



Student comp open

THE Pharmacy Guild of Australia has officially launched its fourth National Student Business Plan Competition.

Designed to allow pharmacy students to demonstrate their business planning skills, the competition requires small groups of students to submit a business plan for either the establishment or the purchase of the pharmacy.

"The student pharmacy business plan competition is a fabulous way to gain an insight into the many aspects of pharmacy ownership and management," said James Cook University's 2009 competition runner-up Will Franks.

This year's competition is open to all pharmacy schools nationwide, with \$15,000 worth of cash and prizes up for grabs courtesy of PDL and Gold Cross.

In addition to prize winnings, the top three groups will have the opportunity to present their plans on stage at the Pharmacy Women's Congress in August this year.

For further competition info see the Guild website www.guild.org.au.

Nurse practitioners hit back

THE Revive Clinic has hit back at the Australian Medical Association and some divisions of General Practice over allegations that autonomous nurse practitioners could potentially endanger public health (PD 21 Jan).

According to Revive, nurse practitioners have been allowed to work autonomously for five years-protected under state legislation, and as such they have proved the safety of their services.

"NPs have been treating patients in hospital emergency departments for some time," said Revive Clinic director, Louise Stewart.

"They would be prohibited from performing this role if their health care service offering is both unsafe and dangerous.

"Clinical research clearly demonstrates that NPs offer the highest level of patient care and safety," Stewart added.

The clinic cited the extensive education and experience levels required by nurses to qualify to become a NP as another reason to

allay consumer and industry fears.

"NPs must have at least five years post-University nursing experience before completing another two years (part-time) Masters degree to qualify as an NP," a statement from Revive Clinic said.

Instead of safety issues, the Revive Clinic has said that the most pertinent issue should now be whether or not in-pharmacy nurse practitioners should be available to patients via Medicare and the PBS.

The government has added an amendment to its nurse practitioner legislation which stipulates that in order to offer Medicare rebates for their services as well as access to the PBS, nurse practitioners need to have collaborative agreements in place with GPs - and according to Revive this is already in place for its clinics.

"It appears that medical groups and certain doctors are doing their best to ensure that this valuable health service remains unaffordable for the community to access."

"Considering the GP shortage, this is an unreasonable position for the public to accept," she concluded.

Women's health focus

THE latest edition of the Australian Longitudinal Study of Women's Health has been released with a particular focus on women's reproductive health issues.

Amongst its findings, the report found that 91% of young women wished to have children in their lifetime, and that while the median ideal number of children that women wanted was two, older women were found to be more likely to want just one child.

Infertility and miscarriage were found to be fairly common within the population, with over half of the survey's participants who reported pregnancy in Survey 4 (2006) found to have had at least one miscarriage.

Amongst those women who reported being pregnant or trying to conceive, around 39% said they had experienced infertility for at least a 12 month period.

The most common reasons for infertility were found to include polycystic ovary syndrome, endometriosis and miscarriage.

To view a copy of the report see www.health.gov.

TGA food regulation

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration has released the public submissions received pertaining to the proposed Section 7 Declaration that products in capsule, tablet or pill format should be considered as therapeutic goods.

The release features 30 submissions from organisations including the ASMI, Johnson & Johnson and the Complementary Healthcare Council of Australia, as well as 13 submissions from individuals and two petitions.

A number of the submissions are critical of the proposals, including a petition which says that compelling all foods in tablet, pill and capsule forms to conform to TGA regulations would have "far-reaching and restrictive consequences to industry operators and ultimately to Australian consumers".

In its submission the Australian Self-Medication Industry said that it was important to help define the boundary between foods and therapeutic goods, but raised several concerns with the declaration incl a lack of good definitions of tablets, capsules and pills in Therapeutic Goods Orders.

Addisons Lawyers, which represents clients who manufacture and supply food and nutritional products, said that while the current regulatory regime is complex and causes confusion between foods and medicines "we consider that the proposal is not the appropriate way to address these concerns," instead urging that each product or class of products should be dealt with on a case by case basis.

The Complementary Healthcare Council said the proposal will have a significant financial impact on many companies, urging the TGA to consult further with the industry.

Biotech's new head

AUSTRALIAN biotechnology company Prima BioMed Ltd has appointed Matthew Lehman as its new chief operating officer.

Lehman comes to the position with extensive experience in the areas of clinical research, regulatory and drug development strategy as well as operations and sourcing having held variety of roles in over 100 clinical research programs.

He will now head up operations at Prima, which specialises in 'cutting edge' cancer treatment research and development.

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Osteo focus 2010

THE Pharmaceutical Society of Australia has announced it will host a special Osteoporosis presentation by renowned rheumatologist Dr Michelle Tellus at its 2010 Annual Offshore Conference 28 April-7 May.

The presentation will focus on the 'micro-architecture of bone, bone mineral density, the importance of calcium and vitamin D in bone health, and the place of bisphosphonates, strontium and parathyroid hormone analogues in the treatment of osteoporosis'.

Dr Tellus is also set to host a second conference session focusing on pain and pain management.

