allocated an Individual Healthcare Identifier (IHI) which will support "better linkage of patient information and

communication between healthcare providers."

The IHI won't replace Medicare numbers, which will continue to be used in claiming benefits.

Ministers also launched Australia's new National Mental Health Policy 2008 which embeds a 'whole-of-government' approach to mental health.

State and territory govts will this month hold consultations to develop a fourth National Mental Health Plan based on the policy.

## HRT drugs switch to private

PREMIA and Premarin will be withdrawn from the PBS and move to private prescription in June, pushing the price up by about \$10 per prescription.

The Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) products will go private, according to manufacturer Wyeth, because the reimbursement price is too low compared to the cost of ingredients and manufacturing.

The new nominal price of around \$32 may vary depending on pharmacist dispensing fees.

## Flu resists Tamiflu

AN influenza strain expected to hit Australia this winter is almost totally resistant to Tamiflu, US researchers have claimed.

The study, published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, found that 98.5% of the H1N1 influenza virus was now resistant to Tamiflu.

Australia's Influenza Vaccine Committee has asked for the H1N1 strain to be included in the 2009 flu vaccination.

H1N1 is still susceptible to Relenza but the spray isn't suitable for children or people with asthma.

In the last five months six patients with the strain have died in the US and the Netherlands.

## Dove targets assts

BEAUTY brand Dove has launched a large scale "sampling and information program" targeting pharmacy assistants, doctors and dermatologists to provide educational materials on the Dove Beauty Bar.

Information packs will highlight the difference between the Dove product and conventional soaps.

Dove will also be a sponsor of the Pharmacy Assistant National Conference in Oct 2009.

## MIMS March prescribing update

### NEW INDICATIONS

• **Enoxaparin** (Clexane, Clexane Forte) indications have been extended to include treatment of acute ST-segment elevation myocardial infarction in conjunction with a fibrinolytic.

• **Raloxifene** (Evista) is now also indicated to reduce the risk of invasive breast cancer in postmenopausal women at high risk of or with osteoporosis. Regular breast examinations and mammograms are still necessary. The effects of raloxifene in women with inherited mutations (BRCA1 and BRCA2) have not been studied, neither have they been adequately studied in women with a prior breast cancer history. Raloxifene is not indicated for treatment of invasive breast cancer, reduction of the risk of recurrence, or reduction in risk of non-invasive breast cancer.

### NEW PRODUCTS

• **Bridion (sugammadex)** is a modified gamma cyclodextrin that acts as a selective relaxant binding agent. It is indicated for the reversal of neuromuscular blockade induced by rocuronium and vecuronium. Bridion forms a complex with these agents, thus limiting their binding to nicotinic receptors at the neuromuscular junction. It is administered intravenously as a single bolus injection with dose

dependent on the level of blockade reversal required. Bridion is available on a private prescription as a single use vial (100 mg/mL) in pack sizes of 2 mL or 5 mL (10 vials per pack).

• **Relistor (methylnaltrexone bromide)** is a competitive, mu-opioid antagonist which acts on gastrointestinal tract tissue without impacting opioid mediated analgesic effects on the central nervous system.

It is indicated for the treatment of opioid-induced constipation in palliative care patients with advanced illness, where laxative therapy has been insufficient. Relistor is contraindicated in mechanical gastrointestinal obstruction or acute surgical abdomen. The recommended dose is 8 mg (patients 38-62 kg), 12 mg (patients 62-114 kg) or 0.15 mg/kg (patients <38 kg or >114 kg). It is administered as a single subcutaneous injection on alternate days. The dose in patients with CrCl <30 mL/min should be halved. Relistor is available in 12 mg vials on a private prescription.

### SAFETY-RELATED CHANGES

• Women have longer baseline QT intervals compared with men and thus may be more sensitive to QT-prolonging drugs including **moxifloxacin** (Avelox).

Caution should be used in women as well as the elderly, who may also have a higher susceptibility to drug-associated QT interval effects. Post-marketing studies have reported cases of fulminant hepatitis potentially leading to life-threatening liver failure, Stevens-Johnson syndrome and toxic epidermal necrolysis.

