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## Weekly Comment

Welcome to **Pharmacy Daily's** weekly comment feature. This week's contributor is Corrin O'Brien, Medical and Regulatory Affairs Associate at Galderma Australia.

### Eczema- just dry and itchy skin?

When I first started working in retail pharmacy, my clinical perception of eczema was that it was dry and itchy skin that mostly affected children.

A number of years and a pharmacy degree later, I now understand that it is a little more complex than that.

Put simply eczema, clinically known as 'dermatitis', is an inflammation of the skin.

There are many forms of eczema, for example atopic, contact and seborrheic, with atopic eczema the most common.

Atopic eczema is more frequently experienced by people who have a family history of an atopic disorder, e.g. asthma or hay fever.

It is not contagious and more common in children.

But why is eczema more frequent in children?

Well, typically children's skin is more sensitive than adult's skin.

Therefore, given the number of products aimed at children on the market, it can be difficult to know what cleansers and moisturisers to recommend to minimise the child's exposure to allergens.

Cleansers should be gentle, pH balanced, fragrance-free, and most importantly soap-free.

Ideally, they should also be a shampoo alternative.

Like a cleanser, a moisturiser should be pH balanced, fragrance-free and pleasant to use but not contain alcohol or lanolin.

A good moisturiser will help to smooth and soften the skin.

Given all this talk about eczema, September 6 to 12 is National Eczema Awareness Week.

For more information on how you can support this week or to



order posters and brochures, contact the Eczema Association of Australasia on freecall 1300 300 182 or visit their website at [www.eczema.org.au](http://www.eczema.org.au).

## Codeine is generally safe

**THE** Australian Self Medication Industry has responded to recent concern over the safety of non-prescription medicines containing codeine, saying that, in general they are safe and effective if used appropriately.

The statement closely follows the publication of a study in the *Medical Journal of Australia* titled 'Serious morbidity associated with misuse of over-the-counter codeine-ibuprofen analgesics' which looked at 27 cases of patients who had either sought treatment for opioid addiction or were referred to a hospital addiction service between 2005 and 2008.

Surmising their study conclusions the researchers said "the significant morbidity and specific

### Key opportunities

**THE** key to solving young pharmacists workforce issues relating to oversupply lies in new opportunities outside of traditional pharmacy models, according to the chair of the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia's Early Career Pharmacist Working Group, Justin Lee.

The comments come on the back of recently released figures which showed that the number of new nationwide pharmacy student enrolments in 2002 were 4241 compared to 6115 in 2006.

"Since then that number has risen even further with the entry of more pharmacy schools and so great is the problem that it was researched recently by an ECPWG survey of early career pharmacists," Lee said.

According to the results of the survey, early career pharmacists viewed workforce oversupply as their 'primary concern'.

"Some ECPs seem unable to find full-time work and seem disillusioned with their future in the profession," said Lee.

"This is also having an impact on wages for pharmacists," he added.

In terms of a solution, Lee suggested that new opportunities created through additional professional services or new retail models where non-dispensing pharmacists are "fully utilised" may be two ways of helping to find young pharmacists work.

To view the ECP survey results see [www.psa.org.au/ecp](http://www.psa.org.au/ecp).

patient characteristics associated with overuse of codeine-ibuprofen analgesics support further awareness, investigation and monitoring of OTC codeine-ibuprofen analgesic use".

Rebuffing industry concern over the results, ASMI's regulatory and scientific affairs director, Steven Scarff said that it was important to keep in mind that the study was "very small, comprising of 27 people over three years".

"It should be remembered that the mean dose range of those in the study was 37 to 47 tablets per day, with one patient taking up to 100 tablets per day.

"That level of use constitutes gross overuse, and is far in excess of what is recommended, and what is typical for the majority of consumers," he said.

Scarff also highlighted the recent introduction of pharmacist-only restrictions to the sale of non-prescription medicines containing codeine saying that (as opposed to when the study timeline 2005-08) pharmacists now have the ability to identify and engage with consumers and problem users.

"ASMI supports calls for high levels of awareness amongst healthcare professionals and pharmacy staff to identify problem users," he said.

"Consumers should be reminded to follow the label instructions and to talk to their GP or pharmacist if their pain persists," he added.

### PD Friday winner

**CONGRATULATIONS** to Jennifer Chong, pharmacy student at the University of Sydney who was the lucky winner of Friday's ULittleBeauty competition.

## Investment needed

**MEDICINES** Australia is calling on world governments to work with pharmaceutical companies to create "the right policy environment for research into urgently-needed new antibiotics".

The call follows the World Health Organisation's new warning regarding the potential global spread of a new multi-drug resistant bacteria, as well as new research published in the *Lancet* which cited evidence of a new gene making several strands of bacteria resistant to almost all bacteria.

"Governments must start giving serious thought to how they can work with pharmaceutical companies to encourage investment in new antibiotics in response to the growing threat of superbugs," said Medicines Australia ceo Dr Brendan Shaw.

Shaw suggested Incentives for commercialising promising technologies as one option to encourage investment, adding that "extending patent terms, R&D tax credits and commercialisation funds" may also help to provide financial incentives to commercialise antibiotics.

"Governments should also look carefully at how they assess the prices they are prepared to pay for new antibiotics," he said.

"Comparing new medicines against cheap, old generics can lead to industry avoiding further investment in a therapeutic area such as antibiotics and investing instead in other areas where the return is greater.

"In cancer, governments have been prepared to pay for new treatments as they are developed. The result is that today the industry has over 800 new cancer medicines in development compared with 83 antibiotics," Shaw added.



