



Pharmacist shots

PHARMACY students from across the nation have thrown their support behind a pharmacist based immunisation program.

A survey of 200 pharmacy students conducted by the National Australian Pharmacy Students' Association found overwhelming support for pharmacist immunisation, with 80% of students indicating that they would like immunisation services to be expanded into the profession.

The major barrier to any such scheme, according to respondents, is inadequate training to provide immunisation.

Possible legal ramifications surrounding any such program, as well as an assumption that pharmacists would lack resources/time to provide immunisation services were also highlighted as potential drawbacks.

UK Viagra seizures

THE UK Border Agency seized fake and unlicensed Viagra worth more than £13 million (A\$22m) last year, with over 8.5 million tablets intercepted before they could enter the black market for pharmaceutical drugs.

The massive haul was part of an operation which also saw the closure of hundreds of websites and the arrest of 87 people engaged in the distribution of the products.

API to boost Priceline rollout

AUSTRALIAN Pharmaceutical Industries has flagged a further expansion of its Priceline outlets in 2011, with the introduction of a \$50,000 annual rebate over 10 years to new franchisees who register expressions of interest before 31 Mar 2011.

The company says the ongoing development of the brand as a "complete health and beauty retailer" is generating real growth for its pharmacist partners.

API ceo Stephen Roche said many pharmacists were rethinking their business model, with the environment experiencing "unprecedented competitive pressures from other retailers."

"In the past, pharmacists have been able to rely on underlying PBS growth to keep pace with rising operating costs, but now with ongoing PBS reforms and aggressive retailing, pharmacists are looking at what options they

have to bring more customers into their stores," he said.

He said the recruitment drive for more pharmacist-owned stores aimed to further leverage the strength of the Priceline brand, which now comprises more than 330 stores nationwide.

"Our growth will benefit all our franchise members because it will strengthen our competitive position in the marketplace and our increased retail presence will enable us to further differentiate our brand as offering the best value, range and service," Roche added.

He said that Priceline's "first mover advantage in retail" was a crucial success factor for the brand.

Actemra indication

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration has approved a new indication for rheumatoid arthritis treatment Actemra (tocilizumab).

Effective 01 Mar Actemra is also approved for the inhibition of progression of joint damage in adults with moderate to severe RA when given in combination with methotrexate.

The medication was listed on the PBS in August last year, with more than 700 patients being treated with the drug so far.

Actemra is administered as a once monthly intravenous infusion.

ASMI backs call for OTC awareness

THE Australian Self-Medication Industry has supported NPS Australia's call for improved consumer awareness about over the counter medicines (PD yest).

ASMI Regulatory and Scientific Affairs Director, Steven Scarff, said that in Australia "in many respects the level of health literacy falls short of what it should be in a highly developed economy".

He said ASMI fully supports the NPS MedicineWise campaign, with an educational website currently under development for consumers "that will include information on how to read a medicine label".

IBM wins eHealth deal

COMPUTER giant IBM has been selected to design and build the system which will authenticate health providers and patients under the personally controlled electronic health care records framework.

Health Minister Nicola Roxon said the system is a key e-health building block, with the move a big step towards the health records being available from 01 July 2012.

Roxon said IBM would implement "strong access control mechanisms" so that patients will be able to grant access to their information, and track which providers have accessed their records.

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Travel Specials

WELCOME to *Pharmacy Daily's* travel feature.

Each week we highlight a couple of great travel deals which we're sure will be of interest to everyone in the pharmacy industry.

AURORA Expeditions is offering a special bonus of a free accommodation and Minyirr Park tour package valued at \$300, for all bookings on any of its 2011 Kimberley voyages made before the end of this month.

Aurora's unique trips travel from Broome to Bigge Island off the northwest coast of Australia, with the expeditions taking about 11 days and priced from \$6950 per person including all meals on board and Zodiac excursions.

For more information call 02 9252 1033.

AUSTRALIAN Alpine Resorts has a special Snowy Mountains escape priced from \$613 for a family of four including three nights accommodation, an all inclusive three day Thredbo chair lift pass and bobsled rides.

The Super Saver Family Deal is valid at the Magpies Nest resort in Thredbo and also includes unlimited gym, tennis court and golf course access.

More details 1300 138 311.

Pharmacists travelling to London in the coming months can avail themselves of an Exclusively London deal at the five star **RADISSON EDWARDIAN** hotels.

Australian travellers staying at the upmarket properties are offered free full English breakfast for one person, priority early check-in, late check-out to 4pm, complimentary wireless internet and a 20% discount on food.

Rates start at £99 per night, with 13 hotels available in London and Manchester - 1800 333 333.

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MA warns on gene patents

MEDICINES Australia is pushing for changes to proposed legislation which would ban patents on biological materials, saying such a move would threaten access to new biologic medicines.

The Senate's Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee is currently conducting an inquiry into the Patent Amendment (Human Genes and Biological Materials) Bill 2010, and a MA submission has cited a list of 28 commonly prescribed biologicals which "would never have been marketed in Australia had the proposed legislation been in place".

These include Herceptin, Enbrel, Mabthera, Remicade and Lucentis - all of which would have been ineligible for patent protection if the bill had been in place ten years ago.

The bill aims to exclude biological materials from patentable subject matter.

"Biological medicines represent

the cutting edge of medicine," said Medicines Australia.

"They have already revolutionised the field and in time biological medicines are likely to deliver the most effective means of treating a variety of illnesses and disabilities".

If the patent changes go ahead, MA warned that there would be "devastating consequences for the Australian biotechnology and pharmaceutical industries," because it would invalidate patents on hundreds of products currently in development in Australia.

AusPARs released

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration has published new Australian Public Assessment Reports covering the approval processes for Buprenorphine/Naloxone, Ofatumumab and Human Papillomavirus Quadrivalent Vaccine.

The latest releases are online at the TGA website.



Pharmacy DAILY is giving Independent pharmacists the chance to WIN 1 of 10 Pharmacy Alliance Group memberships by answering this question:

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DISPENSARY CORNER

THERE'S been a major health alert in South Africa, with authorities bamboozled by what turned out to be a publicity stunt for a soon to be released horror movie, according to the BBC.

Pamphlets were widely distributed across Johannesburg, with an offer from someone called Dr Uba to "pay the best prices for all your body parts and organs".

The South African Health Department issued an official statement of concern before the leaflets were revealed to be a hoax, and it's also reported that police were dispatched to try to track down Dr Uba himself.

The flyers quoted prices of about \$700 for a pair of eyes and \$350 for a tongue, while testicles could be worth up to \$280 each.

"Stop suffering in silence. Rush to get that cash you need. If not for you, do it for your loved one," an associated website said.

Clicking on a link on the site directed users to publicity for the *Nightdrive* film, which is about a group of tourists who encounter a poacher hunting body parts.

THE latest pampering craze may actually lead to the spread of disease, according to the UK Health Protection Agency.

So-called 'fish pedicures', in which people dunk their callused feet into tanks to be nibbled by Garra Rufa fish, could possibly cause cross-infection through open wounds, according to environmental health officers.

"The agency is currently investigating if there are any potential risks of infection associated with the commercial use of fish spa pedicures in the UK," said an official statement from the HPA.

The Garra Rufa is also known as a "doctor fish", and is a type of toothless carp which feeds on dead skin.

Similar procedures are widely available across Asia, but have been banned in some US states because of health and safety concerns over the same fish feeding on multiple customers.