

Aboriginal health

THE life expectancy gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians is estimated to be 12 years for men and 10 years for women, according to the latest Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report.

The health and welfare of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: an overview 2011 looked at the impact of chronic diseases on the life expectancy gap, and found that 80% of the mortality gap can be attributed to chronic disease - most significantly heart disease (22%), followed by diabetes (12%) and liver disease (11%).

The report also found that babies born to Indigenous mothers were twice as likely to be of low birth weight, compared to babies of non-Indigenous mothers.

The report also showed that the proportion of Indigenous people who were daily smokers had declined slightly, from 49% to 45% between 2002 and 2008.

Preventers vs LTRAs

LEUKOTRIENE receptor antagonists are just as effective in managing asthma as preventer inhalers, according to a new study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

The study followed 650 patients with chronic asthma for a period of two years, some of whom were given preventer inhalers, the others leukotriene receptor antagonist tablets (Singulair or Accolate).

The results found that LTRAs managed the disease as well as "preventer" inhalers when used in addition to steroid inhalers.

Cancer call out

THE University of Sydney, in conjunction with the Sydney Cancer Centre is calling for cancer survivors with memory and/or concentration problems following their chemotherapy treatment to participate in a new study.

The study hopes to help the nearly one in every three cancer survivors who have problems with memory and concentration following chemotherapy.

For details call 1800 778 167.

Choice blasts fat loss pills

CONSUMER watchdog CHOICE has published a damning report on weight loss supplements, after an investigation into a selection of diet pills and ingredients claimed to have fat busting qualities.

"What we found were products that are not rigorously tested and active ingredients with little or no proof they work," said the report's author, Emily McCluskey.

In the article McCluskey argues that in general diet pills are a mix of herbs and vitamins (including stimulants), which in most cases are only tested individually for safety.

"Amazingly, two products we looked at contained both bitter orange and panax ginseng, which aren't recommended to be taken together, due to an increased risk of fatal heart arrhythmias," McCluskey said.

Products under the microscope included: Naturopathica FatBlaster Max; Supprexxa Metabolism Formula; Rapid Burn Dual Action Weight-loss System; FatBlaster and FatBlaster Max; Hershel-Beck Laboratories Xantrax; Hydroxycut Advanced; Rapid Burn; Optislim Max; and Xenadrine Ultra.

Looking at key ingredients in the products - such as hydroxycitric acid, bitter orange, capsicum annuum, green coffee extract,

chitosan and chromium picolinate - McCluskey found that whilst there was some positive evidence for their efficacy, this was often variable, while side effects ranged from mild to severe.

Overall the report suggested that more testing of the ingredients and their interactions was required to prove their fat-busting properties.

McCluskey also takes aim at the advertising of the diet pills, saying that although companies are required to publish testimonials and photos of "typical" cases, some will publish "exceptional" cases, and in their fine print explain that the individual's results were based on the product in conjunction with other lifestyle factors including diet and exercise.

The fact that products don't need to be tested to be listed on the ARTG is also cause for concern, according to McCluskey, who said that even though manufacturers were required to keep proof of efficacy on file "we suspect their proof is pretty underwhelming".

"So, if the products aren't evaluated for efficacy, how do you know whether they are worth the money?" she said.

"The short answer is you don't - unless you do some leg work," she concluded.

MS autoinjectors

MERCK Serono says its single-use RebiDose autoinjector is now available on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme for the treatment of relapsing-remitting multiple sclerosis.

The disposable system is prefilled with a single dose of Rebif, providing a quick and simple injection solution to help manage the condition.

New malaria nets

BAYER is hailing an interim recommendation from the World Health Organization for its new LifeNet mosquito nets for the control and prevention of malaria.

The innovation sees deltamethrin directly integrated into a polypropylene fibre, with the molecule gradually released to provide insecticidal protection.

Stroke crisis report

A NEW report titled *How Can We Avoid a Stroke Crisis in the Asia-Pacific Region?* has been launched today at the 18th Asian Pacific Congress of Cardiology in Kuala Lumpur.

The report calls for "urgent coordinated action" to avoid millions of preventable strokes which strike people with atrial fibrillation (AF) each year.

Professor Graeme Hankey from Royal Perth Hospital said the rising incidence of stroke "constitutes both a major public health issue and a significant economic burden."

The report urges improved awareness of the impact of AF, developing methods for early and adequate diagnosis and providing "equal and adequate administration of therapy for patients with AF across countries in the Asia-Pacific region".

Measles outbreaks

THE US is facing its highest number of measles cases in a decade, having already clocked 89 reported cases this year, whilst the EU battles 6,500 cases in 33 countries.

The rise in measles has been linked with a failure to vaccinate all children.

Symbion staff stepping out



RECENTLY this intrepid group of ten Symbion Pharmacy Services staffers participated in the Oxfam Trailwalker charity fundraiser.

The 100km endurance event was completed by the group (split into two teams) in a healthy 27 hours

and 36 minutes - well under the 48hrs they were officially given to finish the trek.

For their enormous efforts the group raised an impressive \$10,000 for the charity.

The trekkers are pictured above.

Olives for heart health

A NEW study published in *Clinical Nutrition* has found that phenolic compounds such as oleuropein found in olives may boost antibodies which protect the heart from bad LDL cholesterol.

