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Stand 188

NPS on statins

NPS Australia is urging people on statins to continue to taking their medicine as prescribed, in the light of the new label warnings announced by the US Food and Drug Administration earlier this week (TD Tue).

The FDA has mandated that the cholesterol-lowering drugs must now carry advice about a small increased risk of diabetes as well as reports of memory problems.

NPS spokesperson Karen Kaye said that the risk of developing diabetes with statins is small compared to their benefits for preventing cardiovascular incidents.

"Evidence shows that for every 255 people treated with a statin for four years, at least five cardiovascular events are avoided, while there is one extra case of diabetes," Kaye said.

NPS also said that there is not enough evidence to be certain that statins were linked to reports of memory loss and confusion.

An NPS study published in the *Medical Journal of Australia* in Jan found that 30% of Australians aged over 50 had taken medicines to lower cholesterol on the day the survey was taken.

FDA flu approval

THE US Food and Drug Administration has this week approved the first quadrivalent vaccine to prevent seasonal influenza.

FluMist Quadrivalent contains weakened forms of two influenza A strains and two influenza B strains, and is administered as a nasal spray.

Continued dispensing passes

AN amendment to the *National Health (Fifth Community Pharmacy Agreement) Bill 2011* passed by the Senate yesterday will allow certain medications to continue to supply pharmacists to continue to supply certain medications without a repeat prescription.

The "continued dispensing" amendment allows pharmacists to provide birth control pills and statins under the following circumstances:

- There is an immediate and ongoing need for supply of the medicine to facilitate continuity of therapy, and the patient cannot get to a prescriber in time to get a valid prescription
- The medicine has been previously prescribed for the person, and there has been prior clinical review by the prescriber that supports continuation of the medicine.
- The medicine is safe and appropriate for that consumer.
- The pharmacist provides written communication to the most recent prescriber advising of the supply of the medicine to the consumer within 24 hours.

The Pharmacy Guild of Australia said the move "implements key initiatives of the Community Pharmacy Agreement, both of which will deliver better health outcomes for Australian consumers".

Guild national president, Kos Slavos, said that prescribing would continue to be the sole domain of the patient's doctor.

"Pharmacists always have the

highest regard for their close working relationships with doctors, and the Guild is confident this limited measure will ensure the best outcomes for patients".

The legislative amendment also provides for the dispensing of PBS medicines from a medication chart, rather than a prescription form, for residents of residential aged care facilities.

"This measure will improve patient safety and streamline administrative procedures for doctors, pharmacists and staff of aged care facilities," Slavos said.

Health minister Tanya Plibersek said the passing of the bill was "a big win for patients who can't always make it to the doctor before their medications run out".

She said the amendment would complement existing emergency supply mechanisms - but these new arrangements would mean that patients would have access to the medicines through the PBS rather than paying full price.

Slavos thanked the government and opposition for supporting the passage of the "important legislation," and said he was looking forward to State and Territory governments making any consequential legislative changes necessary for continued dispensing "to facilitate this very sensible and beneficial change".

Last year almost 22 million statin prescriptions (costing the PBS \$1.1 billion) were filled by Australian pharmacists, along with 590,000 scripts for the pill, worth \$7m.

UTS barometer

THE new pharmacy faculty at Sydney's University of Technology has announced the launch of a new 'Community Pharmacy Confidence Barometer' in partnership with Cegedim Strategic Data.

The Barometer aims to provide ongoing insight into the effect that a range of issues has on the confidence of community pharmacy - and in particular the effect of price disclosure.

A launch event will take place on Wed 28 Mar - more info via pharmacy@uts.edu.au.

Events Calendar

WELCOME to *Pharmacy Daily's* Continuing Professional Development Calendar, featuring upcoming events and opportunities to earn CPE and CPD points.

If you have an upcoming event you'd like us to feature, email info@pharmacydaily.com.au.

08-11 Mar: APP Conference, Gold Coast Convention Centre appconference.com.au.

27 Apr-03 May: PSA 37th offshore refresher conference, Istanbul - psa.org.au.

25-27 May: PSA Clinical and Practice Expo, Hordern Pavilion Moore Park Sydney - more info 02 9431 1100

01-04 Apr: 38th annual SHPA national conference, National Convention Centre Canberra - details mm2012shpa.com.

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PHARMACY ALLIANCE
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Free HIV treatment

THE UK government has announced that England's National Health Service will offer free HIV treatment for foreign nationals.

