



Happy new year!

THIS is the first issue of *Pharmacy Daily* for 2010, and we'd like to wish all of our readers a happy and healthy new year.

We look forward to continuing to bring you the latest pharmacy industry news, with more than 6200 subscribers across Australia catching up with the latest in **PD** each day.

Assistant programs

THE Victorian branch of the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia has today launched a new series of pharmacy assistant programs.

The agenda includes a series of professional development lectures spread throughout the year as well as a primary healthcare weekend to be held in August.

The PSA said it would also be running several Pharmacy Assistant Certificate II and III programs in 2010, stating that many course participants would be eligible for a full Government subsidy for their course participation.

MEANWHILE the PSA is also inviting all pharmacy assistants who have, or are in the process of obtaining, a Certificate II qualification or above, to join its membership ranks an affiliate member.

PSA membership will entitle pharmacy assistants to participate in PSA activities and also have input into initiatives that will 'shape the future of pharmacy assistants'.

British mattress alert

THE UK Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has issued a Medical Device Alert for all types of bed mattresses.

Health professionals are being advised that if mattress covers are damaged, body or other fluids can pass through and contaminate the inner core, leading to the possibility of cross-infection.

Mattresses should be inspected for signs of damage, staining or contamination, the MHRA said.

Guild welcomes MA chief

THE Pharmacy Guild has today formally welcomed the appointment of Dr Brendan Shaw as the new chief executive of peak pharmaceutical manufacturers body Medicines Australia.

Shaw has been acting MA ceo for some months, following the resignation of former chief Ian Chalmers (**PD** 16 Sep).

He's been with the organisation for six years, leading the Health Policy and Research division.

Medicines Australia chairman Will Delaat said the appointment followed a "thorough process," with

Registration standards

DETAILS of the proposed new registration standards for pharmacists under the new National Pharmacy Board have been finalised and submitted to the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council.

The standards include provisions relating to criminal history, English language requirements, recency of practice, professional indemnity insurance, supervised practice, examinations for general registration and continuing professional development - see www.pharmacyboard.gov.au.

Dengue warning

AUTHORITIES are warning health care professionals throughout tropical Far North Queensland to be on alert for signs of dengue fever in the population, in a bid to avoid a repeat of last year's outbreak.

According to reports twelve patients were found to be affected by dengue in December, and although no new cases have been reported in January, authorities are urging vigilance.

"We want to ensure people are as prepared as possible this year to avoid a repeat of last year," said Tropical Regional Services public health medical officer Dr Steven Donohue.

Shaw having "earned the respect not only of the Board and member companies but also Medicine Australia's staff and its key external shareholders.

Guild president Kos Sclavos said Shaw's extensive experience and knowledge of the industry meant he was "well placed to steer Medicines Australia forward.

"As Dr Shaw knows only too well, this is a very challenging time for the pharmaceutical industry, given the aftermath of the Global Financial Crisis, the Federal Government's budgetary position, and the importance of maintaining a sustainable Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme," Sclavos said.

He said the Guild was looking forward to continuing to work closely with Medicines Australia and "working cooperatively to ensure outcomes which are in the best interests of the Australian public and our world's best practice health system."

Goldsmith on PSA

THE Queensland branch of the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia has recently announced that early career pharmacist Lisa Goldsmith will replace Dr Geraldine Moses on its branch committee.

The recipient of last year's Pharmacy Graduate of the Year award, Goldsmith is also the chair of the Queensland Early Career Pharmacist Group of the PSA and is also a past president of the National Australian Pharmacy Students' Association (NAPSA).

She's currently undertaking her internship at The Prince Charles Hospital.

"Lisa's demonstrated commitment to the profession and to her colleagues through her work with NAPSA and PSA will be greatly valued on the Branch Committee which is constantly looking to further the careers of PSA members," said Queensland PSA branch president Dr Lisa Nissen.

Physeptone return

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration has announced that supply of Sigma's Physeptone methadone tablets is expected to recommence by this Fri 15 Jan.

There's been a shortage of supply of the tablets because recent batches have been withheld from the market because of quality control issues.

The TGA said it's been working closely with Sigma to resolve the problem and minimise the impact on patients.

The affected tablets require a lower storage temperature and have a shorter shelf life than previous stock, with Sigma currently relabelling and packaging the batches.

In the interim prescribers are being advised to obtain the product directly from the sponsor for patients with serious or life-threatening conditions under Category A of the Special Access Scheme (SAS).

For patients with chronic pain that is not considered serious or life-threatening, applications under Category B of the SAS will be expedited until supplies return to normal, the TGA said.

"There is no problem with the production of sufficient quantities of the product in Australia and it has not been withdrawn from the market," a TGA statement added.



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Medicines hi-tech rise

ACCORDING to new statistics compiled by Medicines Australia, the pharmaceutical industry in Australia has overtaken road vehicles to become the country's largest high technology exporter.

"Australians can be very proud that fellow Aussies have been working relentlessly at the lab bench, in hospitals and factories and in many other environments to bring new medicines and vaccines to patients both in Australia and overseas," said Medicines Australia ceo, Brendan Shaw.

"People often forget where the new medicines and vaccines that treat and prevent their illnesses come from.

"Without the pharmaceutical industry, the medicines and vaccines that people take for granted would not be available today," Shaw added.

