



PHARMACY ALLIANCE
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Australia's **largest independent** pharmacy support network.

Mental Health chief

HEALTH minister Nicola Roxon yesterday announced the appointment of Monsignor David Cappo as the chairman of Australia's first National Mental Health Commission, which will provide independent advice to the govt on mental health reform.

Weight Watchers wins out

A **NEW** international study published in *The Lancet* today has contrasted Weight Watchers with weight loss plans managed by local doctors and nurses, finding that participants in the commercial program lost significantly more

than those receiving standard care.

772 overweight and obese adults were tracked in Australia, the UK and Germany, with the local arm of the research led by Professor Ian Caterson from Sydney University.

The Weight Watchers members lost 5.06kg on average over the trial period, compared to 2.25kg for those managed by doctors.

Caterson said it was the first multi-country, randomised, comparative study to show the effectiveness of commercial weight loss programs.

The Weight Watchers were three times more likely to lose 5% of their body weight, and also showed significantly greater improvements in insulin and cholesterol levels.

The patients cared for by doctors had one appointment per month - half to a third of the meetings attended in Weight Watchers.

Participants in the trial were recruited via primary health carers, and of 377 assigned to the commercial program, 230 (61%) completing 12 months.

395 were assigned to standard doctor care, with 214 (54%) lasting the full year in the program.

Caterson suggested that the greater level of contact, more frequent weigh-ins, peer support and access to resources such as recipes for those in the Weight Watchers program could have been significant factors in the outcome.

He said further research would see follow-up assessments at 18 and 24 months, as well as a comparison of the relative cost effectiveness of the approaches.

New NZ formulary

NZ Associate Health Minister, Peter Dunne, has announced the creation of the New Zealand Medicines Formulary, as a source of "concise, independent, evidence-based medicines information and guidance on best practice".

The NZMF will be based on the British National Formulary (BNF), with other content coming from the BNF for Children and other information including Stockley's Interaction Alerts.

The UK content and ongoing changes from Britain will be modified to suit the New Zealand environment and will be continuously updated.

Dunne said future plans would also see the formulary fully integrated with the electronic health environment, including prescribing and dispensing software programs.

The NZMF is being developed by a consortium including NZ's Best Practice Advocacy Centre and the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain.

GMiA code review

THE Generic Medicines Industry Association says its new Code of Practice has been "highly effective in formalising the high standards of conduct adhered to by members," according to a report which aims to stimulate discussion in the lead-up to a further review next month.

Stakeholders are being invited to provide feedback and comments, with the annual review to take place in Oct in the lead-up to the 03 Nov anniversary of the ACCC authorisation of the code.

PCHR urges poll participation



THE Pharmacist Coalition for Health Reform (PCHR) was formally launched at the recent Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) Victorian Summit.

SHPA ceo Yvonne Allinson and spokesperson for the PCHR, said the organisation would run a series of online polls, aiming to encourage pharmacists to take part and share their opinion on a range of issues.

"We urge people to visit the PCHR website, contribute their own stories, sign up to the campaign, encourage colleagues to do the same and importantly have their voice heard," she said.

The Coalition hopes to highlight

the part that pharmacists can play in the evolving Australian health system, to better utilise their "extensive skills and qualifications".

Allinson said the PCHR wants to work with the government in health reform discussions and find new ways to collaborate and improve the use of medicines.

Pictured above are some of the speakers at the SHPA Vic Summit, from left: Paul Gysslink, APESMA; John Jackson, PSA; Catherine Brown, NAPSA; and Yvonne Allinson from SHPA.

To take part in the current PCHR online poll see the website at www.pharmacistsforhealth.com.au.

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Travel Specials

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

AIRASIA has announced a major fare sale, with 20% sliced off seats across its entire network including flights from Perth, Melbourne and the Gold Coast to Kuala Lumpur plus Darwin to Bali. AirAsia also flies to London and Paris as well as to more than 70 destinations in Asia, with the deal even applying to the Premium Flat Bed seats on its long haul AirAsia X flights. Book at www.airasia.com.

FIJI'S Walu Beach Resort has launched a new 'Stay Four, Pay for Three' offer for Australian travellers, meaning the resort's one bedroom bures are priced from just \$210 per night.

Walu Beach Resort is located on the island of Malolo, and the special pricing is available until 31 March 2012, including school holidays and the Christmas period.