The pain session will cover types of pain pathways, the differences between nociceptive pain and neuropathic pain, treatment options, pain pathways, nociceptive pain and neuropathic pain, therapy targets, the use of analgesic adjuvants and the role of the pharmacist in the management of patients with chronic pain.

See www.psa.org.au/conference.

Friday PD winner

CONGRATULATIONS to Hayley Fejer of High Tech Health, who was the winner of last Friday's Australis Foundation competition.

Ampyra approval

THE US Food and Drug Administration has approved Ampyra (dalfampridine) extended release tablets, designed to improve the walking capabilities of multiple sclerosis patients.

Clinical trials of the world-first treatment showed patients taking Ampyra had a faster walking speed than those on the placebo.

Aussie award for pharmacist

THE Australia Day Awards committee has honoured Queensland Pharmacist, Karalyn Huxhagen with its annual Achievement Award for her 'service to Qld health and the community'.

In particular, the committee recognised Karalyn's out of hours dedication to improving community health as well as community health knowledge.

Throughout her career Karalyn has specialised in community, indigenous, primary health care and diabetes programs and has participated in many Community Pharmacy Agreement programs including medication reviews.

NPS language call

ALL Greek, Arabic, Macedonian, Croatian, Spanish or Korean speaking pharmacists and doctors are being invited by the National Prescribing Service to participate in radio interviews with multicultural media.

"As part of our commitment to ensuring all Australians access the same information about medicines, we do a lot of work with culturally and linguistically diverse audiences," said NPS acting ceo, Karen Kaye.

Currently the NPS is running a series of 'in-language' seminars covering a variety of health topics including the safe use of medicines, which are being promoted via both mainstream and independent media.

Pharmacists who are interested in participating in interviews will be given training as well as financial compensation for their time.

For details contact Jackie Stephenson on 02 8217 8756 or email jstephenson@nps.org.au.

Originally nominated for the award by the Mackay Health Service District, Karalyn told organisers that the award honour was a 'very wonderful' surprise.

"I am extremely pleased to receive this significant award," she said.

Acting PSA president, Lisa Nissen praised Karalyn's 'depth of experience', saying: "[She] is constantly looking to new ways to improve her ability to add to the wellbeing of the community she serves."

Huxhagen last year attended the Pharmacy Women's Congress, having won registration for the event via a competition in *Pharmacy Daily*.

Ambo drug inquiry

THE NSW ambulance is facing a complete overhaul of its drug security and stocktake procedures, following a damning internal report which found that around 90% of ambulance bases failed to conduct regular drug stocktakes.

The audit conducted at the gov't's section 8 review request, found that in 85% of ambulance stations unauthorised staff were able to access medication storerooms, whilst theft for personal use was commonplace, claiming many ambos either took drugs home or simply 'left them in the car'.

"There is a huge potential for staff to disguise losses and discrepancies as breakages," the report said.

Amongst its findings the report cites a 'pattern of unusual breakages' at the Port Macquarie base, whilst one ambo at a regional base left morphine and fentanyl vials on the break room table for someone else to put away as he was going on leave.

The report called for an entirely new schedule 8 drug policy, in part blaming a lack of guidance for the systemic drug abuse, losses and discrepancy problems within the NSW ambulance service.

In light of the report the NSW Ambulance Service has released a new standard operating policy which would see more rigid routine compliance checks, and paramedics only carrying drugs when responding to call-outs.



DISPENSARY CORNER

IN true Aussie style, today it is estimated that 500,000 employees will 'chuck a sickie', which added to tomorrow's Australia Day public holiday will give them a four-day weekend.

Touted as the most expensive sick day ever, 25 Jan 2010 is set to cost the national economy a merge \$257 million in lost labour.

"Employers know what's happening and why people mysteriously don't turn up for work," said the head of "absence-management firm", Direct Health Solutions, Paul Dundon.

"In the end, the business will suffer and it will be the employee's job that is at risk," he added ominously.

LOVE your pet to death? Well now you can rest in peace with the security that when you pass you can be buried right beside your beloved Fido's grave.

The popularity of joint animal/human cemeteries in the UK is on the rise, with the trend accelerated by 'natural' funerary sites laid six feet under in woodland settings - and no marked graves.

"It is something that wouldn't have been considered 30 or 40 years ago, but we are hearing more occasions where owners want to be buried with their pet," said vet Elaine Pendlebury.

One pet lover has already reserved a plot for herself and her husband alongside her dearly departed 17-year old golden retriever Dylan, and has earmarked three nearby plots for her living pets Merlin the Irish horse and dogs Sir Lancelot and Lady Guinevere.

SCIENTISTS from Italy's National Committee for Cultural Heritage have requested permission to exhume the remains of Leonardo da Vinci, so they can reconstruct his facial features to see whether his most famous work, the Mona Lisa is in fact a self portrait.

The move has angered some opponents who claim the self-portrait theory is just myth.

"If Leonardo heard about this he'd have a good chuckle," said former Getty Museum curator, Nicholas Turner.

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The Pharmacy Guild of Australia

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