

## Raptiva cancelled

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has recommended the registration of Raptiva be cancelled due to safety concerns over Progressive Multifocal Leukoencephalopathy

Merck Serono Australia Pty Ltd announced yesterday it would be withdrawing the product, used to treat patients with chronic plaque psoriasis, from the Australian marketplace.

Immediate cessation is not recommended, and those currently on the medication should be referred to a doctor to discuss alternative treatment options.

Physicians shouldn't issue any new Raptiva prescriptions, and those already using the product should be monitored for neurological & infection symptoms.

The TGA withdrawal follows a similar move by European authorities (PD 23 Feb) which was mirrored in the US (PD 25 Feb).

## 'Modern' award job threat

THE Pharmacy Guild has sided with the trade union movement in supporting a call to defer the implementation of the government's award modernisation process in a bid to avoid putting jobs on the line.

The Guild commented that if the proposed Pharmacy Industry Award 2010, brought forward by the Australian Industrial Relations Commission, goes ahead it will be at "the worst possible time for the Australian economy".

Trade union officials also quoted in *The Australian* that the extra costs to employers will should see a transitional period of up to 5 years for the changes.

Extra costs will be imposed on employers in community pharmacy by the new scheme, which will also introduce new penalty rates and restrictive

Protect your Pharmacy against power surges



Talk to us about UPS Protection for your pharmacy  
Contact us today on 1300 554 694 or click here to request more information

## NPS worthwhile

THE National Prescribing Service Ltd released its annual evaluation report yesterday, highlighting the body's achievements last year.

NPS ceo, Dr Lyn Weekes said this year's evaluation report "provides measurable evidence that NPS activities continue to result in better prescribing practices, use of medicines and economic outcomes in terms of savings to the PBS."

Last financial year NPS saved the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme over \$58 million, and other achievements in the report include positive changes in the prescribing of antithrombotics to prevent cardiovascular events.

During the year 11,908 GPs and 3,318 pharmacists participated in NPS core activities, with 90% and 95% respectively finding NPS valuable and over 2,000 medical students utilising NPS modules as part of their professional training.

Copies of the report are available at [www.nps.org.au](http://www.nps.org.au).

## TGA label update

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration has issued Therapeutic Goods Order No. 69C which amends the 'general requirements for labels for medicines'.

The order adopts changes outlined in the *Required Advisory Statements for Medicine Labels (September 2008)* published last year, and also orders that for preparations containing Vitamin A that the quantity be expressed in terms of retinol equivalents.

## New Vic policy

VICTORIAN health authorities have circulated a new "Policy regarding professional misconduct" applying to health professionals working in public and private hospitals in the state.

The policy orders that health services must verify the status of any health worker with the relevant registration board, incl any conditions or restrictions placed on the practitioner's registration as well as any matters referred to state tribunals.

Any professional misconduct while in the employ of the health services must also be reported to the relevant registration board.

conditions of employment likely to jeopardise jobs and change the way community pharmacy functions.

"The opening hours and range of services available at community pharmacies will be adversely affected, especially weekend and after hour services" said Guild president Kos Sclavos.

A spokesperson for deputy PM Julia Gillard said the creation of modern awards was "not intended to negatively affect workers or employers."

## Vitamin over-dose threatens unborn

A FOETAL medical expert from Adelaide University's school of pediatrics and reproductive health, Professor Julie Owens, has uncovered that some to-be mothers are taking up to 10 times the recommended amount of vitamins and putting their unborn babies at risk of birth defects.

The *Medical Observer* magazine quoted Owens warning women against exceeding recommended doses to minimise foetus damage, particularly when high doses of Vitamin A, D and E in pregnancy has been linked to birth defects.

Professor Owens urges pharmacists and doctors not to underestimate the dosage of vitamin supplements some pregnant women are taking, especially if they are consuming high-potency multivitamins, as many believe that if something is good, more must be better.

Owens affirms the importance of taking folate at the time of conception to reduce the risk of neural tube defects, but suggests safe dosage levels should be made clear, and that in the meantime women should stick to 600 micrograms of folate a day.

