

Plain pack proposal

THE Royal Australian College of Physicians and the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons have urged the government to support plain packaging of all tobacco products.

The groups have made a public statement following revelations that the 'Alliance of Australian Retailers' which has been advertising against the proposal was in fact backed by tobacco manufacturers.

The RACP and RACS have also called for a triannual review of the Tobacco Advertising Prohibition Act.

"Supporting plain packaging is a demonstrated commitment to health promotion and disease prevention through the control of tobacco," said RACP spokesperson Associate Professor Leena Gupta.

"As our elected political representatives prepare this legislation, we call on them to focus on the evidence and benefits to the health of our people, not the healthy profits of the big tobacco companies," she added.

Plain packaging will allow Australia to take a global leadership position on tobacco advertising, the RACP and RACS said.

SA hospital pharmacy move

THE South Australian government has announced the consolidation of pharmacy services at the state's metropolitan hospitals, with outlets at each hospital and "one central location for supplies and administration".

State treasurer Kevin Foley revealed the move as part of the state budget yesterday, saying that while health spending had reached another record high this year, "savings will have to be found in areas that do not affect essential health services".

The consolidation of the pharmacy services "will streamline service delivery and provide a more cost effective service," he said.

Budget documents reveal that other services will also be consolidated, including medical

FDA gout approval

THE US Food and Drug Administration has approved Savient Pharmaceuticals' Krystexxa (pegloticase) for the treatment of gout in adults who do not respond to or cannot tolerate conventional therapy.

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Sibutramine split

A KEY advisory panel to the US Food and Drug Administration has been deadlocked over a decision on whether Abbott's weight loss drug Meridia (sibutramine) should be allowed to stay on the market.

The panel voted eight to eight yesterday, after a probe following the release of a trial last year which showed a slightly higher cardiovascular risk in patients who used the medication.

Abbott said the vote "highlights the complexity of this scientific debate," with spokesman Eugene Sun saying "we continue to believe that there are appropriate and identifiable patients that derive benefit from sibutramine".

The company said the study did not directly assess the risk-benefit ratio of the medication in patients for whom it is specifically intended "and its results cannot be readily extrapolated to the approved patient population".

FDA Valcyte update

THE US Food and Drug Administration has issued new dosing guidance for children using valganciclovir (Valcyte) oral tablets and solutions used by children and adolescents receiving a kidney or heart transplant.

The change aims to prevent drug overdosing of children with low body weight, low body surface area and very low serum creatinine.

Revised instructions now appear in the product's label, and include an upper limit on "calculated creatinine clearance".

Valcyte is an antiviral used for the prevention of cytomegalovirus (CMV) disease which can cause pneumonia or colitis in people with weakened immune systems.

imaging, biomedical engineering and sterilisation of medical equipment, with the moves made "while ensuring patient care and safety remain a priority".

The state health department said any changes would be made in consultation with unions and staff.

Foley said that the restructuring of hospital funding would prepare the state for the transition to the planned Commonwealth funding of hospital services "on the basis of a national efficient price".

Sigma slashing

THE \$220-\$270 million writedown of the carrying value of Sigma Pharmaceuticals' manufacturing division which is proposed to be sold to Aspen Pharmacare (PD yesterday) reportedly has some shareholders wondering if the company should have accepted the initial Aspen bid of 55c per share for the whole company.

Today's *Financial Review* cites some investors saying they expect a 40c per share capital return, which may be difficult given the scope of the proposed writedown.

The story also says that Pulse Pharmacy, one of Sigma's biggest customers, is "coming under growing financial and operational pressure from its major lender, National Australia Bank".

UK drug ad change

THE UK Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency has confirmed a change in the way in which "appropriately authorised wholesale dealers and manufacturers can make healthcare professionals aware of the unlicensed medicines they have available".

Effective 19 Aug holders of a licence permitting the manufacture, importation and/or distribution of unlicensed medicines can now issue a price list to healthcare professionals "without having first received a bona fide unsolicited order".

No product claims may be included in the price list, which can only contain reference numbers, drug names, dosage forms, strengths, pack sizes and prices.

Other restrictions are unchanged, meaning that unlicensed medicines cannot be advertised to the public.

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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.

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Congratulations to yesterday's lucky winner: Tim McLaren from The Pharmacy Guild of Australia.

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WELCOME to *Pharmacy Daily's* Continuing Professional Development Calendar, featuring upcoming events and opportunities to earn CPE and CPD points.

If you have an upcoming event you'd like us to feature, email info@pharmacydaily.com.au.

15-18 Sep: Pharmacy 2010, the Pharmacy Management Conference on Hamilton Island - www.pharmacyconference.com.au.

23-24 Sep: Australian Asthma & Respiratory Educators Association Symposium, Canberra - 02 4340 8822.

05 Oct: Monash University, Pharmacy Postgraduate coursework information evening, 6 -7.30pm - 03 9903 9635

28-31 Oct: PSA's Pharmacy Australia Congress in Melbourne - details www.pac10.com.au.

