

Mail-order compliance

NEW research in the USA has suggested that buying medications via mail order may encourage patient compliance with dosing regimes, according to the *American Journal of Managed Care*.

The study by UCLA scientists found that patients with diabetes, high cholesterol or high blood pressure who ordered their drugs by mail were more likely to take them as prescribed than patients who obtained them from a local community pharmacy.

The researchers analysed 2006 and 2007 medication refill data from 14,000 members of the Kaiser Permanente health insurance group.

They defined 'good adherence' as having medication available and on hand at least 80% of the time, finding that 84.7% of patients who received medications by mail at least two thirds of the time stuck to their prescribed regimen - compared to a figure of 76.9% for those who filled prescriptions at "bricks and mortar" pharmacies.

5th Agreement gets closer

INFORMATION technology is set to form a key component of the Fifth Community Pharmacy Agreement, with the Guild confirming that the general shape of the pact has now been finalised (**PD** breaking news).

Guild President Kos Sclavos told **PD** yesterday that a range of significant new programs still require detailed development, with a key feature being the proposed Prescription Commitment which aims to ensure the consistent delivery of dispensary services.

He said the system would see pharmacists provide a tailored information leaflet to patients, detailing any counselling, the availability of generic versions of medications dispensed and CMLs.

The Agreement will also see significant support for the facilitation of electronic prescribing, while it's also proposed that Medicare will automatically be given access to data relating to all PBS prescriptions priced under the

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Injection shortage

THE TGA has announced that it is expecting a shortage of the injectable indomethacin drug, Indocid from next month.

The shortage is due to a change of manufacturing sites in the US.

Whilst currently in discussions with sponsor Pharmalink to resolve the issue, the TGA has advised that an alternate injectable drug, ibuprofen lysine, is currently available from overseas sources.

Neonatologists wishing to make use of ibuprofen lysine must submit a Category A notification under the Special Access Scheme (SAS).

Travel Specials

WELCOME to *Pharmacy Daily's* travel feature.

Each week we highlight a couple of great travel deals which we're sure will be of interest to everyone in the pharmacy industry.

AUSSIES are being invited to commemorate Anzac Day in style with a 7-day package from Adventure World.

The tour arrives in Istanbul on 21 Apr, with visits to local highlights including the bustling Grand Bazaar, before heading off to the Gallipoli Peninsula.

Participants will visit the Lone Pine Memorial, Anzac Cove and the archaeological ruins of Troy, before attending the Dawn Service on 25 Apr.

More details 1300 363 055.

FIJI'S Blue Lagoon Cruises is offering a 30% 'early bird' discount to passengers booking on its "Historical & Cultural Dateline Cruise" before 31 Mar.

The voyage departs 16 Aug and offers a rare opportunity to visit Fiji's remote north-eastern islands - including a chance to straddle the International Date Line at Taveuni.

Prices for the seven day cruise start at \$1860 per person twin share including all meals, activities and accommodation - for more info see www.bluelagooncruises.com.

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co-payment for "epidemiological research purposes".

Other changes will see an enhanced Quality Care Pharmacy Program, a Diabetes Patient Service provided directly by the community pharmacist to support newly diagnosed diabetics, and a pharmacist-initiated Medicines Use Review to allow for discussion with patients and improve the "clinical and cost-effectiveness of medicines."

MEANWHILE PSA President Warwick Plunkett says the release of the broad framework would provide a platform for negotiations on the detailed structure of the agreement, with the PSA to push for increased professional services.

"It is essential that the Agreement delivers meaningful impetus and incentives for an increased number of professional services to ensure the ongoing viability of pharmacy," Mr Plunkett said.

Budget beauty

DESIGNER Brands (DB) is hailing a story on Channel 9's *A Current Affair* which compared cheaper cosmetic options such as those offered through pharmacies by DB with more expensive labels such as Chanel and Estee Lauder.

According to ACA often the cheaper products come from the same factories as the luxury brands, with the testers conducting a blind test on products including lip gloss, foundation and mascara.

The Designer Brands products rated favourably across all categories, and were the clear winner in three out of the four products being tested - meaning a \$5 product was rated as superior to one costing over \$50.

"We don't spend a fortune on all the glitzy glamour that goes into the high-end products," said Designer Brands ceo Tony Rechtman.

"What we do is develop fantastic products with the same ingredients but at an incredible price," he added.

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E-script cancellation

THE Health Dept has cancelled a tender for a consultancy to develop an "ePrescribing and Dispensing of Medicines Benefits Realisation and Implementation Plan".

