

## Guild Update

This week's update  
from the Guild

### Welcome back, Nicola

**THE** Pharmacy Guild looks forward to working with Health Minister Nicola Roxon in the new term of government as she continues her work on the health reform agenda.

After weeks of uncertainty following the election on 21 August, the confirmation that Minister Roxon will continue in the portfolio is welcomed.

The Guild also congratulates Mark Butler on his elevation to the portfolio of Mental Health and Ageing – two areas in which community pharmacy plays an important and expanding role.

We also congratulate the Member for Ballarat Catherine King on her promotion to the position of Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Ageing, where her areas of responsibility will include the Therapeutic Goods Administration.

Minister Roxon made it known that she wanted to remain in the demanding health role, and the fact that the Prime Minister has renewed her commission is a credit to the Minister's determination to turn the reform agenda into a health care reality.

This week Ms Roxon said she would focus on, among other things, "unleashing the benefits of e-health."

The Pharmacy Guild has an ongoing commitment and track record in relation to the development of e-health initiatives in community pharmacy, so we look forward to continuing the dialogue with Minister Roxon and the Department of Health and Ageing.

The Fifth Community Pharmacy Agreement broke new ground in providing a payment to community pharmacists for electronic prescriptions, and there is more we can do together in this exciting and beneficial technological field.



The Pharmacy  
Guild of Australia

## Voltaren feels increased heat

**NOVARTIS** Australia has hit back at recent abstract presented by European Society of Cardiology which called into question the safety of diclofenac (Voltaren) saying it was associated with increased cardiovascular mortality and morbidity and should be used with caution in most individuals.

The abstract is in part based on the findings of a recent Danish study into the safety of nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) published in the journal *Circulation: Cardiovascular Quality and Outcomes*, which concluded that caution should be exercised when prescribing and administering diclofenac in "most individuals" due to an increased risk of cardiovascular mortality and morbidity.

Responding to the abstract and the study Novartis has said that "in the context of the extensive worldwide clinical experience with diclofenac, we do not believe this Danish study changes the benefit to risk assessment for diclofenac when used as directed".

"Diclofenac should be used at the lowest possible dose for the shortest duration of time, in keeping with advice provided to prescribers in the approved product information," a statement from the company said.

As a result of the study and the stir it has caused, Novartis is also hoping to stem concerns by advising patients to continue on with diclofenac as directed and to speak to their GP or pharmacist if they have any concerns.

"Patient safety is of the utmost importance to Novartis," the statement said.

"Novartis maintains a robust drug

safety monitoring process for all its medicines, the data from which is shared with the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) on a regular basis.

"[We] will continue to work with the TGA to monitor and analyse research related to our medicines to ensure the information provided to both doctors and patients is consistent with current scientific knowledge," the statement concluded.

**MEANWHILE** The Australian Self-Medication Industry has also added its voice to the debate, reassuring patients that non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medicines play an important role in short term pain relief.

Discussing the original Danish study, ASMI scientific affairs director, Steven Scarff said that it was important to note that the pain relievers examined were prescription-only (and hence were taken in higher dosages) and were supplied for longer periods (of around two weeks) than recommended for over-the-counter use.

Scarff also noted that, as a historical review of medical record data, the study did not take into account patients' pre-existing cardiovascular conditions or the presence of other cardiovascular risk factors.

"NSAIDs are safe when used as directed, but like any medicine they can cause problems if used incorrectly," Scarff said.

As a point of interest Scarff also noted that the study found the use of low-dose ibuprofen and diclofenac was associated with a decrease in risk of cardiovascular death.

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## ASMI compliments

**THE** Australian Self Medication Industry has praised the latest Access Economics report for the National Institute of Complementary Medicine, which highlighted the potential for significant healthcare savings through a wider use of complementary medicines (PD yesterday).

Commenting on the study's results, executive director of ASMI, Deon Schoombie, said that the research provided a 'sound economic foundation for wider acceptance and legitimacy of complementary medicines'.

"When taken together with the strong body of clinical evidence in support of complementary medicines, we now have strong economic evidence demonstrating the important part they can play in healthcare," said Schoombie.

"This should enhance the case for further research into those areas where complementary medicines can be most valuable, particularly in preventative health and managing chronic conditions," Schoombie added.

The study in particular looked at St John's wort, fish oils, acupuncture and the herbal anti-inflammatories Phytodolor and Remotiv.

"It is clear that many Australians have turned to complementary medicines as a means of helping to manage chronic conditions and maintaining good health," Schoombie said.