## Asthma workshop

THE Asthma Foundation of Queensland is hosting its next Asthma Workshop for Health Professionals on 23 & 24 May.

The event will take place from 8.30am - 4.30pm each day at the Asthma Foundation offices at 51 Ballow St, Fortitude Valley.

It's priced from \$285 including materials, resources and catering. Download the application form from [www.asthmaqlld.org.au](http://www.asthmaqlld.org.au).

## Seaweed booster

A SOUTHERN Cross University study into a Tasmanian seaweed extract has found that it has a positive effect on the immune system and reduces inflammation markers in the body.

The formulation, containing a blend of extracts from three different species of seaweed plus nutrients, primed the immune system in a beneficial way, said Professor Stephen Myers, director of the University's NatMed research centre.

The preliminary findings will be presented at the International Evidence-based Complementary Medicine Conference in Armidale, which starts today.

## Focus for women

THE Rudd Government yesterday saw the beginnings of a new National Women's Health Policy, as a roundtable of women's health experts discussed its development in Canberra and released the *New National Women's Health Policy: Consultation Discussion Paper*.

The current out-dated, 20-year-old women's health policy will updated to be more responsive to women's needs, promote health equity and will get women involved in health decision-making & management.

View the paper online at [health.gov.au/womenshealthpolicy](http://health.gov.au/womenshealthpolicy).

APP2009  
2-5 April

Gold Coast Convention  
& Exhibition Centre Queensland



The Pharmacy  
Guild of Australia

Registration  
now open!



[www.appconference.com](http://www.appconference.com)

## Letter to the editor...

THE new PSA policy relating to pharmacies in supermarkets (PD Wed) has generated a number of comments from our readers, including the following letter from Qld pharmacist Graham Stevens of Kewarra Beach Pharmacy - who has personal experience of supermarket pharmacy in the UK.

*I read with interest the article in Pharmacy Daily about pharmacies in supermarkets.*

*The first two points I think are quite weak - pharmacies in supermarkets elsewhere in the world are often called "in-store pharmacies" - they're quite separate to the rest of the store and even have separate cash registers.*

*But to me, having worked in a supermarket pharmacy, the biggest reason why pharmacies are not good in supermarkets is the third point in the article: often supermarket pharmacy pharmacists have managers that have no idea of ethics, professionalism or patient care.*

*Very often they have no idea of the law either and it's these guys that make the decisions.*

*However, when things go wrong, guess who gets sued? I don't have the abstract, but there is a study that showed that the professional image of a pharmacist to the public rapidly declined when pharmacies went into supermarkets, as did pharmacist's pay after an initial surge due to pharmacist shortage.*

*Australia and Australian pharmacists only need to look at what's happened in the UK to see how easily community pharmacy is destroyed.*

*Fortunately for me I'm hospital trained, so I escaped (here)!*

*PD loves to hear from our readers, so email your comments to info@pharmacydaily.com.au.*

## S8 update

THE Victorian Dept of Human Services has issued an update regarding amendments to Schedule 8 permit and notification requirements, which came into effect in Vic on 01 Mar.

The document can be downloaded or viewed online at [www.health.vic.gov.au/dpu](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/dpu).

## E-script pharmacy rollout

SOME pharmacies in Victoria and New South Wales yesterday became the first in Australia ready to access the first national electronic prescription platform.

The rollout started in pharmacies using Fred Dispense, with expansion expected to shortly include other pharmacy and prescribing vendors, starting with medical software provider Best Practice (PD 06 Mar).

GPs and medical specialists will start to have their systems connected to the eRx Script Exchange platform from Apr, from which point electronically dispensed prescriptions will be able to be retrieved from patients' pharmacy of choice anywhere in Australia.

Guild president Kos Sclavos said "It is very exciting to see this vital project progressing so well.

"Achieving an Australia-wide electronic prescription platform will be a real milestone for the Australian health system and for patient care," he said.

