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Nasodren PD spotlight

TODAY'S Pharmacy Daily issue features two pages of news, plus a third page from Biorevive detailing its Nasodren sinusitis treatment which has undergone 15 trials-see p3.

Actemra approval

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration has approved Actemra (tocilizumab) for the treatment of systemic juvenile idiopathic arthritis in patients two years of age and older.

The approval for juvenile patients follows the drug's current availability for adults with severe active rheumatoid arthritis on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.

Actemra works by blocking the action of the body's protein messenger interleukin-6 which contributes to chronic inflammation.

TGA pain killer controversy

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration's decision to cancel all pain killers containing dextropropoxyphene (Capadex, Di-Gesic, Doloxene and Paradex) from the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods from 01 March 2012, has sparked arguments across the industry, with Aspen Australia rejecting the decision as "flawed".

The cancellation, which was announced yesterday, is based on a TGA review of "available evidence" which revealed that dextropropoxyphene affects the electrical activity of the heart, increasing the risk of serious arrhythmias.

As such, the risk profile of the quartet was deemed to outweigh their pain relief benefit.

The result of the ARTG removal, means that from 01 March 2012 Di-Gesic, Capadex, Paradex and Doloxene will no longer be supplied in Australia.

The TGA advised patients taking Capadex, Di-Gesic, Doloxene or Paradex regularly for chronic pain to consult their GP about alternative medicines, as sudden stoppage may result in withdrawal symptoms; whilst short term users have been advised to swap to alternative pain drugs immediately.

Health professionals were also advised to plan with patients the change to an appropriate alternative method of pain relief at the earliest opportunity.

Opponents to the cancellation have however labelled the move as

"wrong", with Aspen Australia saying that the TGA relied on a flawed study with "questionable" data in making its decision.

According to Aspen, the study which the TGA used to draw its conclusion, was done in the US, and involved a single non-representative sample of six patients.

"Contrary to the TGA's conclusions, Aspen remains of the view that the experience of use of the products by patients in Australia over the past 40 years demonstrates that Aspen's DPP-containing products are both safe and efficacious," said a statement from Aspen.

"Indeed, Aspen estimates that over the past 40 years, close to 2 billion tablets/capsules of DPP-containing products have been sold in Australia alone," the statement said, adding that ADRAC reports show an "enviable record of adverse events", and that DPP products are still used in 39 countries with "no major problems".

The company did however note that whilst DPP products remain in use in the UK and Europe, there are tighter controls for usage and availability in these regions.

Aspen has announced it will pursue the TGA appeal process in relation to the matter, as well as "other avenues of appeal which may be open to it".

Aspen also said it has identified and is currently in the process of obtaining access to additional data and evidence which is relevant to the cancellation and which it believes will prove the safety of the products.

Monash sponsorship

UNDERGRADUATE pharmacy students at Monash University, Melbourne, are set to benefit from a new ten-year sponsorship agreement with API.

The deal will help fund the university's Professional Practice Suite, a learning space that helps to improve students' skills in the practical area of dispensing, whilst also advancing students' communication and leadership skills in the wider practice of pharmacy.

"It's important that pharmacy students learn more than technical and professional skills," said Prof Bill Charman, Dean of the Faculty of Pharmacy.

"API's support for the PPS will enhance Monash's ability to produce pharmacy graduates who can better contribute to the future of community pharmacy," he said.

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Remote WA risks

AUSTRALIANS who suffer major trauma injuries in remote Western Australia are four times more likely to die than their counterparts in metropolitan areas, according to a new study.

The study looked at 1,300 patients with major trauma who were transferred to Perth for treatment over nine years and found that mortality risk increases by 87% for each 1,000 km flown, with the average transfer time being 12 hours.

Travel Specials

WELCOME to *Pharmacy Daily's* travel feature. Each week we highlight a couple of great travel deals for the pharmacy industry.

RYDGES Hotels and Resorts is offering a stay three pay two deal for stays in its three Cairns based hotels: Rydges Esplanade Resort, Rydges Tradewinds, Rydges Plaza Cairns.

This offer can be booked between 1 December 2011 and 31 March 2012 and is subject to availability for travel between 01 December 2011 and 30 June 2012 (some exclusion dates apply).

