

### Lou Gehrig's testing

A NEW study published in the *Journal of Clinical Investigation* has identified a biomarker in the blood that signals the earliest stages of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (also known as Lou Gehrig's Disease).

The study, undertaken by researchers at Harvard Medical School, Tufts Medical School, Brigham and Women's Hospital and Massachusetts General Hospital, found that a type of white blood cell, called a monocyte, developed a specific chemical "signature" in the very earliest stages of the disease, before the symptoms developed.

That signature triggered those cells to move to the spinal cord, where they increased inflammation, an important component of the disease's process.

A similar signature was seen in monocytes of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis patients.

Scientists targeted the signature on monocytes using antibodies, which typically identify and neutralise foreign objects.

This process slowed disease progression, suggesting that it may be a promising lead for developing therapies.

Currently the only way to track the disease progression is through clinical measurements, such as the ALS Functional Rating Scale and measures of muscle strength, which fluctuate over the short term.

"This new biomarker provides us with a tool to better understand the beginning stages of ALS and may allow us to track the disease with a simple blood test," said Lucie Bruijn of The ALS Association.

## Australians get instant care

AUSTRALIAN patients can now find and book healthcare appointments instantly online at any hour of the day or night, via [1stavailable.com.au](http://1stavailable.com.au), the healthcare equivalent of the travel booking website Wotif.com.

1st available allows consumers to track down available appointments, including last minute cancellations with registered dentists, GPs, physiotherapists, chiropractors and other allied health services, at times and locations that best suit them.

The homespun website is the brainchild of Sydney-based dentist Dr Rick Luu, who created 1st available to "bring equity and access to healthcare services in a way that benefits both consumers and providers".

"The healthcare industry has traditionally been slow to integrate non-medical technology into its services, which have simplified other industries such as accommodation and retail," said Luu.

"Booking appointments with healthcare providers is still frustrating and time-consuming for both patients and practitioners.

"Ultimately our goal is to make healthcare more accessible and convenient to all Australians and through 1st available, we are making giant steps forward in doing this," Luu added.

The service is free to use for patients and is accessible via any internet connected medium, including mobile phones.

In terms of practitioners, Luu said

1st available provides them with a channel to reach and secure prospective patients.

"The system improves practice efficiency and profitability by freeing up front desk staff, improving customer service and helping to fill open and frustrating last minute cancellations," Luu said.

"Essentially, 1st Available alleviates and creates capacity in an overextended healthcare system.

"Despite being only new to market, 1st available is on-boarding new practitioners on a daily basis," he added.

### Zaltrap FDA approved

THE US Food and Drug Administration has approved Zaltrap (ziv-aflibercept) Injection for Intravenous Infusion, in combination with 5-fluorouracil, leucovorin, irinotecan (FOLFIRI), for patients with metastatic colorectal cancer (mCRC) that is resistant to or has progressed following an oxaliplatin-containing regimen.

The drug was approved following a Priority Review by the FDA.

"Colorectal cancer is one of the deadliest cancers and is responsible for more than half a million deaths globally each year," said Debasish Roychowdhury, Senior VP and Head, Sanofi Oncology.

"Sanofi looks forward to making Zaltrap available as soon as possible to patients with metastatic colorectal cancer previously treated with an oxaliplatin-containing regimen," he added.

The approval is based on data from the pivotal Phase III VELOUR trial which involved 1,226 patients with mCRC who previously had been treated with an oxaliplatin-containing regime.

The study found that in patients previously treated with an oxaliplatin containing regimen, adding Zaltrap to Folfiri significantly improved median survival from 12.06 months to 13.50 months, and resulted in significant improvement in progression-free survival from 4.67 months to 6.90 months, whilst a 24% relative risk reduction was also observed.

### Today in Pharmacy

TODAY'S PD features two pages of news, plus a full page from API reminding pharmacists to order the 2013 API Calendar, see p3 for details.

### Timely reminder

THE Olympic Games provides a timely reminder to pharmacists to have the resources available to check on the medications that they are dispensing and, in the case of elite athletes, to be able to check if they are banned substances, according to the PSA.

"APF22, provides information to assist pharmacists in their dispensing and other aspects of their pharmacy practice," said PSA President Grant Kardachi.

"The section, Drugs in Sport, is especially helpful in the case of elite athletes as it details the processes that a pharmacist should go through when dispensing any medicines for athletes," he added.



### National Intern Training Program NITP

#### Enrolments are now open

- » Helping interns pass their pharmacy board exams
- » Ensuring PSA interns are a step ahead of the rest
- » Supporting interns locally
- » Engaging pharmacy's finest to develop and deliver our program.

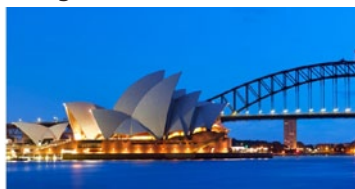


To enrol visit [www.psa.org.au/intern](http://www.psa.org.au/intern)  
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## "Boost Your Financial Management"

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"First Class! Sensational!" Jeremy Francis, Scone

## Guild Update

### Academy Update

The Guild Pharmacy Academy is proud to announce the availability of a new CPD accredited e-learning module available from [www.mycpd.org.au](http://www.mycpd.org.au) titled: *MedsCheck Program – Introduction*.

There are 1.5 Group 2 CPD credits available with successful assessment.

