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## OTC Update Allergies

With Spring upon us, now is the time when customers are suffering from seasonal allergies. In the next few weeks we will look at treating the various conditions associated with allergies. Today we focus on:

### Itchy Eyes

Hayfever and allergies can often have an impact on the eyes. Not only can they become itchy, but often patients suffer from redness, swelling, tearing and sometimes mucous discharge.

These symptoms are usually caused by inflammation of the membrane inside the eyelids and outer eye surface. The inflammation is a result of the release of histamine as part of the body's allergic response to an allergen.

In spring, pollen and grasses can trigger an allergic response.

Treatment options include a range of eye drops:

**Artificial tears** are helpful in treating mild symptoms, particularly dry eyes - for example **Liquifilm tears**.

**Decongestant** eye drops will help reduce redness. These include eye drops containing **Naphazoline, Tetrahydrozoline**, or **phenylephrine** such as **Murine, Optazine, Visine**.

**Decongestant** in combination with an **antihistamine** such as antazoline and pheniramine will help with the itching - e.g. **Albalon-A, Antistine Privine**.

These drops should only be used as a short term treatment.

**Contact Lens wearers:** should decrease contact lens wear time or discontinue altogether until the allergic reaction is controlled.

Long term, patients need to identify what triggers their allergy. If it is a seasonal issue they may need to consider taking an oral antihistamine to prevent troublesome symptoms.

## Tamiflu-resistant swine flu

THE WA Department of Health has confirmed the first Australian case of Influenza A (H1N1) resistant to antiviral drug Tamiflu.

A statement issued on Fri said "The 38-year-old Perth man, who has a weakened immune system, initially responded to the drug but developed a resistant strain of the virus when his illness relapsed."

Chief Health Officer, Dr Tarun Weeramanthri, said the case was "rare and isolated" and did not pose a risk to the public.

"There is no evidence that the virus has spread to other people - none of the patient's family or hospital staff caring for him have contracted the virus, and he has not been in contact with the wider community," he said.

The department said there had so far been 13 cases of Tamiflu-resistant infections reported around the world.

Dr Weeramanthi said the patient had been treated with an alternative antiviral drug which was

### Free Jamaican scripts

THE Prime Minister of Jamaica has negotiated with a number of privately owned pharmacies there to provide free prescriptions to the public, with the move aiming to reduce the load on public dispensaries.

There's considerable congestion when getting medicines at some hospitals due to a shortage of pharmacists, but under the new scheme designated pharmacies will provide the medications free to holders of "a special health card that has some information on you embedded in the card," he said.

### Ovarian cancer test

THE US Food and Drug Administration has approved a new test which can detect ovarian cancer in a pelvic mass that is already known to require surgery.

The test, called OVA1, helps patients and doctors to decide what type of surgery should be done and by whom.

It works by using a blood sample to test for levels of five proteins which change due to ovarian cancer, combining the results into a single numerical score between 0 and 10 to indicate the likelihood that the pelvic mass is benign or malignant.

active against the resistant virus, and was no longer infectious.

"When it becomes available, the human swine flu vaccine will offer the best protection against the virus and I would encourage people to seriously consider getting vaccinated," he added, with the vaccine "effective against drug-resistant strains of the virus".

The department said the first people to be offered the vaccine would be pregnant women in their second and third trimester, those with underlying medical conditions including morbid obesity, Aboriginal people, children in special schools and frontline healthcare workers.

### Scholarship applications invited

PHARMACY Cricket is offering two \$2500 scholarships for students in their third or fourth year of a full time pharmacy degree course, or in either year of a two year Masters.

Applicants need not have any involvement with cricket, but requirements involve capacity to provide leadership, ability to work as part of a team, a sound academic record and involvement in a sporting activity.

The scholarships are to be applied in the year 2010 and applications should be made in writing by Mon 12 Oct 2009.

Full details of the criteria are now at [www.pharmacycricket.com.au](http://www.pharmacycricket.com.au).

### Obama health push

US President Barack Obama has appealed to the nation, urging them to accept sweeping reforms to the US healthcare system.

He's particularly targeting the health insurance system, aiming to end discrimination against people with pre-existing conditions, limiting premium discrimination based on gender and age, capping out of pocket expenses and stopping insurance companies from dropping coverage when people are sick and need it most.

The plan also provides new tax credits to help uninsured people buy insurance, and creates a national "high risk pool" to look after people with pre-existing conditions.

It will also see the creation of an independent commission of medical experts to "identify waste, fraud and abuse in the health care system."

### Last Le Tan winner

CONGRATULATIONS to Lisa T from Fresh Therapeutics Pharmacy, who was the winner of a tube of Le Tan Original Tanning Cream in the competition from last Friday's **Pharmacy Daily**.

See this week's comp on **page 2**.

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## NT health move

A NEW academic staff accommodation facility is being established in Katherine to help attract health professionals to the Northern Territory.

It's an initiative of the Centre for Remote Health, which brings together the Flinders and Charles Darwin Universities to provide tertiary education, training and research specifically focused on remote health services.

The new staff quarters were opened on Fri by Minister for Indigenous Health, Rural and Regional Health Warren Snowdon.

He said the facility would help encourage academics to relocate to Katherine to ensure the highest quality teaching is available for students.

