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Herbal scare overblown

THE Australian Self-Medication Industry has once again responded to a recent article published in the *Sydney Daily Telegraph* which suggested herbal remedies "pose a serious threat to consumer health" by saying the threat was overblown and ill founded.

According to ASMI, the report quoted a paper by Professor Roger Byard of the University of Adelaide who based his research on studies of herbal products in the US where herbal and complementary medicines are unregulated.

ASMI argues that this research is not indicative of the situation in Australia where both herbal and complementary products are subject to strict quality control processes, meaning many of the products sold in the US are in fact not available in Australia.

"Australia has one of the most comprehensive regulatory arrangements in the world for complementary medicines," said ASMI regulatory and technical manager for Complementary Medicines, Ruth Kendon.

"The Therapeutic Goods Administration is the body responsible for overseeing this regime and it has an outstanding reputation for ensuring quality and safety including quality materials," she added.

Kendon also said that a portion of the adverse reactions to the items in the article related to cases where extremely high doses of the medicines were administered, and that the majority of evidence give for medication interaction was purely theoretical, had no evidential basis and for the most part had been subsequently disproven.

In particular, in the case of Black Cohosh, which featured in the report, the TGA mandated label warnings several years ago to alert consumers to the possibility of a "very rare risk of liver damage".

ASMI urged consumers to consult the advice of health professionals when considering a new treatment.

\$2 billion in PBS price cuts

AN AGREEMENT between the government and Medicines Australia is set to see \$2 billion in new savings on the PBS announced in next week's Federal Budget.

The move, revealed in today's *Financial Review*, will reportedly extend mandatory price disclosure as more drugs come off patent - but will also see the government undertake not to introduce any new therapeutic groups.

Health minister Nicola Roxon is set to announce the changes next week, with manufacturers agreeing to concessions in return for industry certainty in the coming years.

The \$2 billion in price cuts will be effective over the next four years, and the *AFR* also said that if the industry doesn't deliver the savings there will be a mechanism to "claw back the targeted subsidies direct from industry coffers".

Guild President Kos Sclavos, who earlier this week unveiled the details of the Fifth Community Pharmacy Agreement (*PD* yesterday), said he wasn't able to comment on budget sensitive issues due to the confidentiality of the Guild-Government negotiations.

However during a briefing on the 5CPA with media on Mon afternoon it was clear that the talks did include all flow-on impacts to community pharmacy, with the agreement incorporating a "whole

Asthma gets a boost

THE Federal Government has announced \$22.6m of funding for the next four-year phase of the Asthma Management Program.

The aim of the program is to reduce the impact of asthma through community education, active and self-management as well as the provision of training for healthcare professionals, and as part of its new phase will also include programs into linked respiratory conditions such as allergy, rhinitis and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

of pharmacy approach".

Sclavos said on Mon that "the signed agreement has many contingencies contained in it and because of budget sensitive items the full agreement documentation cannot be publicly released.

"The savings envelope offered to Government had not changed from 24 December 2010 when the \$1 billion savings amount was announced," he added.

Despite claims in today's *Financial Review* story that this new round of \$2 billion price cuts will upset the Guild, it appears that flow-on impacts to pharmacy will have in fact been already dealt with in the Fifth Agreement.

The fine details and how they will affect pharmacy are expected to be revealed next Tuesday night when the federal Budget is released.

MEANWHILE the Pharmacy Guild has embarked on a national round of Member Meetings to brief pharmacists on the agreement, with the first event held in Perth last night and attended by 150 pharmacists - see tomorrow's *PD* for more details.

The next briefing will be held on Monday night in Canberra.

AMA slams 5CPA

THE Australian Medical Association says it's alarmed that elements of the Fifth Community Pharmacy Agreement "indicate a Government policy shift that puts patient safety at risk by undermining the value of a medical diagnosis."

AMA president Andrew Pesche said there had been no consultation regarding the repeat prescribing provisions (*PD* yesterday), which he said "send a dangerous signal to patients about access to prescription medicines".

He warned that the AMA would be "protesting loud and long" over the move, adding that it shows that "the future of quality health care in this country is under serious threat".

Three pages of news

THERE'S so much going on in pharmacy today that *PD* has three pages including our regular Health, Beauty and New Products feature on page three.

Staged supply move

NEW Staged Supply arrangements under the Fifth Community Pharmacy Agreement will now allow pharmacists, when requested by the prescriber, to dispense PBS medicines in instalments for patients with special needs.

The Guild said the new provision will particularly benefit patients with drug dependency issues or mental health illnesses who would otherwise be unable to manage their medicines safely.

"Given the prevalence of mental health issues in the community, pharmacists' predominant role in adherence to medication will be particularly important," said Guild President Kos Sclavos.

"We envisage the development of national standards for staged supply, and thus consistency among community pharmacies and for patients across the nation".

The agreement provides for a Staged Supply Support Allowance which remunerates pharmacies for their efforts and will be paid to pharmacists as a practice incentive.

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New antimicrobial glove

ANSELL has launched a new world-first Powder Free antimicrobial glove, using proprietary so-called AMT Antimicrobial Technology developed by the company.