Visit www.rydges.com.

SAREERAYA Villas and Suites in Thailand's Koh Samui is offering guests an additional free night's stay when they book in for two paid nights.

The offer is valid for all room types booked before 15 December 2011.

For details see your local travel agent.

GUESTS who stay five nights at The Sarojin in Thailand between 01 and 26 December will receive a sixth night free of charge.

See your travel agent for details.

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Pharmacy chemo changes

PHARMACISTS should prepare for the revised arrangements for the Efficient Funding of Chemotherapy Drugs which will commence from 01 December.

The changes will not affect prescribing and dispensing arrangements for oral chemotherapy medicines, but are designed to achieve greater efficiency in the use of injectable and infusible chemotherapy medicines used in the treatment of cancer.

The changes will: require prescribers to write dose specific prescriptions using milligrams (in most situations) without specific reference to forms and strengths; pay approved suppliers/pharmacists for the most cost-efficient combination of vials that makes up the required patient dose; and result in changes to the way that chemotherapy drugs are listed in the Schedule.

Patients will pay only one PBS co-payment (\$5.60 concessional or

\$34.20 general) for each original prescription dispensed and for repeat prescriptions (i.e. a patient will pay either \$5.60 or \$34.20 for the first injection/infusion on the script but not for each repeat).

Prior to 01 December, patients would have paid a PBS co-payment every time a prescription – original or repeat – was dispensed.

Meanwhile, from Dec suppliers and pharmacies will also have to identify the Streamlined Authority code on the prescription (if relevant).

This is the case for all PBS Authority Required (STREAMLINED) drugs, and not just chemo drugs.

Insomnia approval

THE US FDA has approved Intermezzo (zolpidem tartrate sublingual tablets) for use as needed to treat insomnia characterised by middle-of-the-night waking followed by difficulty returning to sleep.

WIN A BOTANI PACK



This week **Botani** brings five *Pharmacy Daily* readers a special prize pack for Christmas 2011 to reawaken their skin radiance – Sensational Skin Hydration Pack, valued at \$70.

“True hydration and nourishment for the whole body is made possible with this deeply penetrating and versatile skin hydration pack for the face, hands and body. Whether you're experiencing dry, sensitive skin or wanting to enhance your

overall skin health, your skin will appreciate the Botani difference.

This pack contains the Olive Hand Cream 100g, Olive Skin Serum 15mL & Olive Cleansing Bar 125g.”

To win this fabulous skin hydration pack, simply be the first person to send in the correct answer to the question below:

Which Australian wildlife association is actively Botani sponsoring through every sale of the Olive Hand Cream 100g?

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

Hint: Visit www.botani.com.au/arrow

Congratulations to yesterday's lucky winner, **Kim Novak** from **Ayr District Hospital Pharmacy, QLD**.

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DISPENSARY CORNER

OTRIVINE needed immediately.

A passionate opposition MP in South Korea went to extreme measures to block votes for the country's controversial free trade deal with America, by releasing tear gas in Parliament.

According to reports, the country's leading Grand National party was determined to push through the deal, whilst the Democratic opposition was absolutely determined to stop it, with members physically trying to stop Grand National MPs entering Parliament by using their bodies to block them, whilst also shouting them down.

These methods were not warmly received, and scuffles between MPs broke out before the Democratic party's Kim Dun-dong let off his tear gas surprise.

Despite the thick gas, security personnel were able to locate Dun-dong shortly after the gas swept into the room, escorting him from Parliament still shouting against the FTA.

Following the outbreak Parliament was cleared, giving MPs time to clear their eyes and wash their wounds, before returning to vote less than an hour later.

The bill passed 151 votes to seven.

BLIND cinema.

China has launched the world's first cinema for the blind, in Nantong city, Jiangsu Province.

The cinema is located in a community centre, and is furnished with comfortable chairs, as well as a big screen for showing all the latest blockbusters, as well as much loved classics.

What differentiates the cinema from its counterparts is the existence of a translator, who describes all the action, colour and scenes on screen for the cinema's patrons.

So far the cinema has been met with praise from its users.

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