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## Sydney Uni celebration

PHARMACY industry members and alumni are invited to attend the University of Sydney's Faculty of Pharmacy 10th anniversary celebrations, to be held on 07 Oct at MacLaurin Hall.

Tickets to the dinner event are \$150 and include a three course meal, pharmacy trivia, live music and guest speakers.

For info email Jo Bilous on [jo.bilous@sydney.edu.au](mailto:jo.bilous@sydney.edu.au) or call 02 9351 7829.

## Herpes education

NORVARTIS, in conjunction with the Australian Herpes Management Forum has launched an unusual new competition, asking budding film-makers to create 30-second films aimed at destigmatising the herpes simplex virus.

With \$15,000 worth of cash prizes up for grabs, keen entrants have until 24 Sep to write, shoot and edit the short films, five of which will make it to the Sydney finals and live screening on 19 Oct where judges will name the winner.

For more information visit: [www.liveandlove.com.au](http://www.liveandlove.com.au).

## Sizzling prostate campaign

LAST week, against the beautiful backdrop of Sydney's Jones Bay Wharf, The Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia launched its Sizzling September campaign aimed at getting Aussies to host BBQ's to raise both funds and awareness for the charity's cause.

Littered with male sporting, TV and movie stars the event coincided with the kick-off of International Prostate Awareness Month.

Speaking at the event, Andrew Giles, ceo of the Prostate Cancer Foundation, cited AIHW figures which estimate that in 2010 alone around 20,000 Aussie men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer and more than 3,300 Australian men will lose their life to this disease, effectively making prostate cancer not only Australia's most commonly diagnosed cancer, but also the nation's greatest cancer killer.

"What we're trying to do is encourage everyone to go out and have a BBQ to talk about prostate cancer and ideally to raise some funds as well for our world class research, awareness and support that we run here in Australia," Giles

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and *Pharmacy Daily*.

As part of its campaign the Prostate foundation has garnered the support of the Commonwealth Bank with a deal which will see local branches stock \$20 BBQ Kits (tongs, apron, stubby holder and napkins) which the public can buy for their charity BBQ, the proceeds of which will go directly to the PCFA.

"It's really about taking away some of the stigma associated with prostate cancer, and that's why we've gone with the 'big blokes' idea and lots of sporting identities, to try and show that if they're willing to talk about prostate cancer then so should all guys," Giles said, referring to the sheer amount of celebrities in attendance at the launch and attached to the cause.

Speaking on the importance of pharmacists in raising prostate cancer awareness, Giles told *PD* that "when the guys go to buy their drugs, or have a conversation, they normally go to their pharmacist, they're the most trusted industry in the country."

"So at the moment we're actually working on a campaign to get information into all pharmacists in the country, because we just think that they're such an untapped resource.

"Pharmacists can play an important educational role," he added.

In terms of getting onboard for the September campaign, Giles suggests the best way for pharmacists to get involved is to host a BBQ, check out the website for more information, or to contact the Foundation directly to organise more potential education/fundraising opportunities.

See [www.prostate.org.au](http://www.prostate.org.au) or call 1800 220 099.

## NZ Guild PHARMAC

THE NZ Pharmacy Guild has entered into an agreement with NZ authorities to fund the "public good aspects" of the Pharmacode database system used by pharmacies and suppliers throughout NZ.

Introduced by the Guild in 1981, the new funding means that the system is available for use in the NZ Universal List of Medicines.



## DISPENSARY CORNER

MY cat made me do it.

A Japanese man, Tsutomu Mizumoto, distraught by the passing of his beloved feline companion was arrested last week following a three hour road rampage.

According to reports the man was initially spotted driving on the wrong side of the road at 5.45am last Wednesday morning, and police were called in.

The man then lead police on a three hour chase, during which he crashed through five emergency blockades and a tollgate before eventually pulling over.

"I was sad my pet cat died," Mizumoto said.

"I wanted to do something crazy," he added.

**SMOKE** and drink more for the good of your country!

The Russian finance minister, Alexei Kudrin, is calling on the people of Russia to increase their intake of cigarettes and alcohol in a bid to boost the country's bank balance through product taxes.

"If you smoke a pack of cigarettes, that means you are giving more to help solve social problems," he said.

"People should understand: Those who drink, those who smoke are doing more to help the state," he added.

## SURPRISE!

A British couple have had to make a few adjustments to their life following the discovery that their three week old baby girl Olivia, was in fact a three week old baby boy.

Born eleven weeks prematurely via an emergency cesarean, doctors initially thought the incubated baby was a girl.

However as the weeks moved on, the baby (not fully formed at birth) developed, it became apparent she was actually a he.

Whilst visiting 'Olivia' the proud parents were taken aside and told the news, and shortly after settled on the name Dylan, and are still to decide on what to do with all their female baby gear.

## WIN A MINERAL EYESHADOW



Every day this week, *Pharmacy Daily* is giving readers the chance to win a Mineral Eyeshadow from the Love Candy range courtesy of **Total Beauty Network**.

Fall in love with colour! Hearts will be broken everywhere with the release of Designer Brands Love Candy, sweet inspired

products to taunt and tantalise your desire for colour.

The Love Candy range consists of nine vibrant eyeshadows, three tempting shades of nail polish and three opaque glosses.

For a chance to win your very own Mineral Eyeshadow, simply send through the correct answer to the daily question below:

**How many eyeshadow shades are in the Love Candy range?**

Email your answer to: [comp@pharmacydaily.com.au](mailto:comp@pharmacydaily.com.au)

The first correct entry received will win!

Hint: Visit: [www.dbcosmetics.com.au](http://www.dbcosmetics.com.au)