Activities include sailing, beach volleyball, fishing, kayaking and windsurfing, as well as snorkelling amongst the nearby coral reefs and visiting local villages to experience Fiji's traditional way of life.

See your travel agent or visit www.walubeach.com

OCEANIA Cruises is offering up to US\$400 in shipboard credit to celebrate next year's visit by its luxury *Regatta* to Australia.

The 684-passenger ship offers the ultimate holiday, with fabulous dining, spectacular surrounds and a world class spa.

Book via travel agents; for more info see OceaniaCruises.com.au.

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NSAID link to miscarriage

THE Pharmaceutical Society of Australia has urged pregnant women wanting to use non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs to consult a pharmacist before taking the medications, after new research showing they have a heightened risk of miscarriage.

The study published in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* looked at a range of NSAIDs including ibuprofen, and concluded that women who took any type, and any dose, of the drugs had a 2.4 times higher risk of miscarriage than those who did not use NSAIDs.

4705 cases of miscarriage were analysed, of which 352 (7.5%) involved women taking NSAIDs.

PSA National President Grant Kardachi said the findings highlighted the importance of pregnant women seeking advice before taking any medication.

"NSAIDs are very effective and useful medications, but clearly should not be bought in a non-pharmacy setting and taken

without advice," he said.

Kardachi warned that consumers buying NSAIDs in a supermarket are unlikely to know about the higher risk of miscarriage "as they will not be given any professional medical advice when purchasing the product".

Health reform plan

THE Health Minister has released the plan "charting the path for national health reform implementation," which outlines key milestones in the process.

It covers health reform for hospitals, GP and primary care, aged care, mental health, national standards and performance, workforce, prevention and eHealth, detailing components of the \$66.6 billion committed to key health spending measures since 2007.

The report is titled *National Health Reform: Progress and Delivery*, and can be viewed online at www.yourhealth.gov.au.

WIN A FABULOUS MIRROR SHINE



Pharmacy Daily has teamed up with **Keysun** and is giving away Fabulous Mirror Shine to three lucky readers every day this week.

Introducing Fabulous Mirror Shine! It's a top coat, dryer and sealer all in one!

It gives nails a mirror shine and longer lasting nail polish by forming a super-hard, protective shield that surrounds and seals nail colour, allowing the nail polish to last longer and remain chip free.

Mirror Shine protects your nails and helps to give them strength. No more chipping, No more breaking! It also has a quick dry application allowing nails to dry in seconds!

To win your very own Fabulous Mirror Shine, simply be one of the first three people to send in the correct answer to the question below to: comp@pharmacydaily.com.au

What nail care brand does the Mirror Shine belong to?

Hint! Visit www.keysun.com.au

Congratulations to yesterday's lucky winners, **Jolyon Hawley** from **Aspen Pharmacare**, NSW, **Michelle Jensen** of **Airlie Beach Day & Night Chemist**, QLD and **Rebecca Hill** of **The Pharmacy Guild of Australia**, ACT.



DISPENSARY CORNER

AN unusual animal rights campaign in Belgium is urging men to forego underwear in support of the five million piglets who are castrated each year.

Using the tag-line "Let 'em hang," it's the brainchild of welfare group Gaia which says the current practice by farmers of administering the chop without painkillers should be outlawed.

"We are hoping for mass participation so that supermarkets stop selling pork from castrated pigs," said a spokesman for the group, suggesting that men leave their briefs and boxers in the cupboard this Fri to "show solidarity" with the swine.

Women should also hide their partners' underwear, the group suggested, to boost the levels of so-called "freeballing".

AND also from Belgium, a new research project funded by the EU in Brussels aims to investigate the nutritional value of insects.

About \$3.5 million in funding has been allocated to the study, with the team from Wageningen University in Holland looking at claims that eating insects could relieve food shortages and help to save the environment.

"By 2020 you will be buying insects in supermarkets," suggested project leader, Professor Marcel Dicke.

"We will be amazed that in 2011 people didn't think it was going to happen," he added, with the move likely to start with "ground-up insects in sauces and burgers".

COULD this happen in Australia's pharmacy schools?

Students enrolling at academic institutions in Florida in the USA are being given new belts to help them comply with a new law banning on-campus saggy pants.

The so-called 'Pull Your Pants Up Law' aims to get boys to dress "professionally," rather than following the trend of low-slung pants and exposed underwear.