"These treatments should be integrated into the prevention and management of conditions which contribute to the huge burden of disease.

"It could also form an essential element in the trend to consumer self care, where individuals are taking greater personal responsibility for their health," Schoombie added.

## GMIA extensions

**THE** Australian Competition and Consumer Commission has announced it will extend the deadline for the consideration of applications regarding the Generic Medicines Industry Association's Code of Conduct until 11 Nov 2011.

For more information visit [www.accc.gov.au](http://www.accc.gov.au).

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## CVD at PAC

**THE** Pharmaceutical Society of Australia will offer a special session at its upcoming Pharmacy Australia Congress titled "Screening and Early Detection Services in Pharmacy in Australia - What We Can Do Now in Cardiovascular Disease".

The presentation will be made by Kevin McNamara from Monash University, who said there was much evidence to demonstrate that "community pharmacists can deliver effective interventions for many individual risk factors, as well as early detection and awareness".

He said he would focus on new evidence for pharmacist effectiveness emanating from research undertaken as part of the Fourth Community Pharmacy Agreement.

PAC will take place 28-31 Oct in Melbourne, with delegates able to earn up to 35 continuing professional development credits.

For more information, or to register visit the PAC website at - [www.pac10.com.au](http://www.pac10.com.au).

## AHPRA online registration

**THE** new national Australian Health Practitioners Registration Board has opened up online renewals for health professionals whose registration renewal is due by 30 Sep.

The AHPRA said it was already processing "a large number of postal applications", but pharmacists can now apply to renew online, whether or not they have already received a renewal letter from their National Board.

Those with registration due at the end of the month can call AHPRA on 1300 419 495, and once their identity is satisfactorily established, a user ID and password will be supplied so that the renewal can be processed online.

Pharmacists who are not sure when their registration is due can check their status on the National Register at [www.ahpra.gov.au](http://www.ahpra.gov.au).

AHPRA said it will be this week mailing out renewal notices, but those who want to renew now can do so using the new online process.



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## DISPENSARY CORNER

**AUTHORITIES** in Kenya have been forced to issue a statement reassuring mobile phone users that receiving calls from certain numbers can cause brain haemorrhages.

The Nairobi populace has apparently been panicked by rumours that 27 people had died after answering calls, with an alert circulated by text message urging recipients to "please inform all your friends and relatives soon".

The Communications Commission of Kenya said it had analysed the messages and "established that the warnings are a hoax generated by unscrupulous people bent on causing fear and despondency among members of the public."

"In addition, the alleged haemorrhage due to high frequency has no technical basis whatsoever," the statement said.

**PEOPLE** who want to live longer should really get a grip - a firm handshake, that is.

Researchers at the UK's Medical Research Council have found that elderly people who were able to give a strong handshake and walk briskly were likely to outlive their slower peers.

The study pooled the findings of 14 previous research efforts, with those with the strongest grip strengths tending to live longer than those with limp wrists.

**TWO** men have been arrested in Britain after being discovered running an unlicensed fertility company, matching sperm donors with women trying to conceive.

Court proceedings earlier in the week heard that nearly 800 women had signed up to use the service which traded over the internet under creative names such as Sperm Direct Limited and First4Fertility.com.

Prosecutors alleged that 43-year-old Nigel Woodforth ran the business from the basement of his home in Reading, with the pair being the first to be prosecuted under the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act.

## WIN AN AROMABABY ORGANIC PACK



Every day this week, *Pharmacy Daily* is giving readers the chance to win a pack filled with organic treats valued at \$58 rrp, courtesy of leaders in luxe mother & baby care, Aromababy.

Win one of 5 Organic Aromabath Powders, enriched with soothing oats and soy. Ideal for a super-milky bath yet without any dairy/milk content. Added pure essential oils help you dream away your worries as you soak.

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For a chance to win this great organic pack, simply send through the correct answer to the daily question below:

**Can mum bath with baby & use the Aromabath Powder?**

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

The first correct entry received will win!

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

Congratulations to yesterday's lucky winner: Caitlyn Adsett from Jadin Chemist Group. The correct answer was: oats & soy.

## TGA submission FAQ

**THE** Therapeutic Goods Administration has published a series of questions and answers on its new streamlined submission process for prescription medicines.

Details including a full flowchart of the process are at [tga.gov.au](http://tga.gov.au), with the new procedures requiring 'Pre-submission Planning Forms' for all submissions from 01 Nov.

Submissions made after that date without the mandatory new form will incur a mandatory three month wait for the allocation of TGA resources for the evaluation to commence.

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