• **Ketoconazole** should not be given with **mefloquine** (Lariam) or within 15 weeks of therapy discontinuation due to the risk of QTc prolongation. Concomitant administration causes increased mefloquine plasma concentrations and elimination half-life. Due to the long half-life of mefloquine, adverse reactions may occur or persist up to several weeks after the last dose. In a small number of patients it has been reported that dizziness or vertigo and loss of balance may continue for months after discontinuation of the drug.

• **Enoxaparin** (Clexane, Clexane Forte) is now contraindicated in patients with thrombocytopenia associated with a positive *in vitro* test for antiplatelet antibody in the presence of enoxaparin sodium. Extreme caution should be used when treating patients with increased risk factors for haemorrhage, as major haemorrhages, some fatal, have been reported.

• **Lopinavir** (Kaletra) and **ritonavir** (Norvir) have caused modest asymptomatic PR prolongation in some patients. Patients receiving drugs known to prolong the PR interval (e.g. verapamil, atazanavir) or those with underlying structural heart disease should be treated with caution, as rare cases of second or third degree atrioventricular block have been reported.

• **Digoxin** (Lanoxin) should be used with caution in the following situations: atrioventricular heart block (idioventricular escape rhythm may be suppressed in complete heart block), myocardial infarction (increased risk of death due to increased myocardial oxygen demand and ischaemia), cardiac amyloidosis, myocarditis (rare vasoconstriction risk), beriberi heart disease (treat first with thiamine), constrictive pericarditis (should not use), severe respiratory disease (increased myocardial sensitivity is possible).

• **Efalizumab** (Raptiva) use may be associated with an increased risk of progressive multifocal leukoencephalopathy. Patients must be monitored for new or worsened neurological symptoms or signs suggestive of PML. Cases, including some fatal, of serious bacterial, viral, fungal and opportunistic infections have been

reported in post-marketing experience.

• **Sevredol (morphine)** is now contraindicated in pregnancy and in children younger than three years of age. It should be used cautiously pre-operatively and within 24 hours post-operatively. Prolonged use may lead to reproductive dysfunction, including infertility, sexual dysfunction and irregular menses. Morphine may be more rapidly released when taken with antacids (dosing should be separated by at least two hours) and the analgesic effect may be potentiated by muscle relaxants, antihypertensives and TCAs.

• Prolonged adverse visual effects including optic neuritis and papilloedema have been reported after use of **voriconazole** (Vfend). These occurred mainly in severely ill patients with underlying conditions and/or concomitant medications that may have caused or contributed to these events.

*This list is a summary of only some of the changes that have occurred over the last month. Before prescribing always refer to the full Product Information.*

## Pharmacies wanted

MORE than 200 pharmacies in NSW, Victoria and Tasmania are required for a trial of a new national documentation system for clinical interventions by community pharmacists.

The project, dubbed PROMISE III (for Pharmacy Recording of Medication Incidents and Services) is being managed by the Pharmacy Guild under the Fourth Agreement R&D Grants program, and is conducted by the University of Tasmania, University of Sydney, University of NSW and Monash and Curtin Universities.

The PROMISE III trial starts in Jun 2009 and runs for three months, with participating pharmacies required to document clinical interventions via an online system which links through everyday dispensing software.

Participants will earn CPD points and there's also some payments for both pharmacies and individual pharmacists taking part.

Recording interventions will also allow extra services to be offered to clients such as Home Medicines Reviews or use of a DAA.

The Guild is aiming to use the results of the trial to increase funding to community pharmacies under the Fifth Agreement.

See [www.promise.org.au](http://www.promise.org.au).

## E-prescribing gets closer

NATIONAL electronic prescribing is expected to become available from mid-2009, with the launch of a new partnership between medical software specialist Best Practice and the eRx Script Exchange initiative backed by Fred Health.

Best Practice, which provides software for use in Australian medical practice, said it's "delivering the final vital connection" which will allow GPs and specialists to send electronic prescriptions, through integration of clinical management software.

"Electronic prescribing will improve the sharing of vital health information between GPs and pharmacists, leading to better coordination and management of

### It's all in the name

THE Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain has urged that the term 'pharmacist' be restricted to those actively practising the profession, and that a separate register be maintained for 'retired', 'former' or 'non-practising' pharmacists.

Non-registered pharmacists would not be permitted to call themselves 'pharmacists' under the proposed arrangements.

patient care and medication for GPs and medical specialists," said Best Practice ceo Frank Pyefinch.

