

Weekly Comment

Welcome to a new *Pharmacy Daily* feature, in which we will have a regular column from a pharmacy industry commentator.

This week's industry contributor is Dr Deborah Mills.

Vaccines improving over last 49 years

Some people worry that children are receiving "more vaccines now" than in the past.

The good news is that the vaccines are so much more pure, so the number of antigens in the standard childhood vaccine course has fallen over the last 30 years.

In 1960 there were vaccinations against five diseases (smallpox, diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough and polio) that gave 3,217 antigens.

In 2009 there are vaccines against 10 diseases and only 116 protein antigens! That means more targeted antibodies and less side effects.

TB vaccine may confer protection against developing melanoma

As many readers will be aware, Australia has the highest risk of developing melanoma of anywhere in the world.

Australians have a lifetime risk of one in 28 persons who live to age 75.

Studies have recently shown that vaccination early in life against smallpox (vaccinia) or tuberculosis (BCG) or both, confers a significant and enduring degree of protection against melanoma!

The protection seems to result from prevention of tumour development, rather than killing melanoma cells already present in the body.

Yellow Fever vaccine may also have the same effect. A recent study of 28,000 adults vaccinated with the Yellow Fever vaccine, showed there was a period of about 10yrs between vaccination and observed protection.

BCG and Smallpox vaccine are of little or no value in treating established melanoma.

Confirmatory studies in different settings are required, but this effect has also been found in persons who have a history of certain severe, but uncommon infections with a fever above 38.5°C (sepsis, TB, Staph aureus). An intriguing finding indeed.



Dr Deb is the medical director of two Travel Medicine Clinics, and one of the pioneers of Travel Medicine in Aust.

SHPA pushes united front

PHARMACISTS must respond collaboratively to the government's health reform moves in order to ensure that community health needs are addressed seamlessly.

"A flexible, yet nationally consistent approach is needed to ensure consumer access and to support the consistent delivery of pharmacy services across the country," said SHPA chief executive officer Yvonne Allinson.

Allinson said the reform provides an opportunity to "shape an integrated model that will improve outcomes for Australian health consumers," and urged pharmacy organisations to resist the impulse to pursue a minority agenda.

"Reform must not be shaped to advantage sectors of the profession, be that community pharmacy owners or other practice areas," she said, contending that pharmacists should be able to work flexibly

Micardis approval

MICARDIS (telmisartan) 80mg has become the first and only angiotensin II receptor agonist approved for the prevention of cardiovascular morbidity and mortality in patients 55 years and older, regardless of their blood pressure.

Reproductive health

THE Pharmaceutical Society of Australia in Vic is inviting attendance at its upcoming clinical health weekend in Lorne between 20-21 March, canvassing the topic of 'Reproductive Health: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly'.

Keynote speakers include Monash IVF International Medical Director, Professor Gabor Kovacs - more information at www.psa.org.au.

"It generates direct sales and just as importantly good will with customers"

Read what Jo McDowall has to say, click here.



either from a base in a community pharmacy, public or private hospital pharmacy or as individual health workers remunerated via a professional fee structure.

In backing up its 'flexible' work practice model SHPA cited statistics which show that 47% of hospital pharmacists' time is spent outside the pharmacy department working alongside other health professionals on clinical pharmacy services for individual patients - resulting in a reduction in the amount of adverse medication events.

"Knowledge from hospital pharmacy services should influence practice change and innovation in other pharmacy settings," she said.

SHPA said pharmacists should be working together "to ensure that our unique skills, to support the safe and effective use of medicines, are understood and valued by the whole community and our professional partners in interdisciplinary healthcare teams."

Lemon detox probe

THE supplier of the heavily promoted Lemon Detox Diet has been reported to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, Therapeutic Goods Administration and NSW Fair Trading, over revised wording on its promotional material, according to yesterday's *Sun Herald*.

The move follows fines revealed last month for Pure Natural Health, with the NSW Food Authority saying that claims made about the diet were "not quantified" and that advice provided to consumers was "of a medical nature."

The company has been placed on the authority's online "name and shame" list.

Federal boost for APP

THE Federal Minister for Health and Ageing, Nicola Roxon, has confirmed her attendance at the Pharmacy Guild of Australia's 2010 APP conference as a keynote speaker, and will also present the Pharmacy of the Year Awards from 10am on Fri.

The organisers of the conference on the Gold Coast have also advised that all additional tickets for the Gala Dinner on Saturday night are completely sold out.

Diabetes approval

THE TGA has approved Galvus (vildagliptin) for the treatment of type 2 diabetes.

The medication works in combination with metformin, a solfonylurea or pioglitazone, to lower HbA_{1c} levels, and combines efficacy with a low incidence of hypoglycaemia or weight gain, common side effects of some other type 2 diabetes medications.



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First ever Vioxx win

AN Australian occupational health and safety consultant, Graeme Peterson, has won the first-ever Aussie class action against pharmaceutical manufacturer Merck, for injuries suffered after taking its arthritis drug Vioxx.

