

### Travel Specials

**WELCOME** to *Pharmacy Daily's* travel feature. Each week we highlight a few great travel deals which we're sure will be of interest to everyone in the Australian pharmacy industry.

Tahiti looks nice - very nice! And it's now very affordable too, with a special offer released yesterday by **TAHITI TRAVEL CONNECTION** and French Polynesian airline Air Tahiti Nui, which operates flights between Sydney and Papeete.

The deal starts at just \$2055 per person, including flights from Sydney and five nights for the price of four at Le Meridien Tahiti with daily breakfast.

There's also a \$2890 package visiting neighbouring Moorea, staying five nights at the Intercontinental Resort Moorea with free breakfast, a half day 4WD tour and a Tahitian feast - more info 1300 858 305.

For something a bit closer to home, **COURAN COVE ISLAND RESORT** near the Gold Coast is offering a five night Family Adventure package starting at \$360 per night for two adults and two children.

The deal includes unlimited scheduled ferry transfers, daily bike hire, a family Dreamworld ticket and a Broadwater Cruise - [www.courancove.com.au](http://www.courancove.com.au).

**CLASSIC INTERNATIONAL CRUISES** has today announced a last minute fly-cruise package for Aussies to sail all the way from Greece to Australia this Nov.

The 35 night Talpacific Holidays package starts at \$5989 per person in an ocean-view cabin aboard *Athena* departing Athens on 14 Nov.

The deal includes Singapore Airlines flights from Australian mainland capitals, a night in Athens, and the all-inclusive 34-night *Athena* voyage to Perth which will visit Gallipoli, Cyprus, Egypt, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore - book at any travel agent.

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## Roxon supports pharmacy

**AUSTRALIA'S** pharmacists are in a position to be a "key part of driving or taking advantage of" the government's health reform agenda, according to Health Minister Nicola Roxon.

She was speaking at the official launch of Ask Your Pharmacist week yesterday, with a function held at Amcal Max in Altona Meadows, Victoria and attended by Guild President Kos Sclavos.

Sclavos, together with Paul Naismith from FRED Health, gave Roxon a hands-on demonstration (pictured below) of processing an electronic prescription using the eRx Script Exchange system.

The demonstration also showed MedsIndex integrated with FRED and a Mirixa patient interaction.

"We very much encourage pharmacists, and welcome that Kos and his team have been prepared to think innovatively about e-health, [and] the particular programs that Kos has been showing me today," Roxon said.

"We really need professionals like pharmacists and others to be actively engaged in our reform discussions to make sure that the changes we make will benefit our

consumers and our community.

"When we talk about enhancing primary care, we have, you know, 5000 pharmacies across the country - the most regularly visited almost of any health professional - it's a good opportunity to be able to provide more care for families and it's also a very good opportunity to be able to be involved in the prevention debate," Roxon added.

Her close (and clearly cheerful) relationship with pharmacy stands in contrast to the adversarial nature of recent discussions between Roxon and groups of doctors, with disagreements about hip replacement options and even choices of statin therapy.

Roxon said Ask Your Pharmacist week was a perfect example of how the community should be encouraged to see pharmacists as health professionals.

She also said that the negotiations for the next pharmacy agreement were going to be difficult because the government wants to drive some change.

"But what I am very heartened about is that I think pharmacists, led by Kos, are very enthusiastic to be part of that discussion."



### Depressing figures

**THE** World Health Organization has predicted that depression will be the biggest global health problem within 20 years.

The WHO issued a statement in the lead-up to the first Global Mental Health Summit in Greece this week, saying that despite the looming crisis most developing countries spend less than 2% of their national budgets on mental healthcare.

### Walgreens grows

**US** pharmacy giant Walgreens this week reported August sales data, showing an increase of 8.1% in its pharmacies year on year.

However much of the growth was due to the rollout of new Walgreens pharmacies, with the company saying 'same-pharmacy' sales increased 3.8%.

This figure was adversely affected by the introduction of new generics over the last year, Walgreens said.

## Health tourism for Australia?

**THE** Australian health sector has huge potential to grow medical tourism, which is estimated to grow to be worth US\$100 billion worldwide by 2015.

Today the Australian Tourism Export Council is holding its first ever Health and Wellness Travel Conference in Cairns, with speakers outlining the huge opportunities.

Experts said that Australia's high health standards, quality facilities, unspoiled nature, food, healthy environment and climate mean it has the potential to become the "world hub for holistic travel".

Although in its infancy, the strong interest shown in the conference demonstrates that there's likely to be significant growth in medical tourism in Australia.

## Huge Pfizer fine

**US** authorities have fined Pfizer a whopping US\$2.3 billion to resolve allegations that the company illegally promoted off-label use of four of its medications.

Affected drugs include Bextra, Geodon, Zynox and Lyrica,

The move follows an earlier ruling which saw a Pfizer executive fined \$75,000 and sentenced to 24 months probation for illegal Bextra-related marketing (*PD* 19 Jun).

The billion-dollar settlement includes amounts in civil damages and penalties to compensate federal health-care programs for false claims submitted as a result of Pfizer marketing Bextra and the other four drugs at unapproved doses or for off-label use.

## Glucosamine research

**A STUDY** published in *Osteoarthritis Cartilage* has found that glucosamine sulfate was more effective for maintaining cartilage in patients with knee osteoarthritis than either placebo or ibuprofen.

