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## Drug shortages in US

**DRUG** shortages in the US are at their worst in 30 years, according to Larry Wagenknecht, Chief Executive of the Michigan Pharmacists Association.

According to media reports the US has suffered around 200 drug shortages this year, due to a number of contributing factors including manufacturing problems.

The majority of the shortages have been for generic drugs, and include medications for cancer, ADD, Blood Pressure and anesthetics.

"Unfortunately, it's becoming a weekly, sometimes daily occurrence here," said Spectrum Health spokesman Bruce Rossman.

Although they are worsening, the shortages are not a recent occurrence, with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services saying that between 2005 and 2010, the number of shortages has tripled.

Last month US President Obama issued an Executive Order to the FDA to "take action" over the shortages, including new legislation which requires manufacturers to report upcoming shortages and discontinuations six months ahead of time.

Other measures include joint FDA and Justice Department investigations into allegations of price gouging, as well as the speeding up of FDA new manufacturing facility reviews.

Whilst pharmacists have welcomed the new measures, they are cautious as to celebrating a victory too soon, with one Priority Health clinical pharmacist, Charles Mollien telling media that "It will take years to fix this".

## What's the drug score PBS?

**FURTHER** cuts to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme could threaten the best subsidised medicines program in the world, according to a statement from Medicines Australia.

The comments come on the back of the release of the PBS Scorecard by The Medicines Partnership of Australia, which found that for the year ended 30 September 2011, growth in government expenditure on the PBS was 5.7%.

Once adjusted for inflation, this represented growth of around 2% in real terms.

"This is a sustainable level of growth, and existing arrangements such as price disclosure will ensure expenditure remains well under control," Medicines Australia said in a statement.

Further price reductions, unrelated to PBS reforms, are also set to take effect on 01 April 2012, resulting in an average drop of 23% across more than 200 drugs.

"On all the evidence, PBS growth is running at a completely acceptable rate, and continues to provide huge health benefits for the nation," Medicines Australia said.

Additional findings in the Scorecard report show that the ten year average growth in the PBS over the last decade was one of the lowest since the 1980's.

As such, the current growth rate, according to Medicines Australia, "reaffirms that the long term downward trend is continuing".

In addition, over the last decade

PBS expenditure as a proportion of GDP remained steady at between 0.6% and 0.65%, below the 0.7% forecast to hold steady between 2010 and 2020, in the Intergenerational Report released last year.

"The PBS actually represents the most cost-effective element of health expenditure, and should not be subjected to further savings measures," Medicines Australia said.

## SHPA Medal of Merit

**BHAVINI** Patel, Director of Pharmacy, Royal Darwin Hospital has been awarded the Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia GlaxoSmithKline Medal of Merit.

Announced at this year's SHPA National Conference in Hobart over the weekend, the award is in recognition of Bhavini's contribution to the development of hospital pharmacy practice in the Northern Territory and to Indigenous and remote health.

As part of her many achievements Patel developed a comprehensive, viable and sustainable clinical pharmacy service across all NT public hospitals.

## Menactra availability

**SANOFI** Pasteur's Menactra, Meningococcal (Groups A, C, Y, W-135) Polysaccharide Diphtheria Toxoid Conjugate vaccine is now available in Australia.

Indicated for the prevention of invasive meningococcal disease caused by N. meningitidis serogroups A, C, Y and W-135 the vaccine is the only quadrivalent conjugate meningococcal vaccine indicated for use in Australia for children aged from 2 – 11 years, and is suitable for use in persons aged 2-55 years.

"The number of Australians travelling to high risk areas such as Asia, Africa and the Middle East is on the increase, so prior to departure, consideration of meningococcal vaccination should be part of travel plans," said Sydney University, Professor Robert Booy.

## Plain packets passed

**THE** Senate has passed the Govt's tobacco plain packaging legislation, meaning that from 01 Dec 2012 all tobacco products sold in Australia must be in plain packaging.

## Medicare record

**MEDICARE** bulk billing figures for the September 2011 quarter were at record highs, according to the Minister for Health and Ageing, Nicola Roxon.

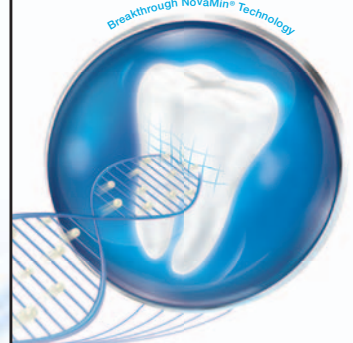
The figures show that 75.9% of all services were bulk billed, equal to the March quarter record numbers.

According to the results the September quarter saw 86 million services and \$4.5 billion in benefits provided to Australians, with the 75.9% bulk-billing rate up 0.5% on the June quarter 2011 results and up 1.3% on the September quarter 2010.

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### Weekly Comment

Welcome to **Pharmacy Daily's** weekly comment feature.



This week's contributor is **Matt Marsh from Pharmacy Alliance.**

#### PBS Reforms 2012

PBS reform has been a reality for pharmacy since August 2008, but the countdown to arguably the most critical day in pharmacy history is now less than 6 months away.

01 April 2012 will trigger the next ongoing series of waves of PBS reform, and independent pharmacy owners in particular will need to understand the impact on their business.