20-29 Jan 2011: Pharmacy Study Tour, Mammoth Mountain California and Las Vegas - www.medic.com.au/events.

NZ name change

PEAK New Zealand pharmaceutical manufacturers group The Researched Medicines Industry Association this week announced that it was changing its name to Medicines New Zealand.

The organisation has represented the industry in NZ for almost 50 years, and ceo Denise Wood said the change aimed to re-establish its commitment to demonstrating the value of medicines and promoting access for all New Zealanders and their clinicians to new and innovative medicines.

Part of the move includes a new Healthcare Partnership Forum comprising representatives of consumer groups, related healthcare associations, clinicians and the research community "to focus on overcoming the barriers to improving healthcomes.

"We acknowledge that health resources are not infinite and want to work together with government agencies, patient groups, clinicians and others to seek better access to medicines," she said.

Medicines New Zealand also aims to encourage an environment for NZ clinical research.

Drug/test feedback wanted

THE Department of Health and Ageing is seeking feedback on new Draft Information Requests for Assessing Co-Dependent Technologies.

The move follows the rise of "co-dependent and hybrid technologies," and in particular the pairing of proposed tests with proposed drugs.

A number of new medications, particularly for cancer, have been shown to be effective in certain patient groups with particular genetic markers, and the draft assessment process aims to look at whether tests and the associated drugs should be subsidised under the PBS and MBS.

The document is based on advice received from Adelaide Health

Technology Assessment which is based at the University of Adelaide, and says that the focus on pairing a proposed test with a proposed drug with reference to a specific genetic DNA biomarker "is only an important first step and so does not comprehensively engage the full range of possible co-dependent and hybrid technology combinations".

The proposed process would see test and drug sponsors working together to integrate a full information package, providing details on test technology along with normal drug assessment requirements.

It also covers so-called "double randomised trials" which would add the use of the genetic test to any drug trial protocol.

The department is seeking feedback on the proposals by 17 Dec to hta@health.gov.au.

The draft document can be viewed by clicking **HERE**.

Multiple births drop

THE Australian Institute of Health and Welfare has released a report on assisted reproductive technology, saying the most significant trend in the area has been the increase of "single embryo transfer" from 40.5% in 2004 to 67.8% in 2008.

"This trend has resulted in a significant reduction of multiple delivery rate, from 16.4% in 2004 to 8.4% in 2008," the AIHW said.

Pharmacy survey

THE NZ Pharmacy Guild has released a new customer satisfaction survey for its members, to allow them to poll their customers on the quality of the services they receive.

In New Zealand pharmacies are obliged under contracts with district health boards to undertake an annual user satisfaction survey.

The Guild said the survey is part of its suite of member benefits, with a template able to be tailored to individual pharmacy requirements.

"These surveys provide an opportunity for members to demonstrate the value of the role of a community pharmacist and the quality of primary healthcare being delivered at the coal face," said NZ Guild president Annabel Young.

"It will also allow members to identify areas that may need to be further developed and ensure the quality of their service is consistent," Young added.

US J&J chief goes

THE long-serving head of Johnson & Johnson's McNeil consumer products division has announced her retirement.

56-year-old Colleen Goggins will step down next March after leading the business for over ten years, with the announcement coming just a few hours after a US congressional panel announced a hearing on 30 September on the company's repeated recalls of popular brands of several consumer products over the last 12 months.

The US House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform cited "extremely troubling" information about a proposed recall of Children's Tylenol almost a year before four million bottles of the painkiller were finally recalled on 30 Apr this year.

"This is about the safety of trusted medication that our children and grandchildren use," said committee chairman Edolphus Towns in a statement.

The committee is reportedly furious at a FDA document which indicated that in 2009 J&J may have avoided a public recall of Motrin by allegedly sending contractors out to stores to buy the product back.



DISPENSARY CORNER

MEN who want to attract a mate should just chill out.

That's the finding of a study in the UK which found that men with low levels of stress are more attractive to women.

A research team analysed levels of so-called "stress hormone" cortisol in young men, and showed pictures of them to a group of women.

The results found a very strong correlation between cortisol levels and how attractive the men were to the opposite sex.

Interestingly they also tested testosterone and found no link between it and sex appeal.

Female attraction to men with low stress levels was at its highest when the women were ovulating, the study also found.

"An ability to handle stressful situations suggests a strong genetic make-up and the ability to pass 'good genes' to their children," postulated one of the scientists.

PHARMACISTS in Ireland may see increased sales in adult incontinence products, with the launch of a the country's new motorway network.

Road authorities have begun putting up signs warning drivers not to expect any rest stops along the way, because there was no money allocated for the construction of roadside service stations or public facilities.

The revamped roads allow drivers to travel from "sea to sea" but there's nowhere to pee, with plans for the service stations scrapped due to a shortage of government funds.

Instead the new signs warn of no "online" services, directing motorists toward rest stops in nearby towns off the freeways.

Motoring group AA has slammed the move, saying it's unacceptable for drivers not to have anywhere to stop for a toilet break or a coffee for the entire 250km journey between two of the country's major cities, Dublin and (the possibly now appropriately named?) Cork.