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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.

Close to home - Lessons from a Dengue epidemic in North Queensland.

In late 2008 and early 2009 North Queensland experienced its worst epidemic of dengue fever infections for 50 years.

In total 1025 people were confirmed to be infected with one fatality recorded of an infected individual.

Dengue fever is not naturally occurring in North Queensland and the cause of the outbreak was from infected international travellers with local transmission occurring thereafter.

Dengue fever viral infection has been increasing globally since the 1970's and it is estimated that between 50 and 100 million people are infected annually with 250,000 people affected by Dengue haemorrhagic fever.

Dengue fever is the most common mosquito borne viral disease affecting humans globally.



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

Once-a-year therapy for osteoporosis

A NEW PBS approved indication for Aclasta (zoledronic acid 5mg) will come into effect from 01 Apr, with the approval of treatment of men with osteoporosis, people with corticosteroid-induced osteoporosis and those with Paget's disease of the bone.

The new reimbursement is in addition to the previous indication which was for treatment of osteoporosis in menopausal women.

One treatment per year for three years per patient in a lifetime will be PBS-subsidised.

Sigma set to take \$320m hit

SIGMA Pharmaceuticals will announce a write-off of more than \$300 million when it releases its long-awaited full year financial report, according to Fairfax publications today.

The company has promised to reveal its financial position before the end of the month, with issues understood to be related to the valuation of goodwill which has been on its balance sheet as a result of the 2005 merger with Arrow Pharmaceuticals.

The non-cash hit would wipe out the company's second half profit and Sigma has already revealed that it's in discussions with bankers about being forced to revise its financing due to breaching

covenants.

Interests associated with Arrow founder David Duchon have since sold most of their Sigma shares at prices around \$2.30 per share - more than two and a half times the 90c price of the suspended shares at present.

Symbion probiotic

SYMBION today announced the launch of a new non-refrigerated probiotic under the Faulding brand.

The company said the product is expected to be of particular interest to small pharmacies which don't have space for a vitamins fridge.

Symbion Consumer Products marketing mgr, Lisa Robertson, said the company was "continuing to focus on developing differentiated products, and the re-launch of the Faulding brand means Symbion customers can offer new and unique products to consumers under the trusted Faulding name."

Pharma uses Facebook

THE US HIV Vaccine Trials Network (HVTN) is utilising social media sites including Facebook to attract around 1350 HIV-negative gay men to participate in its latest HIV vaccine trial.

HVTN has placed advertisements on Facebook and Craigs List as well as gay dating websites and has also enlisted the services of several staffers to vet and send out trial invitations to members of the public who write personal ads that indicate certain behaviours.

FDA blasts Embeda

THE US Food and Drug Administration has issued warnings to King Pharmaceuticals regarding two of its new Embeda (morphine sulfate and naltrexone hydrochloride) news releases, forcing the manufacturer to issue retractions and also reissue its boxed warnings.

According to the FDA the releases were 'false and misleading' because they omitted and minimised Embeda's risk profile, failed to declare its approved indication limitations and also presented misleading product claims.

King has since issued product release and labelling corrections stipulating that Embeda is only for use in patients for the management of moderate to severe pain when a continuous, around-the-clock opioid analgesic is needed for an extended period of time.

King also warned that Embeda with can increase plasma levels if ingested with alcohol which may result in a fatal morphine overdose.

Embeda must also only be used in opioid-tolerant patients, otherwise it may result in fatal respiratory depression.

The FDA has also forced King to recant on its previous media releases which implied that Embeda's pharmacological properties were clinically proven to confer patient abuse resistance and abuse liability; instead, King has now said that Embeda is a "Schedule II controlled substance with an abuse liability similar to other opioid agonists".

Friday's PD winner

CONGRATULATIONS to Danica Wood of Priceline Pharmacy in Lillybrook, who was the winner of last Friday's 'Forever Matt' competition.

Danica has scored for herself newly release Forever Matt product.

See page two for this week's fabulous Neon Brights comp!

Three pages today

TODAY'S *Pharmacy Daily* features a full page promoting the upcoming Australian College of Pharmacy annual conference, with places in both the Community and Consultant Practice options filling quickly.

The conference will take place in three week's time in the Barossa Valley - details on **page three**.

STOCK EXCHANGE

WELCOME to *Pharmacy Daily's* Stock Exchange column, where the industry is able to promote close to expiry or surplus items.

