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Another new Authority

HEALTH Minister Nicola Roxon yesterday confirmed that the government's health reform agenda had entered a new stage, with the introduction of legislation to establish the Independent Hospital Pricing Authority into Parliament this week.

She described the move as a "watershed moment" in efforts to deliver a "more sustainable, efficient and transparent health system for Australians".

The new laws also introduce activity-based funding, "removing the politics" from the system.

"For too long, blank cheques were handed over to state health systems...now, a strong and independent Authority will, at arms length from Government, determine the efficient price of hospital services," she said.

The move is estimated to create up to \$1.3b in extra efficiencies.

Health delusions

A **UK** workplace survey this week has revealed that 42% of people who smoke on a regular basis consider themselves as either "healthy" or "very healthy".

There were similar levels of self-delusion in relation to obesity, with just 12% considering themselves to be unhealthy or very unhealthy - in contrast to 39% who described themselves as overweight.

60% of those who took part did less than three hours of exercise a week, while more than a quarter of those who did no exercise at all described themselves as healthy or very healthy.

ASMI welcomes age regime

THE Australian Self-Medication Industry has welcomed most of the TGA's interim scheduling decisions (**PD** yesterday), and in particular the maintenance of current scheduling of all twenty active cough and cold medicine ingredients under consideration.

Instead age-based restrictions will be undertaken by the TGA, with ASMI executive director Deon Schoombie saying the "sensible and balanced outcome" would ensure parents and carers are able to continue to have access to products that have been widely available for many years.

The exemption of additional Nicotine Replacement Therapy products from scheduling has also been welcomed, which will in particular enable more formats to be offered in grocery as well as

Barbies for prostate

THE Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia will promote a month-long *Big Aussie Barbie* campaign as part of International Prostate Cancer Awareness Month in Sep.

Australians will be encouraged to host a barbecue to help raise funds for research into the condition, with special 'BBQ Kits' on sale for \$30 at prostate.org.au.

GNC vitamin site

NUTRITIONAL supplements maker GNC has purchased a firm called LuckyVitamin.com, with the aim of enhancing its online offering and "broadening its customer demographics".

pharmacy outlets.

The exemption of small packs of loperamide has also been hailed by ASMI as expanding the anti-diarrhoeal product's distribution beyond pharmacies.

However a decision to disallow consumer advertising of Pariet (rabeprazole) has disappointed ASMI because it makes it "very hard for consumers to be made aware that medicines are now available from pharmacists without prescription, and keeping this information from consumers does not appear to serve any useful public health purpose," Schoombie said.

New CHC director

PAUL Mannion, technical director of Health World, has been appointed to the board of the Complementary Healthcare Council of Australia.

US drugmaker deal

NEW York Stock Exchange-listed Par Pharmaceutical Companies Inc has announced the US\$410 million acquisition of privately held Anchen Pharmaceuticals.

The all-cash deal will see Par take on Anchen's portfolio of five commercialised products and pipeline of 27 New Drug applications already on file with the Food and Drug Administration.

Par also owns Strativa Pharmaceuticals, and has a strategy of developing, manufacturing and marketing "high barrier-to-entry generic drugs and niche, innovative proprietary pharmaceuticals".

Pharmacists test German drug imports

PHARMACEUTICAL data firm IMS Health has enlisted the help of pharmacists across Germany to help estimate the value of "parallel imports" in which medications are brought into the country via alternative distribution methods.

The controversial research project involves pharmacists being equipped with digital cameras and asked to take photos of the packaging of products on their dispensary shelves.

The *Suddeutsche Zeitung* newspaper reports they're asked to take pictures of the cardboard boxes that medications come in from three sides, which will help IMS Health determine where they came from - along with a special chart for decoding batch numbers.

They have to then send the camera's memory chip back to IMS once a month in return for monetary incentives which amount to up to \$1900 a year - while they're also told that "if you support our project, you support better service for patients".

The importation survey is controversial because according to the report IMS is planning to use the data to help drugmakers reduce parallel imports - which affects their margins - despite the practice being totally legal.

However IMS has defended the move, saying it's also a key method of detecting the proliferation of fake medications in the German medicines supply chain.

Importers are not happy about the plan because it may affect their ability to source cheaper drugs.

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Travel Specials

WELCOME to *Pharmacy Daily's* travel feature. Each week we highlight a couple of great travel deals for the pharmacy industry.

ECRUIISING is offering up to 50% off a 76 night cruise-tour itinerary onboard the *Costa Victoria* cruise ship departing on 07 Mar 2012, now priced from \$11,319 per person twin share.

