



Guid Update

Home Medicines Reviews under the Fifth Community Pharmacy Agreement

Home Medicines Reviews (HMRs) continue to be funded under the Fifth Community Pharmacy Agreement.

Future changes to the HMR referral pathway may include:

- **Improved targeting.** The proposed Medicines Use Review Program aims to complement HMRs, which may mean that some patients eligible for HMRs may be better suited to receive the new service.
- **Improved access.** Patients who have been recently discharged from hospital and are deemed to be at risk may have improved access to a HMR that is provided within a short period of time.
- **Direct referral.** The Fifth Agreement may allow the opportunity for a GP to send the HMR referral directly to an accredited pharmacist of the patient's choice.

Pharmacists and general practitioners are advised that they must continue providing the HMR service to their patients in the usual manner ensuring the community pharmacy receives the referral from the general practitioner.

A GP cannot directly refer a patient to an accredited pharmacist until proposed changes have been finalised and implemented.

The proposed changes and timeframes are currently under negotiation.

Modifications to the new HMR referral pathways will be communicated to pharmacists and doctors through the Pharmacy Guild of Australia and the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.

To access current Medicare Forms please visit:

www.medicareaustralia.gov.au/provider/pbs/fifth-agreement/home-medicines-review.jsp

For further information: HMR Program Manager on 02 6270 1888.



PBS health reform passes

THE Australian Parliament has passed the National Health Amendment (Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme) Bill 2010, effectively legislating the PBS price cuts as agreed to in the Memorandum of Understanding between Medicines Australia and the Commonwealth.

The Bill sets out new PBS pricing arrangements which are designed to reduce PBS expenditure, as well as increase faster access for consumers to low cost medications, and provide assurity to the pharmaceutical industry in relation to PBS pricing (PD 17 Nov).

Medicines Australia has welcomed the passage of the legislation saying that it would 'work with all sides of politics and healthcare stakeholders to ensure the MoU was implemented efficiently'.

"This legislation will lead to reductions in the price consumers pay for hundreds of medicines on the PBS," said Medicines Australia ce, Dr Brendan Shaw.

"While the cuts contained in the

ASMI on ailments

AROUND 15% of GP time is involved in treating minor ailments, adding to the pressure on over stretched GPs, said ASMI's executive director, Dr Deon Schoombie.

The comments come on the back of today's health forum, organised by ASMI and attended by consumer and GP representatives, as well as pharmacy health information providers and international healthcare providers to discuss better consumer access for treatment of minor ailments.

"The forum discussed how key organisations operating across the health system can work cooperatively to develop initiatives to achieve better use of GP time and improve access to professional healthcare information, including through pharmacists and established advice lines," said Schoombie.

According to Schoombie whilst the new Healthdirect Australia advice telephone line is a step in the right direction, "we need to achieve greater numbers of people accessing this service, and other outlets like pharmacies, to reduce the pressure on our over-burdened medical system".

Bill will have a significant financial impact on our member companies, the MoU will provide a period of policy predictability for Australia's medicines industry.

"This certainty will allow Australia's medicines industry to get on with what it does best," he added.

Canadian prescribers

THE Canadian Manitoba Pharmaceutical Society has thrown its support behind draft changes to the province's 2006 Pharmaceutical Act which would give pharmacists the right to prescribe medications including steroids, antibiotics, and antifungals, for the treatment of mild conditions.

The changes would also allow pharmacists the ability to order simple diagnostic tests.

It is now expected that the changes will pass through the Canadian authorisation channels for implementation next year.

Graduate entry

UNIVERSITY graduates from any discipline are being invited to apply for entry into the University of Sydney's 2-year Master of Pharmacy program.

A special examination called the Graduate Australian Medical School Admissions Test (GAMSAT) will operate in March next year, and graduates who complete it successfully can apply for the pharmacy course as well as to enter MBBS courses at ANU, Deakin, Flinders, Griffith, Monash, Notre Dame, Queensland, Sydney, Wollongong, Western Australia and Melbourne universities.

Anti-illegal drug syringe

UCONFIDISC has announced it has patented the world's first anti-illegal drug syringe device, aptly titled 'Confidisc'.

Basically the device can be fitted to the hub of any existing syringe during or after manufacture, restricting the view of the user and working as a barrier to disallow users to inject at the necessary angle for intravenous injection (the devices' edge touches the skin before the needle).

The disk can also be tracked from manufacture to disposal.

Stressed students

A RECENT study conducted by researchers at the University of Queensland has revealed that students suffer more mental distress, on average, than the general population.

The study looked at responses from 6500 students, 89% of whom reported suffering some form of mental distress, whilst 19% reported suffering from a serious mental illness.

Researchers also noted a concerning trend whereby students fail to seek help for their distress and illnesses, with only one third of sufferers reporting they had sought professional advice.

The findings show a significant spike in mental distress levels in uni students compared to the general population (29%), as well as higher levels of mental illness compared to the general population's 3% of sufferers.

At present, the University of Queensland has partnered with the national depression initiative Beyond Blue, to develop an online program, with the aim of providing support and stress mastery techniques to students in need.