Today Baxter Pharmacy is offering the following items:

- Tarceva (erlotinib) 150mg, 30 tablets x 1

Pharmacist Bruce Hamilton said he would be willing to offload the stock at a "very generous price" - for more info contact him on (03) 5971 1887.

If you have items you'd like to offer through PD's Stock Exchange column please email info@pharmacydaily.com.au.

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K-Mart discrimination

KMART in the USA has been ordered to pay US\$120,000 in damages after a court found that one of its pharmacies engaged in age discrimination activity against a 70 year old pharmacist.

According to reports, the Kmart Honolulu pharmacy manager harassed the pharmacist in front of other staffers over a four year period, calling her "too old", "greedy" and telling her to "just retire".

The manager also deliberately rostered the pharmacist on Sundays knowing she regularly attended church, in a bid to get her to quit.

The discrimination case was finally launched by the pharmacist after Kmart responded to her discrimination complaint by threatening legal action on an unrelated matter.

As a result of the case Kmart now has to hire an equal opportunity trainer, review and revise its anti discrimination policy, provide anti-discrimination training for all its staffers and also ensure that all discriminatory claims against management staff be included in performance evaluations.

PBS cut for influenza vaccine

PHARMACISTS are being urged to continue promoting influenza immunisation, despite a government decision which will see the vaccines no longer dispensed in pharmacy under the PBS.

The Influenza Specialist Group (ISG) has welcomed changes to the way that influenza vaccination occurs in Australia, with an extension of the National Immunisation Program to include people under 65 years of age who live with underlying medical conditions, are pregnant or are of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent.

Five million Australians are now eligible to receive free flu vaccines, with the ISG saying it "looks forward to seeing more eligible young Australians getting vaccinated".

However the change means that more of these patients will be eligible for free vaccination in GP surgeries.

John Jackson, Pharmaceutical Society of Australia board member and part of the ISG, said that previously pharmacists and their

staff focused on at-risk Australians "particularly those aged under 65 with underlying medical conditions.

"While this won't change, vaccines now won't be dispensed in pharmacy under the PBS, which may mean ordering less stock and closely monitoring demand on an as-needs basis," Jackson said.

He said pharmacists could consider extending their vaccine promotion to other groups not covered by the National Immunisation Program, such as friends and contacts of people in high risk groups.

"Despite the changes, pharmacists remain the primary point of contact for most people predisposed to serious influenza conditions, because they regularly dispense medication for these conditions. Thus I really encourage pharmacists and their staff to continue the great work of promoting influenza vaccination in these eligible groups before the season hits," he added.



DISPENSARY CORNER

FINALLY, medicine for the inner snake charmer inside everyone!

UK theme park Chessington World of Adventures has capitalised on the burgeoning popularity of new snake massage therapies by offering its VIP preview guests a free snake massage prior to having a go of its newest ride, The Kobra.

According to reports snake massage therapy involves the placement of non-venomous snakes on the vicim, ahem, client's body and having them slither over the patients aching joints and muscles.

Benefits are purported to include the relaxation of muscles and joints and the increased stimulation of blood flow!

MAN boobs to the max!

Doctors at the Chest Clinic in Beijing have claimed to have discovered the largest ever set of man boobs, located on the chest of Guo Feng, a regional dairy farmer.

According to reports, Feng began to develop the breasts around ten years ago at a time when he was gaining a lot of general body fat.

The breasts have since continued to grow, with Feng telling media that despite attending many hospitals and having many tests no one as yet has been able to help him.

According to the Chest Clinic doctors, excepting his large breasts, Feng is in every other way male.

"In 30 years of working as specialist here at the chest clinic I have never seen anything like it," said Dr Zhang.

"It seems to be fatty tissue - at the most the best we can suggest is that it is the biggest case of man boobs ever," Zhang added.



Feng needs a 'Bro' or a 'Mansierre'.

NEON BRIGHTS NAIL POLISH UP FOR GRABS



Every day this week, *Pharmacy Daily* is giving readers the chance to win 1 nail polish from the latest Neon Brights range, courtesy of Total Beauty Network.

Exclusive to the Designer Brands Nail Care range is Neon Brights, a kaleidoscope of the hottest neon colours that are chip & fade-proof, quick drying and long lasting! Get a professional finish

with the exclusively designed brush for the perfect application.

For your chance to win a Neon Brights nail polish this week, simply send through the correct answer to the daily question below:

How many colours is in the Neon Brights range?

Send entry to: comp@pharmacydaily.com.au

The first correct entry received each day will win.

Hint! Visit www.tbn.com.au.



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