The GAMMEX glove is designed with a proprietary antimicrobial coating which according to Ansell's research is effective in killing between 99.7%-99.9% of eight of the most common healthcare infectious bacteria, comprising gram-positive, gram-negative, and drug-resistant bacteria within just 60 seconds from exposure.

Additionally the company claims that the glove's antimicrobial coating killed 99% per cent of Hepatitis C¹ and 99% of HIV-1 (strain Mn) within 60 seconds of exposure through a simulated glove breach.

The company said the Gammex gloves are now set to progressively roll out in all of its markets over the coming months.

For more info see www.ansell.com.



ASMI urges S3 advertising

THE Australian Self-Medication Industry has today called for reforms to advertising regulations for medical products to allow consumer promotion of Schedule 3 medications in Australia.

ASMI said that the current prohibition on consumer advertising of S3 medicines unless they have an Appendix H listing "is short-changing consumers, and harming manufacturers who are unable to bring products to the notice of consumers who may benefit from them".

Executive director, Juliet Seifert, said "It does not make sense to have a category of medicines that is available to the public, without prescription, but which is not able to be advertised to those who may need them.

"If these medicines are sufficiently safe to be allowed to be sold without the need for a prescription, it also makes sense to allow them to be responsibly advertised," she said.

The move follows this month's

rescheduling of codeine-containing analgesics, but also applies to other S3 items including proton pump inhibitors and treatments for eye infections and weight loss.

Seifert said the situation was damaging to the industry, with one major pharmaceutical firm required to restructure operations because its S3 product wasn't able to gain the advertising necessary to reach a broad-based consumer market.

"If the current restrictions remain the S3 category without advertising will remain a backwater of little-known products that are largely uneconomic for providers," she warned.

"It's time that the advertising controls relevant to the Pharmacist Only category were reviewed in light of recent scheduling decisions, and the need for increased consumer awareness about latest treatment options," Seifert added, saying that without knowledge of the alternative treatments available patients are also more likely to have to visit "an already overstretched GP" for minor ailments, "when an effective OTC remedy is available at a pharmacy".

Hypochondria spike

ACCORDING to researchers at Monash University, around one in five Australians suffer from hypochondria, a condition which places "excess and avoidable stress" on the health system every year.

Based on analysis from the 2007 Mental Health Survey, the researchers found that around 4.2% of Aussies in 2006 presented to their GPs with symptoms of hypochondriasis and 5.7% suffered hypochondriasis over their lifetime.

"Most people who have had it, have had it in the last 12 months," said lead researcher Professor David Clarke.

He said that around 20% of all patients presenting to GPs are somatisers (related to hypochondria but where patients turn mental distress into a physical symptom) and this level rises dramatically - to 60% - for patients who suffer depression or anxiety.

Both hypochondria and somatisation are easily treated, with cognitive behavioural therapy, he added.

PSA ceo resigns

THE chief executive officer of the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia, Bryan Stevens, has today announced his resignation.

Stevens joined the PSA in Jul 2008 and has led the organisation through the "complex process of unification" according to acting PSA president, Grant Kardachi, who added that his leadership "had also seen PSA develop into a strong and highly respected voice of pharmacy" - as reflected in the Fifth Agreement signed this week which "following representations from PSA now includes a strong emphasis on professional programs."

Stevens' departure will be effective from Tuesday 05 October.

Broccoli for breasts?

A RECENT study has linked a compound found in broccoli (sulforaphane) with the death of cancer stem cells in breast cancer.

Scientists found that sulforaphane when administered to rats and mice actively sought out the breast cancer stem cells (which are responsible for tumour development) and killed them, retarding the disease's progression.

Free bone seminar

THIS month The Garvan Institute of Medical Research, in conjunction with the National Council of Women of Australia and Osteoporosis Australia, is hosting a free public osteoporosis seminar titled 'Beating Brittle Bones'.

The seminar, to be held in Sydney on 26 May, will include presentations from Australia's Governor General, Quentin Bryce, former Olympic sprinter Melinda Gainsford-Taylor as well as three of the country's leading bone experts.

The seminar will provide attendees with information about osteoporosis in Australia, its risk factors and diagnosis as well as how to best manage, prevent and treat the condition.

"Only 43 per cent of women diagnosed with osteoporosis believe their risk of fracture to be increased while many are unaware that there are simple measures available to minimise the effect of the disease on their day-to-day lives," said Professor John Eisman, Director of the Osteoporosis and Bone Biology Program at the Garvan.

To register for attendance call 02 9884 9100 by Friday 14 May.

WIN AUSTRALIS EYESHADOWS



Australis has teamed up with **Pharmacy Daily** this week, giving readers the chance to win Australis Intensifeye Wet/Dry eyeshadows.

Look out lids, you're in for an eye brightening

experience! Colour intense pressed eyeshadows that are high in pigment content for an extreme colour payoff when used both wet and dry. Use wet to intensify the colour pigments and gain longer-lasting colour. The high-end quality, silky-smooth formulation is long-lasting, smudge and crease proof. In a range of perfectly chosen shades for contouring, shading and highlighting in a variety of trios and quads, show-stopping, unforgettable eyes are just a brush away.