Sclavos said eRx Script Exchange was an example of how

## US salaries rise

A SALARY survey in the USA has concluded that pharmacist wages are continuing to climb despite the country's economic woes.

In 2008 the average pharmacist salary in the US was US\$112,000, up from US\$107,000 in 2007.

Australian Pharmacy's biggest event of the year...



# pharmspace09

CAREERS FAIR & EXPO 1<sup>ST</sup> - 31<sup>ST</sup> JULY

[www.pharmspace.com.au](http://www.pharmspace.com.au)

## DISPENSARY CORNER

A COMMENT by a Japanese doctor last week has left some people's ears smoking.

The unnamed medico is reported to have last week told a gathering of health workers at Ida hospital in Kawasaki City that "It's better if people smoke a lot and die early.

"Medical costs will increase if non-smoking spreads" he added.

Anti-smoking activist Bungaku Watanabe commented "It was an outrageous remark that should not come from a doctor who is suppose to protect people's lives and health."

THIS Indonesian villager will surely stop horsing around on the job after this nasty experience.

The 35-year-old man was unloading sand at a Sulawesi construction site from a horse-drawn cart, and was shortly rushed to hospital after one of the horses lunged into his crotch and bit off one of his testicles.

All we can say is ouch.

FORGET the boy who cried wolf.

A 42-year-old Chinese woman actually howls like a wolf every day - and can't help it!

Hong has been howling for the past 26 years since she discovered the canine noise made the pain in her back, from a protruding spinal disc, go away.

She said that when she howls, she feels a "release of gas" inside her, and "can't stop it".

Originally only needing howling relief every three months, she's now forced to howl 4-5 times a day for up to 20 minutes at a time.

innovations in technology can lead to better coordination of care between GPs and pharmacists, "generating the best health outcomes for all Australians."

Advantages of the system cited for pharmacists include reducing the likelihood of keying errors, more dispensing accuracy, faster retrieval of external repeats and efficient and safe coordination of new script requests - not to mention no longer having to decipher doctors' handwriting!

There's more information about the system online at [erx.com.au](http://erx.com.au).

## UK pharmacy tech regulation call

THE Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain is calling for the "statutory regulation of pharmacy technicians", saying dispensary techs play a "growing role in patient care and delivering health services.

The move follows the introduction of new legislation regulating technicians which is only valid in parts of the country.

The RPSGB said the changes would be beneficial for pharmacy technicians, giving them "the status of belonging to a health profession recognised in statute and the ability to practise as a pharmacy technician, and to use that title, anywhere ie in Great Britain."

## Win a Nailene Nail Duets pack!

Artificial nails just got easier with the introduction of *Nailene's Nail Duets*, the first ever artificial nails to come in pre-matched nail pairs.

To celebrate, *Pharmacy Daily* teamed up with *Creative Brands* to offer one lucky reader a packet of *Nailene Nail Duets* every day this week, priced at \$15.99.

The time-saving *Nail Duets* has done the work for you when it comes to selecting what artificial nail to put on which nail, having already pre-matched nail pairs.

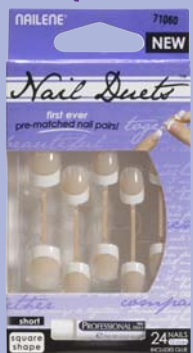
*Nailene Nail Duets* are available in French Manicure style in four different shades to suit different skin tones and a variety of styles to match all nail types for the best fit.

To receive your very own *Nailene Nail Duets* pack for FREE, email your answer to the following question to [comp@pharmacydaily.com.au](mailto:comp@pharmacydaily.com.au)

**What colour is the Nailene packet?**

The first correct answer will win the prize - last chance to enter today!

**HINT:** Visit the *Nailene* website at [www.nailene.com](http://www.nailene.com).



**Tell your pharmaceutical friends about Pharmacy Daily**

**They can sign up for a free subscription at**

[www.pharmacydaily.com.au](http://www.pharmacydaily.com.au)

**Click here**