

Sigma services pact

SIGMA Pharmaceuticals has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with healthlinks.net's GuildCare which will see it as the professional services provider for the 520-strong network of Amcal, Amcal Max and Guardian retail community pharmacies.

The deal has "signalled to the market Sigma's intentions of delivering a consumer driven value oriented offer, drawing on the professional services opportunities of the SCPA," according to a GuildCare statement today.

Sigma gm of Retail, Peter Tilley, said the appointment of GuildCare followed an audit of various service providers which found that "GuildCare programs were the solution we needed because they tick all the boxes for practice incentive payments, value-adding clinical services and work-flow innovation that align to Sigma's Health Management Services program".

PBS savings missed?

THE govt could save up to \$52m per annum if long-acting antipsychotics were more widely used, according to a new report by Deloitte Access Economics.

The report follows the cabinet decision to defer PBS listing of the new schizophrenia drug Invega Sustenna (paliperidone palmitate).

Access Economic spokesman Henry Cutler said almost 13000 patients would shift away from oral antipsychotics if the use of long-acting drugs increased to the 30% level seen in the US and UK.

Stop Pneumovax 23 dosing

HEALTH care professionals should not administer a second dose of Merck Sharp and Dohme's pneumococcal disease vaccine Pneumovax 23 pending the results of an investigation into adverse events, according to the Therapeutic Goods Administration.

Provided free to patients over 65, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders over 50 years old, smokers and people aged 10 and over who are predisposed to invasive pneumococcal disease, the vaccine is under investigation due to a marked increase in the rate of adverse events in people receiving the vaccine for the second time.

The vaccine is used to prevent a potentially life-threatening bacterial infection that can cause meningitis, pneumonia, sepsis and death and is only required once every five years.

Blackmores has guts

BLACKMORES has launched a new online digestive health resource as a page on its website.

Included in the mini-site is a downloadable e-book called '7 Days to Optimum Digestive Health + Wellbeing' which boasts a selection of delicious, healthy recipes, as well as natural health news about digestion, talks and cooking demonstrations, info about Blackmores' Digestive Bio Balance and a Digestion Community forum.

See www.blackmores.com.au/digestivehealth.

This year the TGA has received a cluster of seven severe local injection site reactions related to the use of a single batch (N3336) which was distributed in NSW and the ACT (which was recalled on 25 March) as well as 178 reports of adverse reactions to Pneumovax, (compared to 63 at a similar date in 2010 and 34 in 2009).

So far the investigation has found that the largest number of reactions is occurring in people receiving their second five yearly dose of Pneumovax, whilst analysis of batch N3336 did not detect any problems with its manufacture or handling.

Labelling info sought

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration has issued new explanatory information and additional notes on proposed changes to the Required Advisory Statements for Medicine Labels, as well as extending the period of consultation on the issue until close of business on Fri 06 May.

See www.tga.gov.au.

J&J recalls Topamax

JOHNSON & JOHNSON has been forced to recall two lots of its 100-milligram Topamax epilepsy tablets in the US due to complaints over a 'chemical odour'.

The scent is believed to have come as a byproduct of the shipping pallet preservative tribromoanisole, and it has caused gastro symptoms in a "very small number of J&J patients".

Incontinence facts

THE Department of Veterans' Affairs has released a new Urinary Incontinence fact sheet on the Veterans' MATES website, with advice on drugs and bladder control, plus info about services - see www.veteransmates.net.au.

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Weekly Comment

Welcome to *Pharmacy Daily's* weekly comment feature.

This week's contributor is the Business Unit Director, Consumer Products for Symbion Pharmacy, Oskar Hakansson.

The Benefits of Companion Selling

There's no doubt that the dispensary is the primary source of income for any pharmacy – commonly 70% of profits are derived from here.

However, current pressures on the dispensary business means pharmacies have to look to other areas of their business to drive revenue and continue to prosper.

Having a viable front of shop offer with relevant OTC products for companion selling is one way to help offset loss of margin in the dispensary.

Not only does companion selling generate more sales for the pharmacy but it also improves health outcomes for patients – a win-win scenario.