The 12 week trial undertaken by the Institute of Sports Medicine in Copenhagen involved 36 elderly patients with osteoarthritis as diagnosed by radiography.

While taking the supplement, placebo or ibuprofen the participants took part in 12 weeks of strength training, with knee cartilage turnover in those on glucosamine 13% less than those on placebo and 17% less than those who took ibuprofen.

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## PSC helps adults

**COMMUNITY** pharmacies which are part of the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia's Pharmacy Self Care program are this week getting behind Adult Learner's Week by providing educational materials and fact sheets.

Acting PSA president, Grant Kardachi, said it was "never too late for consumers to learn about their health and how to use their medicines properly," with one of the most accessible places to learn being their local pharmacy.

"Community pharmacists are highly trained and respected members of the health care profession and their accessibility means that if you want to learn more about your health, you can walk in off the street for advice and literature which may help," he said.

About 1700 pharmacies across Australia are currently members of the scheme, which was launched more than 22 years ago.

## Section 100 under discussion

**THE** Opiate Dependence Treatment Program, which sees pharmacists dispense doses of methadone, is at a 'crisis point' because of inadequate pharmacist remuneration, according to a Section 100 discussion paper released today.

Some stakeholders said payments need to "appropriately reflect the level of professional service provided and the workload of community pharmacists."

The paper aims to summarise issues around Section 100 of the National Health Act, which provides access to subsidised medicines where the usual PBS arrangements are inadequate or inappropriate.

It's part of an official review of the program, with submissions from pharmacists invited to help resolve the suggested issues.

The programs covered include the Aboriginal Health Services Remote Access Program, the Highly

Specialised Drugs Program, the Special Authority Program, the Opiate Dependence Treatment Program; and the Continuing Medication Program.

Other issues raised include the uneven distribution of pharmacies participating in the program, the increasing use of takeaway doses.

The full discussion paper, which has chapters on each element of the S100 program, is now available at [www.guild.org.au](http://www.guild.org.au) and people wanting to respond need to do so quickly, with submissions due by 18 September 2009.

## Bayer skin buy

**BAYER** Healthcare has announced an agreement to acquire two prescription dermatology product lines from California-based SkinMedica Inc.

The products, Desonate and NeoBenz Micro, are currently marketed in the US by SkinMedica.

A Bayer spokesman said "we are currently seeing solid growth of our existing portfolio of prescription dermatologicals in the US," with the new additions to build on its presence in the market.

Desonate is a low potency topical corticosteroid for the treatment of mild to moderate atopic dermatitis, while NeoBenz Micro is a benzoyl peroxide acne medication, with a special formulation allowing for a gradual release of the active ingredient minimising irritation.

## Kidney disease spending soars

**THE** Australian Institute of Health and Welfare today released a new report into chronic kidney disease, saying the condition "contributes substantially to health care expenditure in Australia and is increasing much faster than expenditure on total health care."

In 2004-05 chronic kidney disease accounted for almost \$900 million in spending - 1.7 of the total - an increase of 33% since 2000/01, compared to a 19% total rise in health care spending over the same period.

In 2000 there were about 6400 people receiving dialysis, while by 2007 this figure had risen to almost 10,000.



## DISPENSARY CORNER

**HEALTH** minister Nicola Roxon has a very close relationship with Australian pharmacists - particularly her parents, who are both pharmacy graduates.

At yesterday's official launch of Ask Your Pharmacist Week in Melbourne (see p1) she self-deprecatingly described herself as "the family failure" because she was just the federal minister for health, and not a pharmacist

**HOW** about this as an example of productive ageing?

A 90-year-old New Zealand thrillseeker has put her hand up to be one of the first to be strapped to the blade of a giant windmill and whirl around above the town of Foxton.

The new "extreme" tourist attraction is set to launch in Dec, with Alice MacAulay one of 72 people who have already booked.

Alice enjoyed a tandem skydive for her last birthday - after having to get a medical certificate saying she wasn't on medication and was fit enough to do the jump.

"I do not have the time to think about medication, I have a lot of living to do," she said.

The ride's developers are fine-tuning the design and how the giant windmill will operate.

"We are working out how many times to go around before they get crook," said spokesman Richard Werner.

"We do not want people spewing up," he added.

**BRITISH** people may be getting plenty of iron and protein soon, with a strong increase in do-it-yourself butchery due to the country's economic crisis.

The Ginger Pig butcher's shop in London is holding classes (BYO cleaver and bloodstained apron), with guests paying £120 for a three hour class - complete with lamb stew afterwards.

"They want something new to do and something cheaper than expensive restaurants," said shop manager Perry Bartlett.

"They come here and cook an equally good meal and have an education as well about meat."

## WIN A BOTTLE OF BIO-OIL

**CONGRATULATIONS** to Charmaine Young of Orion Laboratories in WA who was the first **PD** reader yesterday to tell us that Bio-Oil contains the breakthrough ingredient **PURCELLIN** Oil which reduces the **THICKNESS** of the formulation.



**Did you know that 9 out of 10 pharmacists recommend Bio-Oil®?**

**Pharmacy Daily** has teamed up with Bio-Oil® this week, giving readers the chance to win their very own bottle of Bio-Oil®.

Bio-Oil® is a specialist skincare product that helps improve the appearance of scars, stretch marks and uneven skin tone.

Its advanced formulation, which contains the breakthrough ingredient, PurCellin Oil, also makes it highly effective for numerous other skin concerns, including aging skin and dehydrated skin.

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