

Today in pharmacy

TODAY'S PD features two pages of news, plus a full page from the Guild Pharmacy Academy about clinical sessions offered at the Guild Academy National Convention & Exhibition in June. See **page three** for more details.

Pharmacy winner

CONGRATULATIONS to Linda Johnston of North Coast TAFE who was the winner of last Friday's Bostito's competition.

Healthy eating

THE Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Ageing Catherine King is urging Australians to think carefully about their nutrition choices.

Addressing delegates at the International Conference on Science of Nutrition in Medicine and Healthcare, King said "We want people to consume less saturated fat, sugar and sodium and to lower the energy content of many common foods they consume".

Medicine choices with NPS

NPS is aiming to make it easier for consumers to make choices between medicine brands, by updating its online Medicine Name Finder with a new interface.

The new feature is designed to help people find important information about their prescription medicines, and allows users to type in the name of their medicine to find out more about the active ingredient and brands available.

To use, consumers simply type in either the active ingredient or brand name of their medicine and, after selecting their prescribed dose, they can view a list of bioequivalent brands which they may be offered at their pharmacy.

The new functionality also provides users with a link to the drug's Consumer Medicine Information (CMI) leaflet.

"When the active ingredient of a medicine comes off patent, the number of available brands can quickly increase," said NPS CEO Dr Lynn Weekes.

"Using the Medicine Name Finder, people can quickly see a list of the different brands available so they can be sure they are taking the right medicine and avoid confusion," Weekes added, saying that "for people who take medicines regularly, it can be confusing if they are suddenly offered a different brand by their pharmacist".

To view the Medicine Name Finder **CLICK HERE**.

Contentious support

THE US Food and Drug Advisory's decision to back Truvada to prevent the transmission of HIV, has caused a stir amongst the healthcare community, with some saying its preventative usage may see at-risk patients stop using other preventative methods like condoms.

The backing means that the FDA is likely to approve the indication for prophylactic Truvada in three populations: HIV-uninfected men who have sex with men, in HIV-uninfected partners in relationships with infected partners, and for individuals at risk of acquiring HIV through sexual activity.

Opponents to the approval also cited non-adherence concerns given that Truvada's efficacy depends on consistent daily administration, as well as concerns that treating HIV-naïve patients with the drug will result in the evolution of a drug-resistant HIV strain.

The Advisory committee however has stood by its decision saying that it based its decision on a study which found that men who have sex with men and who took PrEP Truvada had 43.8% fewer infections than men taking a placebo.

The committee also considered data showing that the drug decreased infection rates by 63% in men and women at high risk of infection in Botswana, and data that showed that the drug decreased transmitted infections by 62% in serodiscordant Kenyan couples, and that combination treatment with the Tenofovir resulted in a 73% reduction in infections.

Gambling addiction?

RESEARCHERS at the University of Sydney are causing a stir with claims gambling is not an addiction.

"The idea of gambling addiction is widespread, but inaccurate," said Dr Fadi Anjou, of the Sydney Uni's Gambling Treatment Clinic.

Backing up his position, Anjou said that symptoms such as tolerance or withdrawal, which are central features of addiction are rarely seen in gamblers.

"Problem gambling is better thought of as a misguided obsession," he said, adding "we are dealing with habitual and poorly informed choices rather than biological processes that are beyond individual control."

Vaccination knowledge

PARENTS in Australia, Canada, the UK and Spain are more likely to know if their child has been vaccinated against meningococcal disease, compared to parents in France, Germany and Sweden.

The findings are part of new research, presented at the European Society of Paediatric Infectious Diseases Annual Meeting, which looked at the levels of meningitis vaccination knowledge across six countries.

Interestingly, the research found that 61% of parents are unaware that current vaccinations do not protect their children from all forms of meningitis, whilst only 16% of parents knew that children under 12 months are at greatest risk of contracting the disease.

Other findings also revealed that parents in Australia, Spain, and the UK were the most likely to allow their child to receive MenB vaccination.

"Misunderstanding about meningitis vaccine protection suggests that the majority of parents do not consider meningitis when their child is ill, thinking they are protected," said study co-author, Sue Davie.

"We have to address this complacency as a matter of urgency and ensure meningitis remains at the forefront of parents' minds while there are not vaccines available for all types of this disease," she added.

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Weekly Comment

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

This week's contributor is

Dr Terri Foran, Sexual Health Physician and Lecturer, School of Women's and Children's Health at the University of NSW.



In 1917, as the First World War drew to its close, the Methodist minister and self-appointed moral guardian Rev J. Frank Chase commented that: "It is generally recognised that a bad and diseased woman can do more harm than any German fleet of airplanes that has yet passed over London."

Of course sexually transmitted infections (STIs) have been with us as long as sex has.

The reality is that STIs are a risk for anyone who is sexually active.

That risk is amplified whenever unsafe sex occurs or when people lack basic information about the symptoms, transmission, and treatment of STIs.

Some STIs are associated with not just transient discomfort and embarrassment but have the potential for significant life-long consequences including infertility and pregnancy loss.

