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Weekly Comment

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

This week's contributor

is **Jonathan Layton**, Executive Director of Chemmart Pharmacy.



Pharmacy in 2012

There is little doubt that 2012 will be the most interesting year our industry has experienced in a long time.

The uncertainty that lies ahead, coupled with the huge changes we have recently witnessed in retail dynamics, means it is vital that your business clearly stands for something in the minds of your customers.

Overseas, chain store pharmacies such as Walgreens are investing heavily in differentiating their offer through product selection, store design and professional services to become a “health and living” destination.

For Chemmart Pharmacy it is our wellbeing strategy – which incorporates a portfolio of professional health services – that differentiates us from our competitors.

I have no doubt that for community pharmacy to remain relevant and grow; it must promote its role in primary healthcare.

Over the past year more than 60 pharmacies have joined Chemmart.

For many, the most significant reason for joining has been to ensure their business has a clear proposition which is desired by their customers, as well as the tools to deliver this.

Whatever you want your pharmacy to stand for, always remember one thing – your customers will judge you by your actions, not by your intentions.

It's what you do that matters, not just what you say or think.

Aspirin is okay for seconds

THE Australian Self-Medication Industry has come out in defence of aspirin, saying its low-dose use as a secondary preventative measure against future cardiovascular events and strokes, for patients who have previously had a heart attack or stroke, is not controversial.

The comments come on the back of a recent report titled *‘Effect of Aspirin on Vascular and Nonvascular Outcomes: Meta-analysis of Randomized Controlled Trials’* which looked at a large number of primary prevention studies on the use of low-dose aspirin in patients without previous cardiovascular disease and found that the benefits of aspirin may not outweigh the risks for those patients.

Speaking out in the wake of the study, ASMI Regulatory and Scientific Affairs Director, Steven Scarff, said that the drug is one of the most extensively studied medications in history with a 110-year track record of safety and efficacy across a range of doses and indications.

“The use of low-dose aspirin products to help prevent blood clotting and reduce the risk of heart attack and stroke in patients with blood vessel disorders is well established,” ASMI said.

“Products for this purpose (i.e. secondary prevention) are available in Australia without prescription but should only be used under medical supervision,” ASMI added.

Speaking about the use of low-dose aspirin in patients without previous cardiovascular disease, Scarff said the review's findings were in keeping with the Australian National Heart Foundation's current position which does not recommend low-

dose aspirin in patients without existing coronary heart disease, stroke or other forms of vascular disease such as heart attack or angina.

“Any decision to use low-dose aspirin to prevent heart attack or stroke should be based on the individual's absolute risk of cardiovascular disease and on their doctor's assessment of the totality of evidence of the benefits and the risks for that individual patient,” said Scarff.

Manicare winner

CONGRATULATIONS to Deborah Cladera of Jardine's Chemmart Pharmacy, WA, who was the lucky winner of *Pharmacy Daily's* Manicare competition last Friday.

For more chances to win look out for this week's Sukin competition.

Walnuts are a winner

RESEARCH published in *Food and Function* has found that walnuts have the highest polyphenol antioxidant content among nuts.

The study compared the amount of polyphenols (a type of antioxidant) in nine types of roasted and raw nuts and two types of peanut butter, with walnuts coming out ahead of the pack with 107umol/g polyphenols (roasted) and 69.3umol/g polyphenols raw.

The next highest nut was pistachios with 40umol/g polyphenols (roasted) and 50umol/g polyphenols (raw).

“A handful of walnuts has almost twice the antioxidant content as an equivalent amount of any other commonly consumed nut,” said lead researcher Professor Joseph Vinson, Department of Chemistry at The University of Scranton.

Tummy troubles

FORTY-two percent of Australians experience excessive gas at least once a month, if not more, according to a Newspoll survey commissioned by Wagner.

The online survey also found that one in ten Australians suffer excessive gas everyday, whilst 19% suffer from bloating once a week.

16% of survey respondents also said that they suffer from indigestion, and 13% from stomach pain, whilst around 24% said that they experience constipation at least once a month and 22% said that they suffered diarrhoea around once a month.