Bidders have been advised in a letter that "the governance arrangements for electronic medication management will now be addressed within the scope of the broader e-health agenda".

The letter says the move follows the release in June of the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission 'A Healthier Future for All Australians' report, with its recommendations having "materially affected the department's anticipated workplan in the e-prescribing and dispensing arena".

Initial responses to the tender were solicited last May.

Since May there have been significant developments in both the Guild's eRx Script Exchange e-prescribing solution and the rival RACGP-backed MediSecure.

PSA adds complementary

THE Pharmaceutical Society of Australia is set to launch a series of online modules, presentations and podcasts aimed at helping pharmacists to better understand complementary therapies, usage, properties, interactions and effects.

The move comes on the back of recent National Prescribing Service research which highlighted the urgent need for an improvement in the availability of complementary medicine information for both health professionals and the general public.

It is hoped that the flow-on effect of the modules will be that pharmacists can help patients make more informed decisions around the quality use of complementary medications.

The first module will be launched tomorrow and will address the hugely popular supplement, glucosamine.

Subsequent modules will be

released at the rate of one per month, each covering a different medicine.

As part of each module participating pharmacists will have to complete an assessment, which will allow them to test their new knowledge base.

The modules will be available to all PSA members and once completed will provide pharmacists with CPD credit points.

PSA members will be able to access the modules via the Professional Development Materials area on the PSA members website.

Walgreens diabetes consultation move

US pharmacy giant Walgreens has announced a pilot program in which Type 2 diabetes sufferers will be offered personal consultations with its pharmacists and nurse practitioners.

Initially the scheme will operate in Indianapolis, Oklahoma City, Phoenix and Albuquerque, and will allow patients to discuss medications, weight and other issues in a one-on-one consultation with a Walgreens staffer.

The company's senior vice president of pharmacy, Kermit Crawford, said the aim of the program was to "supplement and enhance what the physician is doing," helping to ensure medication compliance.

The scheme is free to patients at present, but Walgreens said there may be a charge if it decides to expand it across the USA, with payments possibly made through medical insurers.

Walgreens also said the program could expand to cover other conditions such as asthma, obesity and hyperlipidaemia, according to the *Wall Street Journal*.

API agm update

AUSTRALIAN Pharmaceutical Industries has told investors that it will hold its Annual General Meeting at 2pm next Tue.

The agm will take place at Rydges Parramatta Hotel in Rosehill NSW, and there's also an audiocast facility for those unable to attend, accessible from the API website at www.api.net.au.



DISPENSARY CORNER

A TV production company in the UK is seeking a terminally ill patient willing to donate their body to be mummified as part of a documentary on ancient Egypt.

Fulcrum TV, in conjunction with Channel 4, has placed advertisements seeking a volunteer, confirming that it's working with a group of scientists to research the embalming procedure used for Egyptian royalty before their bodies were placed inside the pyramids.

IT'S amazing what people will buy on internet auction sites.

A charity auction for a toenail on NZ site Trade Me has attracted a top bid of NZ\$61, with the proceeds going to the Salvation Army.

The nail attracted more than 25,000 views while online, with its description billing it as a "chance to own one only prime porcellus carnisvarous keratin (middle toe nail) that has been carefully groomed for one year for you."

It was also billed as a "good honest Kiwi Male nail" with dimensions 12mm long x 11mm wide - "132 sq mm of prime real estate...a perfect 'off the foot' present for an arty friend for their next 'off the wall' project."

A BRITISH man is enjoying some very welcome relief after undergoing surgery to relieve a three-year bout of hiccups.

26-year-old Christopher Sands has reportedly been hiccupping ever two seconds for 12 hours a day since early 2007, and attempted a range of remedies including hypnotherapy, yoga, acupuncture and even eating honey while suspended upside down from a tree.

The bizarre condition attracted worldwide attention - including from a Japanese TV network which offered to fly him to Tokyo to try out further treatments.

A scan there found a small tumour on his brain stem, and an operation in the UK removed 60% of the growth and stopped the relentless hiccupping.

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 on Blu-Ray and DVD.

CONGRATULATIONS to Kathryn Law of ADS Specialist Pharmacotherapy Pharmacy who was yesterday's winner, sending in the following poem -

Christmas comes but once a year

But it is a season I've come to fear.

The patients are all in a rush

To get extra Safety Net drugs with minimum fuss.

I want to run away and hide

I think most staff would be on my side.

But I am a pharmacist and have to stay

And toil day after day.