And perhaps the biggest trick of all is that many STIs depend on their lack of symptoms for easy transmission- so that control depends on honesty, awareness and regular testing.

There is no doubt that effective STI management requires buy-in from all of us- health workers, parents, teachers, government leaders, the media and the community itself.

Certainly in many countries pharmacists are playing an increasingly recognised role in this area, both as reliable sources of information and as a point where self-collected testing can be easily accessed.

Let's hope we see similar innovations in Australia.

e-Health learning centre

THE Department of Health and Ageing has launched a new e-Health online learning centre, designed to inform and educate both healthcare professionals and the general public about e-Health and the personally controlled electronic health record system in the lead up to its July launch.

The website follows the recent e-Health investment of \$233.7m announced in the Budget, which has been earmarked to aid the continued rollout of the system.

Announcing the new website, Health Minister Tanya Plibersek said "eHealth will deliver benefits to Australian patients as it will ensure health practitioners are able to access their medical histories in one convenient location, reducing errors and making diagnosis and treatment quicker and easier".

"This website will help people discover how eHealth can help streamline their interactions with the health system, as well as assist doctors and nurses learn about the new system, saving them time and effort once it is up and running," she added.

The learning centre also features click through modules tailored for the public and healthcare professionals, as well as case studies illustrating how eHealth records will benefit people in a variety of settings, and general e-Health news.

Rather than being a fully completed enterprise, the website

will be progressively added to with more information as the 01 July deadline gets closer, and following the launch of the system.

To access the site go to www.ehealth.gov.au and follow the link to the learning centre.

Undertreated migraines

MIGRAINES are underrecognised and undertreated, according to new American guidelines published in the journal *Neurology*.

According to the guidelines around 38% of migraine sufferers could benefit from preventive treatments, but less than a third currently use them.

"Some studies show that migraine attacks can be reduced by more than half with preventive treatments," said guideline author Dr Stephen Silberstein, Jefferson Headache Center at Thomas Jefferson University.

The guidelines were developed after reviewing all available evidence on migraine prevention, as well as over-the-counter treatments and complementary treatments.

According to the American guidelines, the seizure drugs: divalproex sodium, sodium valproate and topiramate, as well as beta-blockers: metoprolol, propranolol and timolol, are effective for migraine prevention and should be offered to people with migraine to reduce the frequency and severity of attacks, whilst the seizure drug lamotrigine was found to be ineffective in preventing migraine.

In the OTC and complementary stakes, the herbal drug Petasites, (also known as butterbur) was shown to be effective in preventing migraine, whilst other treatments that were found to be "probably effective" were the nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs fenopfen, ibuprofen, ketoprofen, naproxen and naproxen sodium, subcutaneous histamine and complementary treatments magnesium, MIG-99 (feverfew) and riboflavin.

Generic Lipitor

MYLAN has launched its generic Lipitor, Atorvastatin Calcium tablets, 10mg, 20mg, 40mg and 80mg in France, Belgium, the UK, the Netherlands and Ireland following the receipt of authorisation from each country's respective health authority.

"Mylan's launch of Atorvastatin Calcium Tablets will help to provide health care systems in these markets with an estimated US\$700 million (£500 million) of savings in 2012 associated with the generic availability of this important medicine," said Mylan CEO Heather Bresch.

DISPENSARY CORNER

CROSS species contagion.

Yawns can spread across a room full of people like wildfire as soon as someone starts the chain, however researchers now think that yawns can also spread between dogs and humans.

Researchers from the University of Portugal tested the theory by playing the sound of yawns to 29 dogs.

Results found that nearly 50% of dogs yawned in response to the noise, and were five times more likely to yawn if it was the noise of their owner yawning.

"These results suggest that dogs have the capacity to empathise with humans," said lead author Karine Silva.

THE cane toad of Kent?

The introduction of species into environments to which they are not naturally occurring, has proved in the past to not be a spectacular idea (cane toads, rats, possums, just to name a few).

So it is interesting to note that an Australian wallaby has turned up free-range in the English county of Kent.

The wallaby was caught on camera by a dog walker, Alex Pooley, who happened on the creature whilst walking along a farm track on Pluckley.

"We were in a field near the train station and I saw what I thought was a giant hare, but then it moved and started hopping," said Pooley.

"I was a bit surprised to say the least and the dog was off the lead at the time and he went off to investigate.

"They ran around for a couple of minutes and then he came back and I put him on the lead," she added.

According to Pooley the wallaby was "quite friendly" and came right up to her before hopping away.

As yet it is not known how the wallaby got into Kent, or if there is a horde hiding away enjoying the English countryside.

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Diabetes – Making the Decision
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• Pharmacists Role in Inflammatory Bowel Management • National Prescribing Services
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Friday Plenary Session: Surviving the Economic Winter presented by Financial Analyst, Paul Clitheroe

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The weekend sessions are not booked in advance so it's a matter of first to arrive in order to secure a place at individual sessions on the day. Visit the website to review the open hours, stream location and program timetable.

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