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Email your answer to: comp@pharmacydaily.com.au

The first correct entry received will win!

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

Congratulations to yesterday's lucky winner: **Dimity McDouall** from **Gold Cross Products and Services**. The correct answer was: Both



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Health, Beauty and New Products

Welcome to our weekly feature with all the latest health, beauty and new products for pharmacy!

Suppliers wanting to promote products in this feature should email advertising@pharmacydaily.com.au.

Vegetarian supplements a-plenty!

Vegetarians will be over the moon to discover Pretorius' selection of vegetarian specific supplements. Included in the range is a Vegetarian Multi which has been specifically designed to provide nutrients that may be lacking in vege and vegan diets. Also featured in the line-up is Vegetarian Glucosamine 1500 which has been formulated entirely from corn (great for people with fish allergies also) as well as a complete vegetarian digestive enzyme supplement 'Vegetable Enzymes' made from amylase, protease, lipase and cellulase to aid with the function of digestion and alleviate the symptoms of poor digestion.

RRP: \$35.95 (Multivitamin), \$39.95 (Glucosamine), \$30.95 (Enzymes)
Stockist: 1800 791 381



DISPENSARY CORNER

FORGET BPharm - what about a Bachelor of Dreams and Visions?

Imagine no more, Saudi Arabian-based dream interpreter, Yusuf al-Harthy, has announced plans to launch a Dream Institute, which will offer students bachelor, masters and doctorate degrees in Dreams and Visions.

"Dream interpretation is by nature a way of counselling a person," said Harthy.

The Institute is set to be linked to an as-yet unnamed Middle Eastern University, and will qualify students to decipher and interpret dreams.

GOAT rampages nursing home?

A Victorian goat has caused a massive furore at the On Luck Chinese nursing home in Melbourne after it escaped its neighbouring enclosure and took to the home's juicy green lawns.

All was going well for the goat, until a gardener discovered its gluttonous ways and tried to shoo it off the grounds.

The goat got grumpy and head-butted the gardener sending him to the ground, and then faced off with an elderly gentleman who rushed to his aid.

A female resident then ran off to call for help - injuring her ankle in the process.

Goat three, humans nil: until of course the police arrived with the goat's owner to tether the wayward Billy and lead him home.

Neighbours of the grumpy goat were surprised at his behaviour, saying he was usually well behaved.

PORK put under pressure!

Kazakhstani scientists have devised a test for traces of pork products in non-pork food.

According to the scientists chefs in their country often cheat patrons who adhere to strict Islamic rules of not eating pork, by combining other meat products such as beef with bits of pork to make it cheaper to produce.

The new test is designed like a pregnancy test in that it is a stick which changes colour when applied to food containing porcine traces.

It's really none of your Frizziness!

Clairol Herbal Essences has expanded its None of your Frizziness range to include a brand new Smoothing Serum. Made using hair smoothing silicones (cyclopentasiloxane and dimethiconol) which coat hair strands to transform the appearance and surface texture of hair from frizzy to sleek, shiny and smooth the Serum also contains traces of sweet smelling citrus and pearl to add a slight luminosity to the hair. As an added bonus the silicones also make hair easier to brush without suffering breakage.

RRP: \$9.99 (available to order from June)
Stockist: 1800 028 280



Pure water without the use of pills

AquaSafeStraw is a portable drinking straw which filters water as the user drinks, without the use of any chemicals. The patented technology filters 99.9% of waterborne germs and bacteria (including giardia and cryptosporidium) from tap water through microfiltration via microporous membrane. The straws are lightweight and can be carried in pockets and bags, and can be stored and used periodically over extended periods of time. Each straw can also filter up to 500 litres, is reusable and can provide users with up to nine months of continuous use.

RRP: \$59.95 per straw
Stockist: 1800 602 446



New formulation for an old favourite

Pantene has re-worked the formulation for its 'Nourished Shine', 'Daily Moisture Renewal', 'Deep Fortifying', 'Colour Therapy', 'Classic Clean', 'Extra straight', 'Hydrating Curls', 'Sheer Volume' and 'Always Smooth' shampoos and conditioners. The new shampoo formulas are designed to more effectively remove excess sebum, dirt and oil rather than redistributing it, whilst the new conditioning formulation more easily distributes and holds conditioning agents to the hairs' surface improving its overall texture and appearance.

RRP: \$7.99 (350ml)
Stockist: 1800 028 280



Spray on hair removal

Veet has extended its spray-on hair removal product range by adding two new products. 'Veet Spray-On Hair Removal Cream with Aloe Vera & Vitamin E' is tailored to the needs of sensitive skin whilst 'Veet Spray-On Hair Removal Cream with Shea Butter & Lily' is designed with dry skin in mind. Simple to use, the creams need only be sprayed onto legs, left for 3 - 5 mins and removed with a spatula before a quick leg rinse under water.

RRP: \$14.49
Stockist: 1800 226 766