After completing this module, you will be able to

- Be aware of the aims of the MedsCheck program;
- Understand the registration and claiming process for MedsCheck;
- Appreciate other resources available to assist in delivering the program;
- Identify responsibilities of pharmacists performing MedsCheck and Diabetes MedsCheck services

Due for release mid-August 2012 – the Guild Pharmacy Academy will be releasing a second e-learning module regarding the MedsCheck program which will explore how to complete a MedsCheck or Diabetes MedsCheck service.

*MedsCheck Program – Introduction* is available now at: [www.mycpd.org.au](http://www.mycpd.org.au) - If you do not have a myCPD account, please visit [www.mycpd.org.au](http://www.mycpd.org.au) and click *myCPD Register here*.



The Pharmacy  
Guild of Australia

## Parkinson's on the PBS

**THIS** month Australians living with Parkinson's Disease will have access to a new drug on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, Azilect (rasagiline).

The once daily tablet is approved in Australia for the symptomatic treatment of idiopathic Parkinson's disease as monotherapy or as adjunct therapy (with concomitant levodopa/decarboxylase inhibitor therapy).

Although the precise mechanisms of the action of the drug are unknown, it is believed that one action is related to its MAO-B inhibitory activity, which causes an increase in extracellular levels of dopamine in the striatum.

Thus, the elevated dopamine level and subsequent increased dopaminergic activity are likely to mediate Azilect's effects seen in models of dopaminergic motor dysfunction.

The drug has undergone three multinational, double-blind, randomised, placebo-controlled, clinical studies, involving more than 1,500 patients which together provided statistically significant

evidence of efficacy, as well as safety and good tolerability.

At present, around 64,000 Aussies are living with Parkinson's.

Last year, an estimated 10,500 new cases were diagnosed.

### Esophagus grants

**THE** Queensland Institute of Medical Research will receive \$2.4 million in funding to study the cause of esophagus cancer.

The deadly disease kills around 70% of the people who contract it, and around 1000 Australians are diagnosed with it every year.

The grant is just one of 17 involved in the \$42.3m medical research funding recently doled out by the Government, with other research grant winners set to look into cost-effective personalised medicine in breast cancer, nutritional solutions to major diseases, antibiotic resistance for respiratory infections, reducing children's food allergies, and better management of blood used in the treatment of trauma.

## WIN A EUKY BEAR PACK



Every day this week, **Pharmacy Daily** is giving one lucky reader the chance to win a Euky Bear Pack, valued at \$50, courtesy of **FGB Natural Products**.

Each pack contains a Euky Bearub, Euky Bear Thermometer, Koala Soft Toy and Information Guide.

Euky Bear to the rescue! Little noses blocked? Luckily

there is a natural way to provide some relief to your sniffing tot, with Euky Bearub! This fast acting, gentle and naturally soothing Australian Eucalyptus chest rub helps to relieve a sore throat, clear a stuffy nose and soothe irritating chesty coughs.

For your chance to win this great prize pack, simply be the first person to send in the correct answer to the daily question below to [comp@pharmacydaily.com.au](mailto:comp@pharmacydaily.com.au). Hint! Visit [www.fgb.com.au](http://www.fgb.com.au)

**True or False? Euky Bearub contains natural ingredients.**

Congratulations to yesterday's lucky winner **Brooke Barnes**, from **Bathurst Base Hospital Pharmacy**.

## DISPENSARY CORNER

**HONESTY** is good for you!

People who tell fewer fibs have better physical and mental health, according to research from the University of Notre Dame.

The research involved 110 people between the ages of 18 and 71 who took a lie detector test once a week for ten weeks.

During the ten week period 55 participants were told to refrain from telling any lies, but were however allowed to omit truths, refuse to answer questions and keep secrets.

The other 55 participants were not given any instructions regarding lying.

The results found that the less the no-lie group lied the better their physical and mental health became.

"When they went up in their lies, their health went down," said head researcher Professor Anita Kelly.

"When their lies went down, their health improved," Kelly added.

**WASTE** not want not.

An innovative card company, Haathi Chaap, is making use of elephant dung by pulping it and crafting greeting cards out of it.

The company is aiming at pulping 30 tons of dung a month in order to produce its "unique" paper.

"Elephants' gastrointestinal tract cannot digest fibres well," said company owner Vijender Shekhawat.

"About 40% of everything goes through untouched but softened and pre-pulped.

"As a result, their dung makes fantastic paper when it is pressed and processed," he added.

Amongst the products to be crafted from the poo pulp are special Valentine's Day cards.

"People always worry about the smell, but believe me the cards smell as sweet as any other Valentine's Day cards on the market," said Vijender.



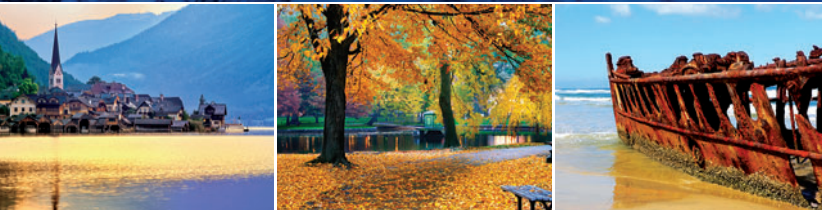
# ORDER YOUR 2013 API CALENDAR

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ENDS AUGUST 31st, 2012

api

