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Biologicals framework

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration has published an update to its Biologicals framework.

The revision follows approval of amendments to the Therapeutic Goods Regulations 1990 to implement the framework which will now be effective from 31 May.

NEW

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Pharmacy attacked again

COMMUNITY pharmacists are once again under attack in the pages of the *Australian Financial Review*, which today features an article claiming that discounts provided by generic makers are benefiting Australian pharmacists "to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars each year".

The story has been written by Philip Clark, associate professor of health economics at Sydney University, who's urging the government to force further cuts to the prices of generic medications.

Clark cites a recent study he undertook with a colleague which found that in the case of statins, Australia could save \$1.7 billion over the next five years if prices were the same as already paid for the generic versions overseas.

He also refers to the recent government decision to defer approval of several new drugs

recommended by the PBAC.

"These drugs could have been bought from savings if more substantive price cuts to generics had been made," he said.

The article also mentions recent changes in Canada which saw the province of Ontario legislate for a 50% across the board cut in the price of existing generics - and a 75% cut for future patent expiries.

By contrast, the Memorandum of Understanding signed with Medicines Australia only provides for "modest" cuts, he argues.

Clark urges Treasury and the Productivity Commission to look into the issue, selectively citing the high PBS growth rate highlighted in the first Intergenerational Report in 2002 - without mentioning that subsequent reports have shown this has been arrested.

However he does point out that despite the PBS reforms of the last decade it is "surprising that, a decade later, Australia is paying some of the highest prices in the world for many generic drugs".

He suggests that any politicians interested in PBS reform who are planning northern hemisphere study trips in the upcoming parliamentary winter break should make sure they "have a trip to Ontario on their itineraries" to see how Canada has reduced its costs.

Arthritis webinar

DR David Hunter, Rheumatologist at Royal North Shore Hospital, is hosting a web-based seminar on how to preserve joint health and improve function in patients with osteoarthritis on 01 April.

The webinar will focus on four main inter-related topics including weight reduction, correcting abnormal mechanics in osteoarthritis, what tissue changes first in osteoarthritis and disease modifying therapies.

A registration fee of \$30 applies, with registration closing in 30 March. Call (02) 9857 3300 for details.

All eyes on diabetes

Fenofibrate, a lipid lowering drug, has been found to slow the progression of diabetic retinopathy (a sight-threatening disease) and reduce the need for laser treatments by around 30%, in two international studies involving 14,000 participants.

Based on this evidence, Professor Paul Mitchell, Director of the Centre for Vision Research at the Westmead Millennium Institute, is calling for a change in the clinical practice regarding the treatment of diabetes patients.

"The greatest benefit was for people with early diabetic retinopathy and there is reason to think that those without retinopathy might also benefit," he said.

"By halting the progression of retinopathy, it could help preserve vision and reduce the need for costly therapies for advanced disease.

"This is a new reason to use an old drug, one tablet, once a day, can prevent sight threatening damage to the retina in people with type 2 diabetes," he added.

High Tech Health winner

CONGRATULATIONS to Penelope Hickman of Westbury Pharmacy Tasmania who was this year's lucky winner of High Tech Health's APP Ultralieve PRO prize.

Jessica scores with Pharmacy Cricket

RIGHT: Jessica Bugg was the lucky recipient of \$2500 at APP last weekend, as the winner of a Pharmacy Cricket 2010 scholarship.

Jessica started her pharmacy career as a junior pharmacy assistant in Burnie, Tasmania, and is now based on the Gold Coast after achieving qualifications as a Dispensary Technician - having enrolled for a degree in pharmacy at Griffith Uni.

A keen advocate for patient-focused pharmacy, Bugg is also very much in favour of rural and regional



pharmacy and has asked for a placement in Alice Springs as part of her course.

She's pictured receiving her award from Guild executive director Wendy Phillips.

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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.

TEMPO Holidays is offering up to \$1000 per person off its *Flavours of Jordan and Syria* package, for travel until 31 December, when booked for two passengers.

The new eight day tour is now priced from \$2823ppts including bed and breakfast, meet and assist, transfers, english speaking driver, entrance fees, local guides, a Wadi Rum Jeep ride and portorage at Amman Airport.

More at tempoholidays.com.

SOFITEL Luxury Hotels has launched a new seasonal break offer offering a four night stay for the price of three, valid for sale and stays until 20 May 2011.