For example, lipid lowering medication has a known side-effect of a CoQ10 deficiency; therefore a companion sale of CoEnzyme Q10 will help to address this.

Similarly, a companion sale of a probiotic with an antibiotic prescription will assist in minimising possible adverse reactions for the patient.

Along with providing more GP for your business, offering complementary products will assist staff in developing relationships with patients and building trust by providing them with an integrated solution to their health issue.

Consumers look to pharmacists to help them look after their family's overall health.

In consumers' eyes, pharmacists are one of the most trusted professions, but only by meeting all of their health and wellbeing needs will pharmacists continue to uphold this reputation.

Symbion Consumer Products source and distribute high quality products under the Faulding brand name. For more information please call 1300 774 000.



PSA pharmacist liaison plan

PHARMACISTS need to be more involved in the treatment of mental illnesses, according to the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia.

The PSA's proposed Liaison Pharmacist Program (**PD 04 Apr**) would involve one pharmacist for every Medicare Local.

The program would ensure there was a point of coordination and communication between the consumer, the primary health-care team, the community mental-health team including GPs, and hospital-based health professionals, whilst also reducing preventable medication errors.

The call for a Liaison Pharmacist Program coincides with a recent media report which claimed that more than half of all Australians suffering anxiety and depression disorders go without treatment.

The report also highlighted the fact that in 2009 nearly 300,000 patients in the top-income bracket received \$146m in Medicare financed mental health services, whilst less than 150,000 of Australia's lowest income earners

accessed \$54m in services.

"Clearly accessibility to mental health services is a major issue and one that needs to be addressed," said PSA National President Warwick Plunkett.

He said pharmacists were an effective way of getting services to those currently missing out, adding that: "pharmacists are the medication experts who can help patients with compliance issues, a major factor in ongoing mental illness treatment".

Fun meal times

PHILIPS AVENT has launched a new range of eating tools, designed for toddlers between six and 18 months as they are weaned.

The range includes bowls, plates and utensils, and was developed by experts with story telling designs which "encourage child engagement through stimulation and interactive learning".

The range comes in different toddler sizes and is priced from \$6.95. See www.philips.com.au/avent.

DISPENSARY CORNER

WHALES love Australian-made.

It seems even the ocean's humpback whales are getting onboard with Australian-made music, with scientists discovering that whale songs created whilst in Aussie waters spread to other whale pods in the South Pacific.

The music is crucial in the whale mating ritual, with male whales serenading the ladies with sonorous sounds as they traipse to their annual breeding grounds.

Songs composed by whale minstrels in Eastern Australia have turned up in as many as six different populations spanning across 6,000 kilometres.

"I'm not sure exactly how whales learn, but because they are able to imitate within a population and take up the new song changes, we think there's been acoustic contact on possibly shared migration routes, or that males have moved from one population to the next and they've taken this song with them," said Ellen Garland from the University of Queensland.

CLOSE call for pharmacy.

Pharmacy staffers and shoppers at CVS Pharmacy in the US city of Hartford breathed a sigh of relief following a brush with death which involved a car crashing through a solid brick wall to park inside the store.

According to reports the driver of the car was trying (fairly unsuccessfully) to score the perfect park outside the chemist, which quickly turned into a more 'convenient' park inside the shop.

Fortunately no one was injured during the fiasco, however the pharmacy will remain closed until a full assessment of its structural damage can be made.



WIN AN AL'CHEMY PACK



This week *Pharmacy Daily* is giving four lucky readers the chance to win a pack filled with hair products (valued at \$45), courtesy of **Al'chemy**.

Heat styling and environmental elements can wreak havoc on the hair but the right shampoo and conditioner can help repair the damage.

Made with certified organic ingredients, natural botanical actives and gentle cleansers, the Al'chemy range uses sophisticated combinations of cleansers to help leave your hair looking shiny and healthy, whilst retaining the essential natural oils and moisture.

Five selected winners will take home an Al'chemy shampoo, conditioner and a styling treatment, specially chosen by Al'chemy's Technical Team to suit their hair type.

For your chance to win your very own Al'chemy hair care pack, simply be the first person to send in a correct answer to the question below:

How is Al'chemy different from A'kin?

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

Hint! Visit www.purist.com