



The Pharmacy
Guild of Australia

This week's update from the Guild All eyes on the Federal Budget

THE degree of difficulty faced by Treasurer Wayne Swan in handing down the Federal Budget is high.

While we don't want to add to his hardships our message to him is clear – the PBS has already delivered savings, and should be spared!

Community pharmacy has worked closely with Governments over the last few years to maximise the value achieved by taxpayers through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, and the Guild is saying loudly and clearly that this contribution needs to be recognised.

As has been reported recently, the Guild has commissioned a detailed study of the impact of the PBS Reforms which shows that the savings to Government over the ten years of the program are worth \$7.4 billion – more than double the \$3 billion estimated by Treasury.

Among other things, savings of this scale represent a big hit on community pharmacy revenue – at every pharmacy across the country – and there is no reason why the Government should expect to squeeze more out of our sector.

As usual there has been considerable speculation – and some inspired leaks - ahead of the Budget about possible cuts in the health area, including savings measures affecting the PBS.

We can only hope the Government heeds the message we have been sending that PBS expenditure is well controlled and credit is due for financial pain already accepted by community pharmacy.

We'll know soon enough.

TGA confirms ad concerns

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration has confirmed that it's considering stronger regulation of advertising for therapeutic goods.

The statement came in response to a Fairfax media story yesterday which claimed the TGA had "put on notice expensive anti-aging creams and potions that are marketed as 'clinically proven' or 'scientifically proven'".

In fact the comments attributed

Bowel screening alert

FEDERAL Health Minister Nicola Roxon says she's "very concerned" about possible inaccurate results from testing kits issued as part of the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program.

The program has seen 475,000 kits issued since December last year, but now some "quality issues" have been identified, seeing lower than expected levels of positive results from the tests.

It appears that one of the reagents in the kits, supplied by Dorevitch Pathology and made by Japanese firm Fujirebio Diagnostics, may be adversely affected by Australian temperatures with the Health Department "seeking advice to determine the legal and financial liability of the supplier resulting from this investigation and the re-testing."

Since the tests were distributed 108,000 people have returned a negative result, and will be asked to repeat the test with a new kit.

The Department will also write to all of those who have received the kits, and is advising that people who have used the kit and received a positive result aren't affected and should see their doctor if they haven't already done so.

Swine flu update

THE Pharmacy Guild has set up a dedicated Swine Flu information page on its website including the most current information on the threatened pandemic.

Fact sheets for both consumers and community pharmacies are available for download, as well as the key items supply availability update flyer covering details of Tamiflu, Relenza, face masks, gels and wipes and other items.

See www.guild.org.au.

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DISPENSARY
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A SCHOOL in China has adopted an unusual approach to mental health, by encouraging students to work off their frustrations by attacking teachers.

Fortunately not the actual teachers, but punching bags with pictures of the instructors attached.

In the 'physical release' program, pupils are provided with boxing gloves to hit the dummies, with vice principal of the Lichang Middle School in Jinan, Meng Fanxiang, saying "Adolescent students may have a lot of problems and be under great pressure from studies.

"It's better for them to release it within the school than other places," he said.

AND speaking of education, how about furthering your career in pharmacy with a PhD in fast food?

US restaurant giant McDonald's has received approval to award its own nationally recognised qualifications in Britain, under a new scheme to acknowledge skills gained in the workplace.

Spokesman David Fairhurst said the move made the company a "university in its own right.

"One day, I'd love to see us doing a PhD - I definitely think we should go as far as we can."

He said the first step wasn't quite as ambitious - McDonald's is currently putting together courses on shift management, which will be equivalent to high school qualifications.

A POST-OLYMPICS exercise boom in China is causing major problems in an ancient garden.

More than 20,000 fitness fanatics are turning up each morning at Chengde Mountain Resort in the northern Hebei province - a huge garden formerly used by emperors of the Qing Dynasty.

A park official complained that "people hang their bags on trees or climb on the branches, bringing more than 100 ancient trees to the brink of death."

Local authorities are rapidly creating new parks to deal with the excessive exercise issue.

to the TGA were actually made by the Complaints Resolution Panel last Aug, which posted a statement on its website expressing concern about the growing use of the words "clinically proven" in advertising for therapeutic goods.

The comments were nothing to do with cosmetics, which are regulated by the ACCC and the National Industrial Chemicals Notification and Assessment Scheme.

However a TGA spokesperson told **PD** that the administration "recognises that the overall regulation of therapeutic goods advertising requires strengthening."

The spokesperson confirmed that "significant reforms" to the regulation of therapeutic goods advertising are proposed.

Drug careers online

THE Drug Information Association has launched a new 'Online Career Center' allowing pharmaceutical employers to post jobs online and search for qualified candidates.

The DIA said the move would help firms "attract first-rate talent with a minimum expenditure."

See www.diahome.org.

FDA approves Avastin

THE US Food and Drug Administration has approved Avastin (bevacizumab) for the treatment of patients with brain cancer glioblastoma multiforme, in cases where the cancer progresses despite standard therapy.

Calming kava

TRADITIONAL Pacific island ceremonial drink kava can be used to effectively treat anxiety, according to a study undertaken by the University of Queensland.

Kava is a plant, with water-soluble extracts from its peeled root stock used in the trial of 60 participants, which found a "positive impact on reducing depression levels" in subjects taking a daily dose.

Previously concerns about liver toxicity have been raised in connection with kava use, but the researchers said this wasn't apparent in their trial and could be because the liver problems are linked to ethanol or acetone plant extracts rather than water-based extracts.