The move aims to reduce the risk of Britons being infected, and thus reduce the costs of more expensive later treatment, according to a report by the *BBC*.

The UK Health Department said there would be safeguards against so-called "health tourism" but said there were an estimated 25,000 people with undiagnosed HIV in Britain, many of whom were not UK citizens such as asylum seekers, tourists and students.

Under the new policy the NHS would extend free treatment to those who have been in Britain for at least six months, with the move bringing HIV into line with other infectious diseases.

Blackmores now on PharmX

THE PharmX electronic pharmacy ordering gateway yesterday announced an extension of its product range to include Blackmores products.

The health products manufacturer said the move had been motivated by a strong push to improve customer service.

"Our customers have been very interested in the much faster lead times that online ordering provides," said Blackmores retail and consumer services manager, Nicole Steven.

"Using the gateway pharmacies can order our products directly through their Point-of-Sale, with the order reaching our warehouse within 15 minutes.

"If we receive orders by 11 o'clock in the morning they will usually be received in store the next day, which is a great experience for our customers," she said.

PharmX general manager Brad Lumb said the company was delighted at the addition of Blackmores, with the move

following strong growth in electronic ordering during 2011.

Last year more than 14 million orders and invoices passed through the gateway, up 30% on 2010, with 4250 pharmacies now using PharmX - a growth of 14.5%.

"Pharmacies have embraced the faster ordering process and savings in staff time that flow from purchasing and managing stock via the PharmX gateway.

"We are now widening the gateway supplier base so that pharmacies can use it as a one-stop shop for all the suppliers that they need," Lumb said.

PharmX is a joint venture owned by pharmacy IT vendors including Corum, Fred IT, Simple Retail and Mountaintop Systems, and is fully integrated with an estimated 95% of dispensing/POS products including Healthsoft, Minfos, Simple Retail, Corum, Fred, Surefire Systems, POS Solutions, POS Master, Mountaintop, POS Works, CPIAM, Rimtech and Scanning Systems Australia.



DISPENSARY CORNER

HOW about this for some amazing family planning.

A woman from the US state of Utah gave birth on Wed this week - to her third baby born on the once-in-a-leap year 29th Feb.

Louise Estes' daughter Jade was born in the early hours of Wed morning - exactly four years after her son Remington was born on 29 Feb 2008, and eight years after her firstborn Xavier came into the world on 29 Feb 2004.

The only other known case of triple Leap Day babies was the Henriksen family in Norway, which had babies born on 29 Feb in 1960, 1964 and 1968.

The new monther quipped that "we're gonna try to get our oldest a car on his fourth birthday".

A 43-YEAR-OLD man in North Carolina died this week after drinking petrol and then lighting a cigarette.

The tragedy was described as "just a freak incident" by local police in Havelock, who said that Gary Banning accidentally drank from a salsa jar containing gasoline at a friend's apartment.

He spat out the fuel and got it on his clothes, and then later lit a cigarette which set them on fire leading to fatal burns.

COULD there be a market for vegetarian drugs?

According to a report in the *Postgraduate Medical Journal*, about 25% of people who choose not to eat animal products are unaware that many common medicines contain them.

The survey of 500 inner-city patients in Manchester found about 40% who preferred not to consume animal products, either for cultural or religious reasons or because they were vegetarian.

A significant number of those on a medication regimen were not aware that their drugs contained gelatin derived from animals, with the report's authors urging doctors to be aware of more than just the active ingredient.



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WIN A CASE OF BEYOND COCONUT WATER



Pharmacy Daily has teamed up with **Beyond Coconut Water** this week and is giving five lucky readers the chance to win a case of Beyond Hibiscus Infused Coconut Water, valued at \$90 each.

If you love Beyond Coconut Water then you will love their newest product, Beyond Hibiscus Infused Coconut Water - a world first. Coconut Water has a multitude of benefits with the most significant being its 'natural isotonic' qualities that replenish lost electrolytes and hydrate super efficiently. The Hibiscus flower also contains antioxidants that may help reduce the build of fatty deposits in arteries and reduce blood cholesterol levels, therefore reducing the risk of heart disease.

For your chance to win, simply be the first person to send through the correct answer to the question below to: comp@pharmacydaily.com.au.

Coconut water is a 'natural what' that helps replenish and hydrate?

Hint! Visit www.beyondcoconutwater.com

Congratulations to yesterday's lucky winner, **Noelene Morris** from **Marlin Coast Amcal Pharmacy**.