According to the new *Medicines Australia Facts Book*, in 08-09 the Aussie pharmaceutical industry exported around \$4 billion worth of product to countries including South Africa, NZ and Korea.

Shaw said the pharmaceutical industry in Australia is also one of the country's most important R&D manufacturing industries, investing \$860m in research and development each year.

NPS quinine cramp warning

THE National Prescribing Service is urging health care professionals to cease the prescription of quinine sulphate or bisulphate tablets for the treatment of conditions other than malaria.

Six years ago the TGA withdrew its approval for the use of quinine as a preventative treatment for muscle cramps, citing the risk of thrombocytopenia far outweighed quinine's preventative benefits.

The NPS has said that since quinine's cramp treatment approval withdrawal "more than 10,000 prescriptions continue to be dispensed each year, which far exceeds the quantity required to treat cases of malaria.

"Prescribers are reminded of the lack of efficacy of quinine in leg cramps, the risk of harm and that the only TGA-approved indication for quinine is malaria," said NPS acting ceo, Karen Kaye.

"We strongly encourage doctors to ask patients to stop taking quinine for muscle cramps.

"While some patients may be reluctant, there is no evidence for its long-term efficacy or safety for preventing or treating leg cramp," Ms Kaye said.

The NPS has suggested that

health care professionals chat to patients about quinine's risks and encouraged investigation of the condition's root cause.

Kaye also suggested that patients suffering from cramps may benefit from a program of stretching exercises.

The NPS has released a fact sheet for quinine to help health care professionals discuss the benefits and harms of using quinine for leg cramps - see www.nps.org.au.

PSA CPD 2010 guide

THE PSA has released its comprehensive 2010 Professional Development and Practice Support program guide which for the first time outlines the entire scope of its support offerings available through the year to PSA members across the country.

The guide is designed as an aid to help pharmacy professionals plan their professional and business development activities in 2010.

"PSA has supported the development of pharmacists as health professionals for many years but 2010 sees these CPD and Practice Support programs re-launched with a national focus to meet the needs of today's pharmacists," said PSA national president Warwick Plunkett.

"The PSA's Professional Development and Practice Support programs have been developed to ensure members have a professional and practice edge and are best able to meet the demands they face in their careers, regardless of which sector of the pharmacy profession they operate in," Plunkett added.

The guide is now available to view under the 'What's New' section at www.psa.org.au, and PSA members will also receive a hard copy with the Jan edition of the *Australian Pharmacist* journal.

Soy milk recall

FOOD Standards Australia New Zealand has issued a recall notice for BonSoy soy milk after testing of the product showed unusually high levels of iodine.

Nine adults and one child who reported consuming BonSoy recently presented in NSW with thyroid problems.



DISPENSARY CORNER

SPIDER lovers beware....there are more than a few pincers of pain involved when a tarantula attacks!

Recently a 29-year old British man was found to have a fine coating of hair-like projections sticking out from his cornea - which were found to have come from his beloved pet Chilean rose tarantula.

The man had initially sought medical help after three weeks of 'stinging' eye pain, light sensitivity, redness and watering in one eye.

The attending Doctor suspected a severe case of conjunctivitis and prescribed a course of antibiotics.

When the medication failed to improve matters, doctors looked at the man's eye with high magnification devices, and saw the tiny spines sticking into his cornea, which they were unable to remove even with microforceps.

The man then recalled that whilst cleaning his unusual pet's enclosure, she had sprayed his face with 'a fine mist of hair'.

Upon further investigation it was found that as part of its defense mechanism the tarantula will rub its abdomen to dislodge 'special' hairs and throw them at its would-be attacker.

A course of topical steroids has since helped to clear most of his symptoms, however he reportedly is still suffering mild discomfort.

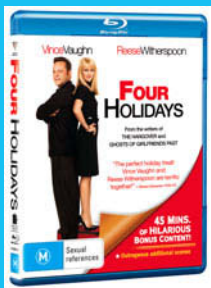
HEALTH groups wanting to attract attention for their causes should follow the example of a NSW farmer who's launched a unique initiative in support of a diabetes and cystic fibrosis charity bike ride.

Neil Schirmer's novel approach has seen him carve a massive website address in 80 metre-high letters in one of his paddocks, using a combine harvester.

The 680m-long URL is designed to attract the eye of air passengers travelling daily on the Sydney - Melbourne route, which overflies his Riverina farmland.

"I have the jets fly over here every morning and every evening so it's the sort of signage that you would see from 30,000 feet up," said Schirmer.

WIN A COPY OF FOUR HOLIDAYS ON DVD



Pharmacy Daily kick starts the New Year with another fabulous competition!

This week EseaCruising.com and Roadshow Entertainment are giving readers the chance to win a copy of the comedy, *Four Holidays*, on DVD. Starring Reese Witherspoon and Vince Vaughn, the movie is about a happily unmarried couple who avoid spending Christmas with their families at all costs, and instead travel to exotic locales.

Due to unfortunate circumstances, their upcoming trip to Fiji gets cancelled and the couple have no choice but to spend the festive season with their divorced parents and the rest of their dysfunctional family.

To enter, simply tell us who you would have liked to avoid over the festive season and why?

The best entry sent in each day will win a copy of the DVD and have their story published in *Pharmacy Daily*.

Send your entries to: comp@pharmacydaily.com.au.

Four Holidays is now available to rent or buy o

