

## Weekly Comment

Welcome to **Pharmacy Daily's** weekly comment feature. This week's contributor is Simon Reynolds, pharmacist and co-founder of Pharmacy Alliance Group.

### Role of the pharmacist in the community

The ageing population and an already over-burdened healthcare system make the role of the pharmacist even more important.

More and more will be expected of you as a community pharmacist.

In many cases, the pharmacist is the first point of contact for patients with health issues, and the onus is on us to help the patient - or refer them on to someone who can.

An intermediary between the prescriber and patient, we must be able to communicate effectively.

This applies to not only patients, but other healthcare professionals.

We must pick up medication errors, ensure medication compliance and manage a patient's disease state/s.

Throw in the daily tasks associated with managing your store (stock ordering, staff management etc) and the community pharmacist is often overloaded.

Try to find areas where you can save time on non-dispensing tasks, giving you more time to spend with your customers:

This might include:

- Using technology where possible to save time (eg centralised IT & PDE ordering)
- Using supplier representatives for training/merchandising rather than spending hours negotiating small discounts
- Investing time/money in training staff
- Outsourcing jobs, such as book-keeping

Communication in health can't be rushed, so look to improve efficiencies in order to give your patients the time they need - and deserve.



## Homeopathy: what's in it?

**THE** efficacy of homeopathic therapies sold in Australian pharmacies is being called into question, with groups of Australian "Skeptics" banding together to launch their 10:23 campaign over the weekend.

"We intend to show that there is a growing feeling around the world that enough time and money has been wasted on homeopathic remedies," said Michael Marshall, co-ordinator of the international 10:23 Campaign.

As part of the campaign, members from the Victorian Skeptics, Melbourne Skeptics and Young Australian Skeptics groups gathered in central Melbourne over the weekend to take a "fatal" overdose of homeopathic drugs.

The aim of the stunt was to "educate the public about the true nature of homeopathy" and to "highlight a problem with Australia's therapeutic goods regulation" which allows medicines to be sold in pharmacies as long as they are "low risk" and have been used historically.

Homeopathy is, according to the Skeptics, based on three laws: The Law of Similars- that substances that causes a symptom can cure it (i.e. caffeine is good for insomnia), The Law of Infinitesimals - that the more diluted a substance becomes the stronger it is, and The Law of Succussion- whereby vigorous shaking of a remedy makes it stronger.

"In the two hundred years these treatments have existed, there has never been anything to suggest they work - and because they're nothing but sugar and water, they couldn't possibly do the things homeopaths claim they can do," said Marshall.

"Tens of billions of dollars are spent every year around the world on these ineffective remedies, and when told what they really are, and how they're made, most people are shocked these useless treatments are still able to be sold to an unsuspecting public," Marshall added.

Highlighting the "dangers" of homeopathy, the group referenced a British BBC investigation which revealed homeopaths doling out ineffective antimalarial and vaccine remedies to travellers and the general public.

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"People assume it's some kind of herbal remedy, but even if you're looking for something totally natural, it's just a con," a Skeptic spokesperson said.

Closer to home, the group also referenced the 2002 Australian case of a nine-month old child who died of eczema after she was treated with homeopathy over pharmacological medicine.

"We've just taken what should have effectively been a lethal overdose of homeopathy and 30 minutes on we're still fine" said a spokesperson, after the Melbourne group "overdose".

"So why is this product being supported by the Federal Government, and why is it being sold in pharmacies across Australia alongside legitimate medicine?" the spokesperson added.

To view video from the event **CLICK HERE.**

### Pricing amendments

**FROM** 01 Feb the Schedule of Pharmaceutical Benefits' Dispensed Price for the Max Quantity (20) of (9184J) Fludara (fludaranine phosphate) tablets 10mg has changed to \$936.70.

In addition, from 01 Feb the Schedule of Pharmaceutical Benefits Dispensed Price for the Max Quantity (30) of Vytorin (ezetimibe with simvastatin) tablets (8881K) 10mg-40mg has changed to \$107.85 (and to \$123.97 for 8882L).

See [www.pbs.gov.au](http://www.pbs.gov.au).

### Pharmacy Daily winner

**CONGRATULATIONS** to Robyn Hedges from Pymble Pharmacy, who was the lucky winner of last Friday's Julianne competition.

### Phebra invests \$16m

**AUSTRALIAN** pharmaceutical company Phebra, has announced it will invest \$16 million into building a new manufacturing plant in Sydney's Lane Cove West.

According to Phebra, the new plant will be a multi-purpose sterile facility measuring at least 1,000 square metres, and will lead to the creation of new jobs due to its expanded R&D and production capacity.

"The new facility is approximately double the size of our last home at Lane Cove and as a result, will assist us in continuing our sustained and strong growth across both local and overseas markets," said the Chief Executive Officer of Phebra, Dr Mal Eutick.