The results are being lauded by Olive Leaf Australia during national heart week (01-08 May), with the company saying that the results create a platform for more clinical research to be undertaken into polyphenol-rich olive extracts and medicinal remedies.

CPD Calendar

WELCOME to Pharmacy Daily's Continuing Professional Development Calendar, featuring upcoming events and opportunities to earn CPE and CPD points.

If you have an upcoming event you'd like us to feature, email info@pharmacydaily.com.au.

11 May: Diploma of Management; Pharmacy Skills Centre, Hawthorn, Vic; for details call 03 9810 9988

17 May: Advanced Wound Care; Pharmacy Guild Skills Centre, Hawthorn, Victoria; for details call 03 9810 9988.

18 May: First Aid Training; Pharmacy Guild, Geelong, Victoria; for details call - 03 9810 9988.

20-22 May: PSA South Australia Autumn Weekend, Majestic Roof Garden Hotel psa.org.au.

21, 22, 28 May, 04 Jun: FOCUS on gastrointestinal conditions in pharmacy - Sydney, Melbourne, Perth and Brisbane. All sessions now full - psa.org.au.

08-10 Jun: ConPharm 2011 in Darwin - see aacp.com.au.

17-19 Jun: Pharmacy Expo, Darling Harbour Sydney - details pharmacyexpo.com.au.

29 Jun-02 Jul: 9th International Conference on Life Long Learning in Pharmacy, Rotorua NZ - www.llpharm.com.

06-09 Oct: PAC11, Melbourne Convention Centre pac11.com.au

Sigma confirms retail focus

SIGMA Pharmaceuticals has confirmed its strategy to be the "preferred partner for all industry stakeholders," with the company's annual report released this morning saying its "position in the supply chain offers many opportunities to add value for pharmacists, suppliers and Sigma".

Similar sentiments were expressed on Wed by md Mark Hooper, who told an American Chamber of Commerce lunch that following the sale of Sigma's pharmaceuticals division to Aspen Pharmacare "there is an increasing focus of Sigma on its retail business.

"Now being solely focused on wholesaling and retailing, they just become more important parts of our business, whereas previously the majority of our income came from the pharma business," he said.

Hooper said that retail support services provided to pharmacists were becoming ever more important due to pressure on margins as a result of PBS reforms.

"We think we can add some real value for pharmacies," he said.

MEANWHILE the Sigma annual report also reveals that Hooper received \$400,000 in cash as a sign-on bonus when he accepted the role as the company's ceo last year.

He will also get a further \$1m bonus in cash or shares if he stays in the top job for three years.

Hooper's salary is \$1.05m including superannuation and he's also entitled to double this as part of a Short Term incentive plan, and earn a further \$600,000 under an annual Long Term incentive plan.

Sigma explained the generous deal by saying that prior to accepting the job he was "securely employed in a senior executive position with another company.

"The offer of employment with Sigma at the time included a degree of risk due to the financial performance of the Company and the threat of a takeover or significant divestment," Sigma said.

Former md Elmo de Alwis got \$472,000 in entitlements plus a a year's salary (\$1.025m) to cover "mutually agreed terms" when he resigned from his job last Aug.

WIN A U LITTLE BEAUTY PRIZE PACK



Pharmacy Daily has teamed up with U Little Beauty, and is giving away exciting prize packs every day this week.

U Little Beauty is a quintessentially Australian natural skincare range that delivers the goods - and looks great!

Every product is made and owned in Australia. Don't be fooled by this clever little Aussies whimsically named products - a bit of rough, butter me up, all washed up and skinny dip. This collection of natural skincare and body care is full of antioxidants, is SLS Free, Paraben Free, and Cruelty Free and is Vegan Certified.

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

U Little Beauty is quintessentially Australian _____ skincare range

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

The first correct entry received will win!

Hint: Visit www.ulittlebeauty.com.au

Congratulations to yesterday's lucky winner: Jessica Rigg from Signiq.

DISPENSARY CORNER

HEALTHY scare.

A German man may need his blood pressure lowered after being locked inside a womens' prison in Hildesheim.

The man was on his way to exercise in a local park, when he decided to take what he assumed to be a shortcut.

Unfortunately for the man the supposed shortcut was in fact the entrance to a fully operational womens prison.

The man only twigged to the fact that he was in a spot of bother when the prison gates closed behind him, leaving him in the cold.

He began to yell for help, and was eventually released from his inadvertent imprisonment - with a rather hoarse voice from all the shouting.

DUTCH researchers have found that strokes can be triggered by all sorts of factors - even blowing your nose.

A 250-patient study identified several risk factors, all of which increased blood pressure and could contribute to a stroke.

The news isn't good, with possibly dangerous activities also including having a cup of coffee and even sex.

Coffee was found to be responsible for more than 10% of brain aneurysms in the patients studied - while April Fool's Day was also a possible culprit, with being startled increasing stroke risk more than twenty-fold.

IT sounds like something out of a movie, but apparently is a real life animal health story.

A Victorian guard dog is raring to sink his teeth into an evildoer, after having an operation to give him a set of titanium choppers.

The dog reportedly shattered his canine canines in an accident, and is so highly trained for his work in a Melbourne prison that it was cheaper to repair the dental problem than retire him.