The cruise sails to more than 20 countries including Brazil, Canary Islands, Portugal, Spain, Jordan, Oman, India, Thailand, and China.

Included in the price is return economy airfares ex Sydney, two nights accom in Sao Paulo and Shanghai, the 72 nights cruise, meals, onboard gratuities and transfers - www.ecruising.travel.

HIDEAWAY Island Resort and Marine Sanctuary in Port Vila, Vanuatu is extending the booking dates for its Stay 4/ Pay 3 deal until the end of the month.

Bookings made over the next week for travel through until 31 Mar 2012 will also receive a \$50 resort credit per room.

Info at hideaway.com.vu.

AUSTRALIA Zoo on Queensland's Sunshine Coast is offering guests from the region purchasing tickets online before 31 Aug unlimited entry to the park and its new African Safari exhibit.

The African Safari is set to open on 17 Sep and will feature a savannah open range field in which guests can discover rhino, giraffes, cheetah and zebras from a Safari Shuttle.

Guests will have to show tickets purchased online and proof of Qld residence at the gate before 24 Dec - australiazoo.com.au.

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Google settles pharma suit

INTERNET juggernaut Google has agreed to pay half a billion US dollars to settle a government investigation into online pharmacy advertising.

The case is intriguing, because it has been brought on the basis that the online search leader had "improperly profited" from advertisements promoting online pharmacies in Canada which illegally sold drugs in the USA.

Google and its senior executives now will not face criminal prosecution over the case, which is believed to be the first time that a search engine has been held responsible for the illegal distribution of medications.

A spokesperson for the US Justice Department said the case "sends a clear message to both Google and to others that contribute to America's pill problem that they will be held to account for endangering the health and safety

[of] persons all across the United States".

The massive penalty has been based on money "illicitly earned by Google" as a result of the ads, as well as profits earned by the Canadian pharmacies themselves from their sales to US consumers.

Google said it had banned prescription drug advertising some time ago, but in a statement added "it's obvious with hindsight that we shouldn't have allowed these ads on Google in the first place".

The Justice Department claimed Google knew it was breaking the law since 2003 but allowed the advertising to continue until 2009.

Investigators built their case via an undercover "sting" operation where they set up fake websites to promote unlawful sale of drugs.

Google won't have trouble paying the fine, though, with the company currently sitting on a whopping US\$39 million in cash.

FDA Botox approval

THE US Food and Drug Administration has approved a new indication for Botox, which can now be used to treat urinary incontinence in patients with neurological conditions such as spinal cord injury or multiple sclerosis.



DISPENSARY CORNER

HEALTH authorities in the UK have released a list of the country's "daftest health and safety bans," after a review of the silly regulations was ordered by government ministers.

The examples cited include bans on dodgem cars bumping into each other at an amusement park, along with a £500 fine threatened by a council for people flying kites, because of the danger they might hit people.

A school in Merseyside was cited for banning leather footballs because they might hurt boys' feet when they kicked them, while the Royal British Legion (similar to Australia's Legacy) introduced a ban on pins to attach remembrance poppies in case people pricked themselves.

UK Employment Minister Chris Grayling said "This has to stop. "These regulations are intended to save lives, not stop them".

FORGET Blue September - clean up crews in Idaho in the USA had a very blue August after being forced to deal with a massive toilet paper spill.

The *Lewiston Tribune* cited state environment officials who confirmed that several massive rolls of unprocessed toilet paper had been lodged for some weeks in the upper Lochsa River.

The paper fell off the back of a truck, and initial attempts to remove it had created even more mess because it began to disintegrate when handled.

However a crack team managed to clean it up last week after lower river flows made the work more manageable.

WIN AN AUSTRALIS COSMETIC PACK



Pharmacy Daily has teamed up with **Australis** this week and is giving Paparazzi Perfect High Definition packs to five lucky readers.

Introducing Australis Paparazzi Perfect High Definition range! A revolutionary range containing an intelligent mix of light reflecting properties and skin balancing pigments which provide a flawless, smooth complexion under any light! Bring on the Paparazzi!

Each pack includes Blush in Poser, Foundation in Natural Beige, Eyeshadow in Snap Attack, Tinted Moisturiser in Med-Dark and Paparazzi Perfect Keyring Camera.

For your chance to win this exciting prize pack, simply be the first person to send through the correct answer to the question below to comp@pharmacydaily.com.au:

What products does the Paparazzi Perfect range include?

Hint: Visit www.australiscosmetics.com.au

Congratulations to yesterday's lucky winner: **Marissa White** from **Friendly Care Pharmacy Booval**.