Speaking about the results, Conjoint Lecturer at the University of Newcastle, Dr Robyn Cosford, said that because 70% of the immune system is in the gut, having a correctly functioning digestive system is vital to supporting overall health and wellbeing.

“Complaints such as bloating, gas and constipation are often traced back to poor diet, stress or antibiotics,” she said.

“Ensuring the balance of ‘good’ to ‘bad’ bacteria is correct is the key to good health and can be addressed at least partially through simple changes to diet and appropriate probiotic supplementation,” she added.

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Hammett retirement

THE National Manager of the Therapeutic Goods Administration, Dr Rohan Hammett, has announced his retirement from the position.

Older Aussie drug trends

THE use of multiple medicines in older Australians is common and more complex than previously thought, according to a new study by NPS undertaken in collaboration with the University of Melbourne.

Published this week in the *Medicine Journal of Australia*, the study took a one day snapshot of the medicine habits of Australians aged 50 and over, and found that 87% of participants used at least one medicine.

The use of multiple medicines on the day that the snapshot was taken was common with one third of 50-64 year old participants and almost half of 65-74 year olds.

Two thirds of people aged 75 were found to take five or more medicines.

Overall, women were more likely to be medicine users than men (90.3% versus 83.9%).

Interestingly, researchers found that the use of medicines by older Australians for the modification of health risks, disease prevention and the improvement of wellbeing was on the rise, with the most common medicines used by participants shown to be antihypertensives, natural marine and animal products (such as fish oil), and lipid-lowering agents.

Meanwhile omega-3 fatty acids (fish oil), paracetamol, aspirin and glucosamine came out in the top spots for the most commonly taken active ingredients.

According to the study doctors were responsible for 79.3% of all

medicines' and 93% of conventional medicines' recommendations, whilst about one in eight medicines were first recommended by family, friends or the media.

Of note, researchers found that one in eight medicines purchased by Australians aged 50 and over were purchased from a supermarket, health food store or the internet rather than a pharmacy.

Greek drug shortages

SUPPLIES of around 250 of Greece's most used medicines are running short, according to the Panhellenic Association of Pharmacists.

The shortages are a direct result of the current economic turmoil in the country and subsequent cuts in Government healthcare spending and Govt cost cutting measures.

Recently pharmacists and doctors across the financially troubled nation went on a 48-hour strike to protest the Government's position, including public sector job cuts and moves to cut pharmacies profit margins by 3% from 18% to 15%.

"We are no longer able to operate our pharmacies," said the head of the association of Greek pharmacists, Theodore Abatzoglou.

"We have unpaid bills worth 400 million euros at a time when banks have closed access to loans," he added.

DISPENSARY CORNER

BLAME Bond.

The UK President of the Royal Society of Chemistry, Dr David Phillips, has blamed James Bond baddies for tarnishing the reputation of nuclear energy.

Speaking about the bad name garnered by nuclear energy, Phillips said that villains such as Bond's Dr No with his own personal nuclear reactor created a "remorselessly grim" reputation for the energy source.

"It is not at all surprising that the public at home and abroad are skeptical," he said.

HEALTHY construction.

For those who are breathless in anticipation of the opening of the new Royal Adelaide Hospital, you can now follow its progress online via a webcam installed directly opposite the construction site.

Like having an office window looking onto a 13-hectare construction site, the site offers an uninterrupted view from the southern side of the new hospital.

"Over the next few weeks you will be able to see increased activity on site, including construction of a retaining piling platform and retention piling – all part of the supporting foundations along North Terrace and Port Road," said Construction Director, Mark Hanson.

To view the work visit: www.sahp.com.au.

SUKIN, NATURALLY YOURS...



PD has teamed up with Sukin this week

and is giving five lucky readers the chance to win a Sukin essential skincare pack, valued at \$109.60 each!

Each Sukin pack includes: Cream Cleanser, Facial Scrub, Hydrating Mist Toner, Rose Hip Oil, Facial Moisturiser, Anti-oxidant Eye Serum, Night Cream & Hand & Nail Cream.

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