

Climate affecting chronic disease

CLIMATE change may have much more to do with chronic disease than obesity does, said World Health Organisation advisor, Professor Garry Egger, at today's First Australian Lifestyle Medicine Conference in Sydney.

Obesity is merely the "canary in the mineshaft", says the Professor of Lifestyle Medicine and Applied Health Promotion at Southern Cross University.

"Through the modern environment, largely caused by economic growth, carbon resistance in the atmosphere and insulin resistance in the body (leading to obesity) are increased. Obesity is thus just the 'canary in the mineshaft', warning of other problems rather than being the main cause of disease on its own," he said.

The conference continues this weekend at the Manly Pacific Hotel.

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Rival e-script offering

MORE than one electronic prescription exchange is set to be offered to pharmacists and doctors, with the launch today of a rival to the eRx Script Exchange system currently being rolled out to over 3000 pharmacies across Australia (PD Wed).

The new system was announced by a firm called MediSecure, and has been created jointly by GP connectivity vendor ArgusConnect together with PSLnet, which is described as a "secure trading exchange with the capacity to electronically connect every pharmacy in Australia."

MediSecure said it was committed to publishing all interface specifications so all vendors are able to connect to its 'secure Script Vault' - and also foreshadowed possible commercial arrangements between exchanges which would see scripts delivered no matter which system is used.

In addition, "MediSecure will not provide patient data for sale, whether de-identified or otherwise," the firm said.

MediSecure is being backed by the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, and while free to doctors, "pharmacists will pay as little as \$0.25 per script."

The company's chairman Paul Montgomery said MediSecure was seeking representatives from across the health sector incl the AMA, divisions of general practice, specialist colleges and pharmacy professional and commercial organisations.

However it appears that MediSecure may have some difficulty getting pharmacists on side, with the Guild saying that while it's not surprised at the

NUROFEN JUST GOT FASTER

THAN STANDARD NUROFEN

TWICE AS FAST

*ABSORBED UP TO TWICE AS FAST AS STANDARD NUROFEN



new entrant, it's "very confident that it has backed the right consortium" with its endorsement of eRx Script Exchange.

Guild president Kos Sclavos said the Guild had developed key principles and standards for electronic prescriptions to ensure patients, community pharmacy and doctors are protected.

"These principles are embedded in legally binding agreements signed between the Guild and the eRx consortium," he said.

"Pharmacists should be very wary of initiatives where there has been little or no consultation with the Guild...especially those which do not have the backing of the major software vendors in the market," Sclavos added.

He estimated that more than \$400m of taxpayer money had already been wasted on "failed e-health projects" in Australia.

"I am confident my members will make the right informed choice in the coming weeks when we present the eRx proposal to them," he said.

Both the eRx Script Exchange and MediSecure systems will be demonstrated at the APP conference on the Gold Coast next month.

Blondes go brunette

A SURVEY of 2,500 women by UK pharmacy chain Superdrug has found that 38% of blondes believe their hair color has hindered them in the job market.

"The current economic climate is obviously making women take more care with their appearance at work, even down to their hair color," said a Superdrug spokesman.

Leasing seminars

PHARMACISTS in Melbourne are being invited to an upcoming Retail Leasing Seminar, which will be hosted by the Guild in Hawthorn on Tue 31 Mar 2009.

Presenters Frank Sirianni and Hymie Zawatsky will discuss retail lease negotiation and current pharmacy trends.

"In uncertain economic times, this is your opportunity to learn how to negotiate a better lease, and to operate your pharmacy more economically without reducing service to your customers, the Guild said.

The event costs \$80 for Guild members and \$120 for non-members incl a meal, handouts and a copy of *The Pharmacists' Guide to Retail Lease Negotiations and Administration* written by Zawatsky.

More info 03 9810 9999.

Tuberculosis day

NEXT Tuesday 24 Mar is World Tuberculosis Day, with the National TB Advisory Committee saying that even though Australia has low levels of the disease "we cannot afford to be complacent."

World Health Organisation figures show someone in the world is infected with tuberculosis every second, with 9.2m new cases and 1.7m deaths in 2006.

The committee said that emergence of drug-resistant strains of TB in the Asia-Pacific region "is a public health concern, and Australian TB experts are working with countries in the region and the World Health Organisation to help control the disease."

Olive spray

OLIVE Leaf Australia says it's already selling more than 1000 bottles of its new liquid extract each day, with a big increase leading into the winter months.

Rich in antioxidants, the fresh-picked extract is made locally and has also seen overseas success, with UK retailers voting it the country's 'Best New Health Product'.

It's available in a 30 day supply 500ml bottle (RRP \$39.95), a 200ml Mixed Berry flavour extract for kids (\$23.95) and a portable 20ml Oral Spray (RRP \$16.90).