## FDA consumer update

THE US Food and Drug Administration has released a number of special consumer health information updates.

Topics covered include 'Lowering Salt in Your Diet', 'A Parent's Guide to Kid's Vaccines', and '2009-2010 Seasonal Influenza Vaccines'.

They're available online at [www.fda.gov.au](http://www.fda.gov.au).

## New guidance on arthritis

THE Royal Australian College of General Practitioners has launched three new comprehensive clinical practice guidelines covering osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis and juvenile idiopathic arthritis.

The musculoskeletal documents have been developed under the government's Better Arthritis and Osteoporosis Care initiative, with a fourth guideline covering osteoporosis due later this year.

The RACGP said the move was significant because most current clinical guidelines are consensus-based rather than evidence-based.

The new guidelines cover diagnosis of the conditions, as well as treatment including a range of pharmacological interventions.

For rheumatoid arthritis GPs are advised to initially consider using paracetamol, but are told that only a small number of patients receive sufficient pain relief from simple analgesia alone.

The next line of treatment is the use of omega-3 supplementation as well as gamma-linoleic acid, and then move onto conventional NSAIDs or COX-2 inhibitors if the other options are ineffective.

For osteoarthritis of the hip and knee paracetamol is again the first line recommendation, followed by NSAIDs and then weak and strong opioids, as well as intra-articular corticosteroid injection.

The guidelines for juvenile arthritis suggest paracetamol, followed by codeine/paracetamol combinations, with NSAIDs suggested as an initial drug of choice for reducing inflammation.

The RACGP said there had already been "significant international interest in this important work."

The guidelines are available at [www.racgp.org.au/guidelines](http://www.racgp.org.au/guidelines).

## Cancer pain results

NEW data presented at an international pain conference in Portugal on Friday showed significantly greater pain relief for cancer patients using Nycomed's Instanyl (intranasal fentanyl spray).

The trial compared Instanyl with oral transmucosal fentanyl citrate for the treatment of breakthrough pain in patients with cancer.

51% of the Instanyl treated patients experienced meaningful pain relief after 10 minutes, compared to 24% with the alternative treatment.

"Instanyl represents a major step forward in the management of breakthrough cancer pain," said the study's leader, Professor Sebastiano Mercadante of the La Maddalena Cancer Centre in Palermo, Italy.

Instanyl was recently granted European marketing authority and will be launched across Europe from this month.

It's not yet available in Australia.

## Wheelchair recall

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration has issued an urgent medical device recall for Invacare Action 2000 Wheelchairs.

Affected chairs have serial numbers between 7007533957 and 7008568013 inclusive, with the manufacturer warning that the bolts used to secure the caster assemblies to the wheelchair frame can fail in use.

"This has the potential to cause occupants to fall from their wheelchair and sustain injuries," the company said.



## DISPENSARY CORNER

**SHARING** A bed may be bad for your health, according to UK sleep specialist Dr Neil Stanley.

Speaking at the British Science Festival last week he said that couples suffered 50% more sleep disturbances if they shared a bed, and claims that historically we were never meant to share beds.

He said the marital bed began with the industrial revolution when overcrowding in cities saw people short of living space.

Stanley said poor sleep was linked to a litany of ailments including depression, heart disease, strokes, lung disorders - not to mention traffic and industrial accidents.

**BELIEVING** in faith healing may jeopardize recovery from illness, because it may lead some people to be less likely to adhere to medical advice.

That's the conclusion of a study by a scientist from the University of Ulster in Ireland, who'll be presenting his research at the upcoming British Psychological Society conference.

"We found that belief and intention to use faith healing was a significant predictor of self-reported non-adherence to a medication," said Dr Tony Cassidy.

"Given that only about one-in-three people follow medical advice totally and about one in four put their lives at risk through non-adherence, it's important that health care professionals understand their patients' belief about alternative remedies such as faith healing," he said.

**ALMOST** 40% of women buy shoes that don't fit, according to the Society of Chiropractors and Podiatrists in the UK.

A survey of 2000 females found that two in every 5 would wear uncomfortable shoes as long as they were fashionable.

"Many of us find it hard to resist a bargain and the latest fashion must-have, but it's important to remember that by buying ill-fitting shoes you're not only going to end up in discomfort, but you're also putting your health at risk," said a society spokesman.

## WIN MOOGOO PRODUCTS

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This week **Pharmacy Daily** teams up with MooGoo to give our readers the chance to win a selection of MooGoo skin care products, including the Eczema and Psoriasis balm.

MooGoo Eczema and Psoriasis balm is a TGA licensed cream that works as an anti-inflammatory, anti-fungal and wound healing cream.

It is formulated for the symptomatic relief of Eczema, Psoriasis and Seborrheic Dermatitis.

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For your chance to win MooGoo's Eczema and Psoriasis balm, as well as their Anti-Ageing Cream, Udder Balm and Milk Wash, simply be the first reader to email us the correct answer to the daily question featured below:

### MONDAY MOOGOO QUESTION:

What can cause an Eczema breakout?

Send your answer through to [comp@pharmacydaily.com.au](mailto:comp@pharmacydaily.com.au).

Hint: Most answers can be found on the MooGoo website at [www.moogoo.com.au](http://www.moogoo.com.au).