On this day the Government will receive their guaranteed min 23% average price reduction on highly competitive off-patent products.

Though the average weighted drop in April of 23% is guaranteed we may see some molecules drop by more than 50%.

These drops will cause other reactions in the industry with generic manufacturers adjusting discounts and wholesalers having to reset their pricing to reflect the loss in turnover.

On the same day, we will see the first PBS listings of Atorvastatin (Lipitor), which is currently the #1 molecule on the PBS.

Though the patent expiry is not until 18 May 2012, Ranbaxy will be the first of the generic companies to come to market due to a 3 month exclusivity deal.

Though everyone is purely focused on Atorvastatin there are an additional 30 other molecule patent expiries which represent more value than Atorvastatin

The events above will have an impact on dispensary revenue and profitability in independent pharmacy. What can you do?

The first thing to do is to research the PBS changes by visiting [pbs.gov.au](http://pbs.gov.au) or looking for updates from the Guild; and then develop a strategy to maximise opportunities and mitigate risks that PBS changes may bring.

Stock management for 01 April is absolutely crucial, make sure you are aware of the drugs that are due to come off patent and ensure that you do not order in bulk.

These changes can be complicated.

If you don't have the time to get your head around how it will impact your business, find help; otherwise email [pbsreform@pharmacyalliance.net](mailto:pbsreform@pharmacyalliance.net) and I'll be happy to answer your questions and let you know how Pharmacy Alliance can support you.

## International OTC evaluation

A VALUE-tree method of over-the-counter medicines regulation has been proposed in a new report commissioned by the World Self Medication Industry.

Published in the *Clinical Pharmacology and Therapeutics* journal, the method defines the important benefit and risk domains relevant to nonprescription drugs.

According to the report the value tree could be used to identify product-specific attributes in each domain and could also support formal benefit-risk assessment using tools such as a modification

of the International Risk Governance Council framework which "systematises an approach to issue review, early alignment of stakeholders, evaluation, and risk mitigation/management".

The report has been welcomed by the Australian Self-Medication Industry which said "it is important for the medicines industry to collaborate with regulators to develop a practical benefit/risk framework to apply to the OTC sector".

"The proposed model is based around a tailored benefit/risk framework that applies a broader definition of "benefits", beyond clinical trial data, and includes elements such as consumer satisfaction, dependency on healthcare systems and time-off work.

"Our hope is that this will help to start discussions between regulators and industry on the way that product submission and applications can be assessed with greater consistency and certainty in the future," ASMI's Executive Director Dr Deon Schoombie added.

### PD competition winners

**PHARMACY Daily** would like to congratulate the winners of last Thursday and Friday's Hollywood Fashion Tape competition: Anna Michael, APhS Pharmacy; Suzy Wright, Bathurst Base Hospital; Jeremy Roach, Royal Prince Alfred Hospital; Lisa Piercy, Terry White; Rebecca Lauchlan, Hydration Pharmaceuticals Trust; and Jamal Assaf, API.



## WIN A KIDDIE BOTTLE



**Pharmacy Daily** has teamed up with **Kiddie Concepts** this week and is giving five lucky readers the chance to win an **Adaptable Kiddie bottle**, valued at \$27.95.

Kiddie Concepts, an eco-friendly company based in Melbourne, Australia, has launched its safer, healthier alternative to the plastic children's 'sippy' bottle.

Practical, stylish and safe for kids the Adaptable Kiddie bottle allows you to simply change the top as

your child grows. The Adaptable Kiddie bottle can change from a nipple teat to sippy top (Phillips AVENT™ Sippy Top supplied with bottle) and finally can convert into a sports bottle - the perfect three-in-one bottle!

For more information, visit [www.kiddieconcepts.com.au](http://www.kiddieconcepts.com.au).

To win, simply be the first person to send in the correct answer to the question below to: [comp@pharmacydaily.com.au](mailto:comp@pharmacydaily.com.au).

Is the Kiddie Concepts bottle made from 18/8 food grade stainless steel?



### DISPENSARY CORNER

#### HEALING tea?

It's hard to deny that a good cup of tea can do wonders for a person's frame of mind, however a new "healthy" tea is raising more than a few eyebrows across the globe.

Made from the collected droppings of Chinese pandas, the tea is the brainchild of wildlife expert, college lecturer and tea lover, An Yanshi.

According to Yanshi, the tea contains lots of nutrients and fibres because pandas have very poor digestive systems and they only absorb 30% of everything they eat.

Not just to improve world health, Yanshi is hoping the tea will nab the Guinness World Record for being the most expensive cup of tea, with his plans to sell the brew for around \$150,000 per kilo.

### New NSW clinical Expo

THE NSW branch of the PSA officially launched its Clinical and Practice Expo last Friday at an event for industry and key stakeholders.

Taking place at the Horden Pavilion in Sydney 25 - 27 May 2012, the event is, according to the PSA, "designed to bring together pharmacists, patient support groups, patients, allied health professionals and the pharmaceutical industry with the aim of improving Australia's health through excellence in the practice of pharmacy".

"This new-look event focuses on the quality use of medicines and therapeutic updates as well as clinical and professional services," said PSA NSW Branch Director Steven Drew.

According to Drew the new format also "provides pharmaceutical companies with myriad options to interact with key stakeholders, integral to the provision of medicines information and medication management".