"It will also reduce the risks associated with prescribing and administering drugs," he said.

All doctors, medical facilities and pharmacies will be able to access eRx Script Exchange, no matter what software they use.

It will enable GPs to send prescriptions electronically through a secure gateway, for later retrieval from a patients' pharmacy of choice.

The eRx Script Exchange process will be demonstrated at the upcoming APP conference on the Gold Coast early in Apr.

### Juice danger

FRUIT juices containing extras, such as echinacea, ginseng, spirulina and wheatgrass, do not contain enough to have any meaningful health benefits and may even cause some people harm, an investigation by Choice has found.

High doses of some extracts, such as ginkgo, could interfere with anti-coagulants, while pregnant women should not take ginseng at all, the study noted.

"The use of medicinal herbs in products like juices should be banned unless specific approval is given after a proper safety assessment," spokesperson Christopher Zinn said.

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### DISPENSARY CORNER

BRITISH health authorities have warned that patients are abusing alcoholic hand disinfectant gels on wards, stealing the dispensers so they can eat the products which contain 75% alcohol.

The National Health Service has sent out a safety alert describing 176 cases of ingestion, saying that even though the hand rubs contain a chemical additive to make them taste terrible, this doesn't seem to deter the addicts.

In some cases the patients have been reported to mix the gels with Coca Cola or orange juice to create extremely strong cocktails and mask the bitter flavour.

EYEBROWS have been raised at a decision to rename the govt department dealing with elderly people in the US state of Iowa.

The new name is the Department On Aging, with the obvious abbreviation of DOA also being short for Dead On Arrival.

"You can't have an acronym like this when you're referring to elderly people," said one of the state politicians.

The previous name was the Department of Elder Affairs, but apparently some people don't like being called 'elders'.

Officials said they would use the shorthand DA for the dept.

## WIN A COPY OF THIS BOOK

Find out more about the characteristics and behaviours of these fascinating creatures

**Australia's Dangerous Creatures FOR DUMMIES**



A Reference for the Rest of Us!

Did you know the second most dangerous creature in Australia is the honey bee?

Each day this week **Pharmacy Daily** has been giving readers the chance to win a copy of the book, *Australia's Dangerous Creatures for Dummies*.

Valued at \$29.95 (Wiley), this book is a fascinating portrait of unique and deadly animals down-under, providing detailed descriptions of each creature, its habitat and its typical behaviours.

The authors provide tips on observing these creatures safely as well as a comprehensive first aid section in case your observation or encounter ends badly!

For your last chance to win today, simply send your answer to the following question to [comp@pharmacydaily.com.au](mailto:comp@pharmacydaily.com.au).

### TODAY'S QUESTION:

What is Australia's most deadliest creature?

This great prize will go to the first correct response, so for your chance to win, make sure you send in your entry NOW!

CONGRATULATIONS to David Kerr from FRED who was the first to tell us yesterday that the largest fish in the world is the WHALE SHARK.

## HOT Travel Deals

WELCOME to *Pharmacy Daily's* travel feature.

Each week we plan to highlight a couple of great travel deals which we're sure will be of interest to everyone in the pharmacy industry.

**Lastminute.com.au** is offering a great Bali deal incl. return economy flights, 7 nights accom in a Deluxe Pool View room, daily breakfast, a massage, 10% off inhouse food and beverages, 15% off Spa treatments, return airport transfers, and all prepaid fees and taxes from \$1611pp for travel until 31 Mar.

The **Ibis Melbourne** is offering budget friendly deals with room prices starting from \$130 per night including a free upgrade to a one bedroom apartment, Foodies dream tour and brekkie; info on 03 9666 0066.

The **Diamond Wailea Resort & Spa** in Hawaii is offering an introductory room special of US\$199 per night which includes a free shuttle service to beach, shopping, golf and restaurants in Wailea and exclusive access to Wailea beach - with complimentary water, umbrella & chair also available for guests. See [www.diamondresort.com](http://www.diamondresort.com).

**Hotels.com** is offering a great Sydney weekend special on the 4 1/2 star property 'Sheraton on the Park', with rooms starting at \$247 for stays up until 31 March.

More info [www.hotels.com](http://www.hotels.com).