The deal is available at Sofitel properties in Brisbane, the Gold Coast, Sydney and Melbourne.

Four nights at the Sofitel Gold Coast Broadbeach are priced from \$808 - for more information see www.sofitel-seasonalbreak.com.

AIRASIA X flights to China have been discounted, with airfares from Perth to Chengdu starting from just \$279 one way, on sale until 10 April for travel between 11 November 11 to 29 February 2012.

Other bargain AirAsia X airfares include prices starting from \$359 one way from the Gold Coast to Hangzhou, and \$399 between Melbourne to Taipei.

The long-haul services connect with AirAsia's extensive network Asia as well as onward to the UK and France via the low-cost terminal at Kuala Lumpur International Airport.

More fares at www.airasia.com.

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Delegates decisions

THE TGA has published the reasons for the Delegate's final decisions regarding amendments to the Poisons Standard, March 2011.

The final decisions cover the listing of atumumab, tolvaptan, vinflunine and rilpivirine in Schedule 4 of the Uniform Scheduling of Medicines and Poisons 1, Amendment 2, effective 01 June 2011.

The document also lists the reasons behind the rescheduling of 5-aminolevulinic acid (used to treat pre-cancerous and cancerous lesions, as well as skin conditions including acne and rosacea.) in Schedule 4 (*PD* 17 Feb)

New member category

THE UK Royal Pharmaceutical Society is planning to add a new membership category for Pharmaceutical Scientists.

"Pharmaceutical scientists, will enrich the knowledge of these matters within the Society and will bring many benefits to all pharmacists," the RPS said.

Prescription update

THE latest edition of the TGA's Prescription Medicine BPR Update covers the progress of the streamlined submission project; regulatory requirements for PPFs and submission dossiers; and the consultation process for electronic format submission dossier regulatory requirements.

The update also looks at info for sponsors on signing up for secure mail, and new PI format requirements and requests to vary Register information for safety related notifications- www.tga.gov.au.

EU Clinical Register live

THE EU Clinical Trials Register is now live, having been launched yesterday by the European Medicines Agency.

The online register gives the public access to information on interventional clinical trials for drugs authorised in the 27 EU member states, as well the ability to search for info on trials conducted outside of the EU (if they are part of a paediatric investigation plan). See www.ema.europa.eu.

DISPENSARY CORNER



HE must have been using a special cologne!

A 92-year old American woman is in gaol for firing a semi-automatic rifle at her neighbour's house after he refused to give her a kiss.

According to the neighbour, 52-year old former police officer, Dwight Bettner, the woman came over to his house and refused to leave until he had given her a kiss.

Refusing to be blackmailed into a smooch, Bettner got into a heated argument with the woman before she stormed out.

Moving on from the strange events of the morning Bettner then began a phone call with his father, which was interrupted by the sound of smashing glass, as a bullet buzzed by his head.

"I've taken her trash out for her, just neighbourly stuff," Bettner told local media.

"I guess she just took that as something else," he added.

YETIS are back on the radar!

Authorities in Russia are considering opening a scientific institute devoted to the study of the mysterious alpine beasts.

Russian folklore and rumor has long held the belief that Siberia holds a population of yetis or snowmen in its remote mountainous regions.

"Organising an institute or a scientific centre would be a logical continuation of research into the yeti," said a spokesperson for the administration of the Russian coal-mining region of Kemerovo.

He flagged an upcoming international conference in the town of Tashtagol featuring "leading experts into hominids".

"We think that the yeti is a separate branch of human evolution... It lives in harmony with nature," he added.

WIN A NICOLE BY OPI PACK



This week *Pharmacy Daily* is giving pharmacists the chance to win a 'Glee' Lacquer Pack valued at \$105, courtesy of Nicole by OPI.

Nicole by OPI is a new range of fashion forward nail lacquers designed for the young fashionistas brought to you by OPI.

Nicole by OPI nail lacquers contain no DBP, Toluene, or Formaldehyde. NO NASTIES! Nicole by OPI is available at Terry White Chemists and leading pharmacies. For stockists contact 1800 358 999 or visit www.nicolebyopi.com.

For your chance to win this great pack, simply send in an answer to the daily question below:

How many nail treatments are there in the Nicole by OPI range?

The first correct entry received wins!

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

Hint! Visit www.nicolebyopi.com

Congratulations to yesterday's lucky winner, Luke Edmunds from Maddington Chemmart Chemist.