The Federal Court's \$287,912 compensation is set to herald a flood of further claimants who suffered heart attacks as a direct response from taking Vioxx.

In handing down his ruling, Justice Jessup said that Vioxx had been proven to be a dangerous drug, "unfit for its purpose and not of merchantable quality" because it significantly increased the risk of cardiovascular incidents in users.

Jessup also found that Merck had breached the Trade Practices Act and its duty of care to patients, and had also engaged in a campaign of misleading and deceptive conduct by not alerting Peterson's doctor of the potential cardiovascular risks posed by the drug and by using its sales representatives to emphasise the medication's safety profile.

In 2008 Merck paid out \$4.85b in compensation to its American Vioxx victims, and calls are now heating up for the manufacturer to work out a similar deal with its Australian patients.

Health goes live nationwide

A NEW pharmacy specific subscription radio station has been launched by health and wellness radio broadcaster 'healthLIVE'.

The station line up has been designed to appeal to pharmacy customers, and will feature live radio announcers, music which is targeted to the 74% majority of pharmacy customers which are female and aged between 25-65.

Sprinkled throughout the programming will also be 90-second health update vignettes covering a host of health, fitness, wellness and nutrition topics which are created to engage customers' interest and promote key pharmacy categories.

In promoting the sales increase

Pradaxa on the PBS

THE first-ever oral direct thrombin inhibitor, Pradaxa (dabigatran) is set to join the PBS from 01 April this year.

Designed for the prevention of venous thromboembolism (VTE) in patients undergoing total hip or knee replacement, Pradaxa was given listing status following the relaxation of NHMRC guidelines for anticoagulation therapies post knee/hip replacement surgeries.

benefits of the new station, healthLIVE's has cited recent research which found that 41% of customers surveyed for the study made a retail purchase they did not plan on after hearing an audio commercial or promotional announcement instore.

The station is set to go live this week and subscription costs \$29 plus GST per week.

For more info call 02 6113 1538 or see www.healthlive.com.au.

Continence info

THE Health Department will host a series of information sessions around Australia on the new Continence Aids Payment Scheme (PD Thu), which replaces the existing Continence Aids Assistance Scheme from 01 Jul.

The seminars are open to consumers and their carers, medical and allied health professionals, as well as service and product suppliers.

Details and registrations are available on 1800 118 455, with registrations closing 19 Mar.

See www.bladderbowel.gov.au.

MEANWHILE the Continence Foundation of Australia is inviting applications from suppliers of continence products to join its Directory of Continence Products.

This directory will be used to help callers to the National Continence Helpline, providing them with timely and accurate information about where they can purchase their continence products.

Organisations interested in being included should email priya@continence.org.au.



DISPENSARY CORNER

MEXICO City has placed its 70,000 strong police force on a strict calorie-controlled diet to counteract the latest statistics which show 70% of its officers are overweight.

The 'three-meals a day' plan will see police personnel receive around 2494 calories per day through new low-calorie menus in police cafeterias.

THE lightest-ever newborn baby boy has beaten incredible odds and survived his first nine months of life, despite being born prematurely in the 25th week of his mother's pregnancy, and weighing just 275 grams.

The German miracle child was discharged from hospital in December after spending the first six months of his life in intensive care - where his body weight multiplied 13 times to 3.7kgs.

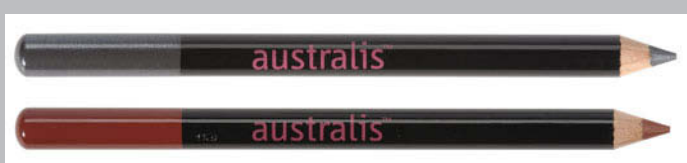
The baby's doctors made the decision to keep the birth a secret from the public until he was out of the woods.

The boy beat the lowest birth weight record set for a boy by 22 grams, whilst the lowest ever birth weight record is held by a girl who was born weighing a mere 244 grams.



Tiny Tim or Tom Thumb?

WIN AN AUSTRALIS EYE PENCIL



Australis has teamed up with *Pharmacy Daily* this week, giving readers the chance to win an Australis Eye Pencil. Valued at \$8.95, the Australis Eye Pencil is the softest pencil ever.

The Blackest Black eye pencil creates the perfect smokey eye with ease, providing an intense colour, smooth formula and long-lasting finish.

New shades available include Silver Service and Hello Sailor, formulated with the same long-lasting easy glide formula.

For your last chance to win your very own Australis Blackest Black Eye Pencil, simply send through the correct answer to the following question:

How many new shades of pencils are Australis launching?

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

The first correct entry received each day will win.

Hint! Visit the Australis website at: www.australiscosmetics.com.au.

Visit us at the Gold Coast APP 2010 stand #136 for your chance to Win a **Kyocera FS-C5200DN Colour Laser Printer**

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