### Pharmacist freed

**A NZ** pharmacist, Grant Gillard, has been released without charge following the death of an intruder at his Mount Albert premises.

Gillard, owner of the Grant Gillard Pharmacy, was facing the possibility of charges after he was "surprised by a burglar" whilst responding to an early morning alarm at his pharmacy last year.

According to reports, a struggle ensued which left the intruder dead.

Following an investigation, NZ police have said they won't place charges.

"This is a sensible decision," said the NZ Guild's Annabel Young.

"This event has highlighted the risk community pharmacies face daily as they play their part in front line health care.

"It is important that pharmacies can operate in the community, and are readily available to patients, while keeping the pharmacists and their staff safe," she added.

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## Mayne partnership

**MAYNE** Pharma has partnered with HealthOne to launch a field pharmacy team which will represent the Astrix brand of pharmacy-sold products.

To support the launch, Mayne has also created a consumer focused website for Astrix.

See [www.astrixaspirin.com.au](http://www.astrixaspirin.com.au).

## Qlaira receives the TGA nod

**THE** Therapeutic Goods Administration has approved a new combined oral contraceptive, Qlaira, for the treatment of heavy and/or prolonged menstrual bleeding in women without organic pathology who desire oral contraception.

Containing the oestrogen oestradiol valerate (a prodrug of the natural human 17- oestradiol) and the progestogen dienogest, Qlaira is the first in a new class of the pill in Australia which delivers the same oestrogen occurring naturally in the body.

"Qlaira is the first oral contraceptive pill to receive this indication and provides general practitioners with an option that will make life a lot more comfortable for many women with heavy menstrual bleeding," said Family Planning NSW director of research, Doctor Edith Weisberg.

According to reports, abnormally heavy and prolonged menstrual periods (menorrhagia) are experienced by around 30% of women during their reproductive lives.

Results from two pivotal phase III clinical trials found that Qlaira reduced heavy menstrual bleeding by up to 88% after six months, compared with the 24% reduction which was recorded with the placebo.

Qlaira is designed to be taken once daily, and is not listed on the PBS.

## DISPENSARY CORNER

**SOCIAL** no-no becomes a legal fight.

Officials in the African nation of Malawi are in the process of drafting legislation to ban breaking wind in public.

The fart moratorium is said to be a part of Malawi's bid to "mould responsible and disciplined citizens".

Opponents to the law however are partitioning the Government to cease the draft's implementation, arguing that it is a hard law to enforce because the crime is easily blamed on someone else.

**BRING** back the brick.

For those wanting to re-live a bit of Gordon Gekko's style, a British manufacturer, Thumbs Up, has launched new technology, designed to transform the space-age styled iPhone, into a serious 1980's phone "brick".

"The 80s mobile remains a design icon in its own right," said a Thumbs Up spokesperson.

"Back in the day these chunky must-haves were the ultimate status symbol," he added.

## Pharmacy treats homesick diggers



**LAST** year, Queensland's Gayndah Guardian Pharmacy put together 200 'Sweet Treat' Christmas care packages and sent them to Australian service men and women serving in Afghanistan.

In addition to stuffing the packages with jelly beans and Guardian Mints, Gayndah Pharmacy staffers also donned Gift Night Shirts and Guardian Christmas shirts to help support the Red Shirt Friday campaign, which entailed wearing the shirts every Friday to show support for Aussie service personnel.

"It has been amazing for our Guardian pharmacy and it's rapport with the community," said Gayndah Guardian Pharmacy's Sam Rowles.

As a result of their efforts staff at

the pharmacy have already received letters from home-sick soldiers, thankful for sweet treats at Christmas time.

"The lollies handed out on Christmas day were a huge morale boost to the diggers," wrote one serviceman, Sergeant John Matthews.

"I have been told that the area we are in will get as low as -30 degrees, by mid Feb, I'm not looking forward to that" said another soldier, a member of the "Delta Boys".

"But as I am freezing my butt off, at least I have got some tasty jelly beans," he added.

Pictured above are the members of the Combat Service Support Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team (including Sgt Matthews).

## MARCH WEEK END

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## WIN THE ORGANIC SOAP COMPANY PRIZE PACK

**Pharmacy Daily** has teamed up with **The Organic Soap Company** this week and is giving ten lucky readers the chance to win a fantastic prize pack including 3 Soap Bars and 1 bottle of Cleansing Body Wash, valued at \$25.00.

The Organic Company soaps are produced on the pristine Northern Beaches of NSW and contain certified organic ingredients for their purity and quality. With essential oils which are selected from all corners of the earth for their purity and intensity of fragrance, the range is able to offer both floral and herbal soaps for their cosmetic and therapeutic benefits.

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

[comp@pharmacydaily.com.au](mailto:comp@pharmacydaily.com.au)

**Where are The Organic Company  
soaps produced in Australia?**

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

The first 2 correct entries received will win

