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Competition winner

PHARMACY Daily would like to congratulate Anthony Zirilli of Circle on Cavill Amcal Pharmacy who was the lucky winner of last Friday's PSA Community Book competition.

For more chances to win loot, see **page two** of today's issue.

Xavant launches in US

THE US Food and Drug Authority has approved a nerve stimulator, the Stimpod NMS450.

The device monitors neuromuscular blocking agents, or muscle relaxants, that are used in many surgical theater procedures.

Lung drug warnings

THE three-drug combination of Prednisone, Azathioprine, and N-Acetylcysteine may do more harm than good in patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF), according to a new study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

The randomised, placebo-controlled, double-blind study looked at IPF patients who were being treated across 25 US centres and found that those in the mild to moderate stages of the progressive lung-scarring disease, had a far higher chance of dying or being hospitalised if they were taking the three-drug combination of Prednisone, Azathioprine, and N-Acetylcysteine, which is commonly prescribed as a standard treatment worldwide.

Interestingly, the report also found that the three-drug combo yielded no improvement in lung function, or even slowing of loss of lung function, compared with placebo.

The study was stopped early when interim analysis showed signs of harm from the three-drug program.

"The findings show the importance of testing even those treatments that doctors give routinely for any type of condition - to see if they truly help, and don't harm, patients," said study author, Fernando Martinez, of the University of Michigan Health System.

Expensive Aussie investment

COMPANIES looking to invest in clinical trials in Australia may be reconsidering their options, after a report found that the nation is the second least competitive as a market for clinical trial investment.

The 2012 KPMG *Competitive Alternatives* report compared business costs and other competitiveness factors in more than 110 cities in 14 countries, and found that Australia is the second most expensive country for investing in clinical trials, behind Japan, and that Sydney ranks 111th out of 113 in the list of most expensive cities, only topped by Tokyo and Osaka.

Sydney was followed by Brisbane which came in hot on its heels as the 4th most expensive city, whilst Melbourne came in at 108 and Adelaide in 103rd place.

Commenting on the report Medicines Australia Chief Executive Dr Brendan Shaw said the results were "not good enough".

"There's absolutely no doubt that when it comes to scientific and commercial capability in running clinical trials, Australia is among the best in the world," he said.

"We have some of the world's best medical scientists and best R&D infrastructure, and the industry is working with the Government to find ways of better capitalising on those advantages.

"But companies who want to invest in clinical trials in Australia are confronted with a slow, inefficient and cumbersome approval process.

"It is often cheaper and easier for

them to run those trials elsewhere," he added.

To rectify the issue, Shaw said that Australia needs a more streamlined system that makes it easier, quicker and cheaper for global companies to run clinical trials.

Award applications

APPLICATIONS are now open for the 2012 Victoria Prize for Science and Innovation, and the 2012 Victoria Fellowships.

The Victoria Prize for Science and Innovation will recognise two outstanding scientists this year (one for work in life sciences and one for work in physical sciences) for their lifelong commitment and achievements and will see them each granted \$50,000.

Meanwhile the Victoria Fellowships are designed to fast-track the careers of researchers, and will provide \$18,000 to up to twelve early-career researchers and innovators to enhance their careers with international study missions.

For details and applications see www.business.vic.gov.au/vicprize.

Health cover increase

50,000 more Australians have taken out private health cover, according to the March quarterly report from the independent Private Health Insurance Administration Council.

The additions bring the total number of Australians with hospital cover to 10,455,462.

Medicare Local funding

THE Pharmaceutical Society of Australia has welcomed the Government's \$50m Medicare Local Network funding announcement, saying it is a positive sign that eHealth is "about to happen".

"This funding will help to ensure delivery of a system that will give pharmacists access to essential patient health information to allow better outcomes to be delivered by the pharmacy profession," said PSA National President Grant Kardachi.

"The Minister's announcement underlines the Government's intention to use Medicare Locals as a linchpin for the provision of coordinated primary care," he added.

The funding adds to the Govt's \$233.7m investment announced in the Budget, and will be meted out over two years as the final piece of a support package to help rollout the new eHealth records system.

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Weekly Comment

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

This week's contributor is
Carol Armour,
Professor of
Pharmacology



and Associate Dean

Career Development at the
Northern Clinical School and
Woolcock Institute of Medical
Research the University of NSW.

Asthma represents a disease that is largely managed in the community.

How can pharmacists have impact?

We have found that in people with asthma who were reviewed by the pharmacist, 77 % report poor control.

This means that they are experiencing many more symptoms than they need to and have poor quality of life.

The factors which influenced control were poor inhaler technique, smoking and poor adherence to medications.

These can be influenced by pharmacist intervention and indeed we have a golden opportunity to improve health care and disease management.

We propose that this intervention could occur at least at two levels.

Level one is to use "show and tell" counselling backed up by review of inhaler technique.

This intervention takes less than five minutes and the evidence is that this improves clinical (asthma control and lung function) and patient outcomes.

Level two would be a disease management service with a change management program.

The change requires careful consideration of how the service will operate, the time and infrastructure investment.

If these factors are considered there is good evidence for high valuation of pharmacy services by consumers and excellent clinical outcomes.

We can improve asthma patient care and change the way we practice, other members of the health care team are waiting to see us take the lead, we should do this now.

Bowel cancer breakthrough

AUSTRALIAN research is leading the charge towards new testing methods for bowel cancer, after a team comprised of scientists from the Australian biotechnology company Clinical Genomics, CSIRO and the Flinders Centre for Innovation in Cancer, identified new genes that show identifiable changes in the blood of people with bowel cancer.

One new gene identified, colon adenocarcinoma hypermethylated (CAHM), is particularly sensitive to cancer, and was found in 120 blood samples to have a high positivity for cancers (68%) while still being accurate in 97% of normal patients.

According to the Australian research team, the genetic discovery has the potential to underpin a new cost-effective blood test that would signal the early stages of bowel cancer.

This three-gene test (including CAHM) is currently under development, and according to the researchers, has the potential to save thousands of lives by supplementing existing screening programs and encouraging those at risk to have a colonoscopy.

The test is currently being trialled with patients from Australia, the United States and Europe, with researchers saying that so far, it has shown a high detection rate for

bowel cancer while also demonstrating a false positive rate of about 5% in samples drawn from a high-risk population.

Results from the trials found that the test was able to detect cancer 76% of the time with a 93% accuracy in normal patients.

"One of the key questions is how a test like this might complement existing screening efforts in a cost-effective way to save even more lives in the future," said Senior investigator, Professor Graeme Young, from the Flinders Centre.

"The need now is to collaborate more broadly with national and international researchers committed to translation of science innovation to clinical outcomes, to help validate these exciting findings in large scale prospective studies," he added.

Community boost

THE Federal Government has announced a \$4.3 million boost to the Home and Community Care Program.

The funding will help older Tasmanians stay in their homes longer, by providing money for services such as domestic assistance, personal care, social support, respite, and support for volunteers and carers.

DISPENSARY CORNER

ARGUING is bad for your health.

A Russian man who was trying to calm his rising blood pressure, found himself head deep in an emergency, after he "escaped" an argument with his girlfriend.

According to reports, the man was so stressed by the fight that he ran out of their shared apartment, and when his girlfriend followed him, he jumped down a rubbish chute.

Unfortunately, rather than a quick exit, the man found himself stuck after sliding three floors, and was rescued from the chute on the fifth floor after neighbours heard his yells and called in the fire brigade.

WIN SUMMER'S EVE PRIZE PACK



Every day this this week **PD** is giving 3 lucky readers the chance to win a **Summer's Eve** exclusive gift,

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