More info www.olea.com.au.

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Cricket invitational

THE end of season Pharmacy Cricket match will be held at the historic Bradman Oval in Bowral, NSW on Sun 19th April 2009.

Two teams of pharmacists, students and industry members will play in the match between "The President's XI" and "The Invitation XI".

It kicks off at 10am, with Pharmacy Cricket president Greg Hodgson saying the game would be a "fitting conclusion to the season and celebrate the fact that both New South Wales and Sydney remain undefeated in this year's competition.

He added that it was hoped the match would attract other pharmacists and industry representatives plus their families to watch as well as enjoying Bowral's autumn colours.

More info 02 9489 3771.

PBS Online software levy

PHARMACY dispensing software suppliers say they have no choice but to introduce new levies relating to the provision of PBS Online connectivity in their systems, after the government's support funding ceases.

The funding was negotiated as part of the 2006 PBS Reforms package and was originally provided to each vendor for two years, based on the number of pharmacies they connected to PBS Online.

Some pharmacies have already passed their two year anniversary while most others will pass this milestone in coming months.

However the Guild is urging that the vendor support payments should continue because software companies have "effectively become a second help desk for

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DISPENSARY CORNER

THE latest oral anti-anxiety approach - chewing gum!

An Australian scientist has found that chewing gum significantly decreased anxiety in volunteers who were placed under stress in a laboratory situation by making them do multiple tasks at once.

Andrew Scholey of Swinburne University said the calming effects of the gum were related to lower levels of cortisol induced while chewing.

DO monkey's have better dental practices than most humans?

Recent studies conducted at the Primate Research Centre of Tokyo University have shown that Crab-eating Macaque (also known as the Cynomolgus Monkey) does in fact brush its teeth consciously.

Video documentation has even found that the monkey will teach it's young to floss with human hair!

NEXT time you reach for your colleagues favourite mug you may want to reconsider.

According to Dr Tom Stafford of Sheffield University, because of the nature of addiction and ritual, coffee and tea does in fact taste better out of your own favourite cup/mug.

"People develop passions on how the drug is delivered. Wherever there is drug use then rituals will always develop.

"It might be irrational or arbitrary but it's absolutely true. Your daily brew tastes better from your favourite mug," said Dr Stafford.

A Friendly understanding



ABOVE: This week the Pharmacy Guild signed an historic Memorandum of Understanding with the Friendly Societies Pharmacies Association (PD Tue).

The pact confirms that in undertaking its negotiations with the government the Guild will "seek to obtain the best possible outcome for all community pharmacies, including more than 120 owned by Friendly Societies."

The Guild said the formal agreement reinforces its role in the negotiations and would be beneficial for members of both organisations.

"The MOU can only assist us in

our goal of achieving an optimal outcome in the Guild-Government agreement," said Guild President Kos Sclavos.

Australian Friendly Societies Pharmacies Association president Jim Howard said: "This agreement enables our members access to a range of Guild professional programs, underlining our support of the Guild efforts in delivering the best health outcomes in the current model of community pharmacy."

Pictured above making it official are, from left: Wendy Phillips, Kos Sclavos, Jim Howard and Betty Collins.

calls that would otherwise be taken by Medicare Australia."

Guild President Kos Sclavos said there were also a number of technical issues which vendors are continuing to work through, including the methods for updating the special security certificates which reside on each dispensing computer.

Negotiations over the matter have been underway for some time, but haven't yet resulted in continuation of the funding.

Minister for Human Services, Joe Ludwig, has suggested that the issue be raised in context of the Fifth Community Pharmacy Agreement negotiations.

The Guild said it would continue to lobby on the matter, with one proposal being that "the current underspend in Fourth Agreement funding for some programs be used to provide ongoing funding for software vendors before the end of the current agreement."

Red meat link to MD

EATING too much red meat has been linked to vision loss, by researchers from the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital.

They found people who eat red meat more than 10 times a week have a 47% increased association with macular degeneration, leading to vision loss.

The link was stronger for people who ate a lot of salami and continental sausage, but weaker for people who ate more chicken.

Still APP places

THERE are still a number of places available for some of the Thur pre-conference workshops in the lead-up to the APP conference on the Gold Coast in Apr.

There's a Fifth Community Pharmacy Agreement Feedback session for Guild members only costing \$66, as well as the AACP Accredited Pharmacists' Forum covering Clinical & Practical Skills for MMRs costing \$295.

Places are also available in the Rural Pharmacy Forum *Future Opportunities for your business* costing \$95 and the QCPP Workshop *How Healthy is your Pharmacy* for \$55.

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