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Pharmacist fees

THE South African Pharmacy Stakeholders Forum has backed plans to do away with individually set pharmacist dispensing fees in favour of a national standard tiered system.

Pharmacists in South Africa have been able to set their own dispensing fees based on their business expenses, for the past five years.

These fees, according to the PSF, have also been effected by the payment made to individual pharmacies from the nation's Medical Schemes.

Lately pharmacies in South Africa have come under fire from sectors of the media, who accuse them of price gouging.

According to the PSF, the new standardised system will create "transparency and fairness".

The new tiered system will see four price bands set for pharmacy medications (except for Schedule 0 which pertains to medications such as antiseptic soap), with each having a set 'maximum' dispensing fee.

The new fees will be set by the SA Department of Health.

Sigma sells up to Aspen

SIGMA Pharmaceuticals has agreed to sell its Pharmaceutical Division to South African company Aspen Pharmacare for a tidy \$900 million.

The deal, initially agreed to "in principle" earlier this year, has now been finalised with the terms and conditions of the sale, as well as the status of the ongoing relationship between Sigma and Aspen formalised (**PD** breaking news).

For its \$900m, Aspen will acquire Sigma's generics, consumer, OTC, Herron, Ethical Products, Medical Products, and Orphan and Manufacturing businesses.

"The Board considers the sale of the Pharmaceuticals Division to Aspen to provide the best outcome for Sigma shareholders," said Sigma chairman, Brian Jamieson.

Under the formalised agreement

Sigma's ongoing relationship will see it act as Aspen's preferred distribution partner under a long-term supply agreement.

In turn Aspen has also agreed to manufacture product for Sigma on an ongoing basis.

The sale of its Pharmaceuticals Division will also allow Sigma to consider capital management initiatives (which could include the payment of a special dividend to shareholders) as well as to significantly reduce its bank debt.

Under the terms of agreement Sigma will retain full ownership of the Healthcare Division, comprising of its wholesale and retail businesses.

Cigarette sales

LEGISLATION targeting internet advertising of cigarettes as 'cheap' or 'tax free' was introduced to Parliament this month.

Titled the Tobacco Advertising Prohibition Amendment, the Bill aims to bring restrictions on tobacco advertising on the internet into line with restrictions in other media and at points of sale.

Life with Botox

A RECENT double-blind randomized placebo-controlled survey published in *Dermatologic Surgery*, found that patients injected with Botox had improved levels of self esteem up to three months after receiving injections.

The survey looked at responses from 100 people who were given either Botox Cosmetic or saline placebo injections for wrinkles, with findings showing Botox recipients reported "significant improvements" in quality of life questions including physical health, mood and overall life satisfaction.

Dunlevy to ACT

FORMER *Daily Telegraph* health writer Sue Dunlevy has moved across to fellow News Limited publication *The Australian*, where she will be the Canberra-based health and social affairs reporter.

Dunlevy has previously attracted attention from across the industry for a number of negative stories criticising community pharmacy and the operation of the PBS.



DISPENSARY CORNER

THREE legged duck.

A farmer in China was shocked to discover one of his ducks had three legs, whilst vaccinating his flock prior to selling them.

Not only did his three legged friend have an extra limb, but the duck was also found to be sporting four feet.

"I have been raising ducks for more than 10 years but I have never seen anything like this before," the farmer told local media.

"It has an extra leg behind the other two and that leg has two feet," he added.

Livestock experts have decreed the extra parts are "almost certainly" due to a mutation in the duck's genetic code.

As for the duck itself, instead of being sold at market, the farmer has decided to keep it as a pet, in order to "see how it does".

CHIHUAHUA comes to the fore.

A small white-and-brown dog Momo has become possibly the world's first Chihuahua police dog.

The seven-year old canine detective was one of 32 dogs to pass his exams to become a fully fledged police dog in Japan.

Momo aced the exam with flying colours, after locating a person within five minutes after just one sniff of an article of clothing.

As part of his new duties, Momo (meaning Peach), will be deployed in search and rescue operations.

LAZINESS has a new name...

Ricky New, a 45-year old US citizen, was arrested recently after robbing a convenience store in South Carolina, and then taking off full pelt, on a lawn mower.

Not the cleverest thief, New disguised his face with a white towel, but the slow progress of his getaway vehicle made him fairly easy to arrest.

Police have speculated that New may have been faster on foot.

WIN AN EYE CANDY PALETTE



Every day this week, **Pharmacy Daily** is giving readers the chance to win a Eye Candy Palette courtesy of **Total Beauty Network**.

Designer Brands Eye Candy Palettes have a brilliant lustre and finish. Created for staying power and will not cake! The mineral formulation contains skin nurturing

ingredients like Aloe Vera and Vitamin E, and the long-lasting formulas provide a fabulous finish every time.

For your chance to win, simply send through the correct answer to the daily question below:

What are the names of the 3 palettes in the range?

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

The first correct entry received will win!

Hint: Visit www.dbcosmetics.com.au

Congratulations to yesterday's lucky winner, **Noelene Morris** from **Marlin Coast Amcal Pharmacy**.