

Sales up, profit down for Blackmores

BLACKMORES yesterday released details of its financial performance for the nine months to 31 Mar, with group sales of \$241m up a healthy 29% compared to the previous corresponding period.

However net profit after tax slid 7% to \$18.5 million "as a result of pressures in a challenging Australian retail environment," according to ceo Christine Holgate.

She said the strong sales result was a reflection of the continuing transformation of the business.

Local sales are up 7% but the third quarter figures "were impacted by larger retail accounts reducing stock levels," Holgate said.

"Additionally, profits have come under pressure by heavy price promotions and higher than normal stock write-offs due to structural changes within the Australian market," she added.

The BioCeuticals division achieved 8% sales growth "and continues to contribute to Group profitability".

Alzheimer's PBS revamp

BARRIERS for continued access to a range of medications for the treatment of Alzheimer's disease have been lowered by the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, with the implementation of recommendations from last Dec's Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee meeting.

The PBAC considered the findings of the Post-Market Review of anti-dementia drugs, including that the medicines are being used "in a much broader population and for longer periods of time than originally agreed as cost-effective".

To account for the use of the medicines in a broader population, the PBAC recommended a price cut of 40% and also agreed to simplify the continuing restriction "to better align with current clinical use".

Effective from 01 May the revised

restriction will be published in the Pharmaceutical Benefit Schedule, giving easier continued access to memantine, donepezil, galantamine and rivastigmine.

"Previously patients have had to show a minimum level of improvement in an Alzheimer's disease test each time they needed a new prescription," said a statement from Health Minister Tanya Plibersek.

After the changes are implemented patients can continue treatment for as long as their doctor and carers consider it to be effective, and doctors can use a streamlined authority approval system for the prescriptions.

"Alzheimer's is a challenging illness to treat, and the government is committed to helping," Plibersek said.

The 40% price reduction has already been negotiated by the government and became effective at the beginning of this month.

Plibersek said the post-market review had also paved the way for the new generation of medicines to treat Alzheimer's disease, which are more likely to be added to existing treatments than to replace them.

Sports drug probe

THE Pharmacy Guild has urged a full investigation of allegations aired on the ABC's *Four Corners* program which it says "have the potential to damage the good reputation of community pharmacy in Australia".

The controversy surrounds an unnamed person on the program, described as a "Melbourne compounding pharmacist," who is alleged to have had a meeting with representatives of an AFL club and offered to make up "almost anything you ask me to" in order to illegally boost player performance.

The Guild said that the notion of a pharmacist actively encouraging cheating in professional sport by using drugs "goes against everything that responsible pharmacists and the Guild stand for in terms of ethical practice, putting patient health outcomes first and complying with the law and professional standards."

Such rogue operators do a disservice to the high levels of trust in the pharmacy profession, the Guild continued, calling on the relevant authorities including the Pharmacy Board of Australia to ensure that such behaviour is fully investigated and that "all necessary action is taken to stamp it out".

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BioCeuticals CPD

THE organisers of the upcoming BioCeuticals Research Symposium have confirmed that pharmacists who attend will be credited for up to 15 hours of Group 2 CPD by the Australian Pharmacy Council.

The Symposium, themed *Research, Innovation, Reality* will include a range of content on topics such as Vitamin D deficiency, probiotics for allergies, calming ADHD with herbs and protecting from heart disease naturally.

The conference takes place 10-11 May at Sydney's Shangri-La Hotel - for more information or to register **CLICK HERE**.

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UK measles outbreak

MORE than 600 young people in Wales have been affected by a tragic measles outbreak, which has been linked to a vaccination controversy 15 years ago.

Health authorities have urged everyone younger than 43 years of age who had not had measles or been vaccinated against it to have an immunisation now, leading to queues at hospitals and clinics in South Wales.

The outbreak is centred in Swansea, where according to the UK *Telegraph*, a local newspaper had campaigned strenuously against the MMR vaccine in the late 1990s, based on a now widely discredited study which claimed a link between the vaccine and autism and bowel disease.

Despite an increase in vaccination rates, "unfortunately there is a cohort of young people who weren't vaccinated and have now reached secondary school," said Dr Roland Salmon, consultant epidemiologist for Public Health Wales.

PSA pilots ethics advice

THE Pharmaceutical Society of Australia has launched a new Ethics Advisory Service which provides information and advice to PSA members, as well as acting on complaints from members.

The service, which is free of charge for PSA members, is claimed to be a first for pharmacy.

It's based on the PSA's Code of Ethics for Pharmacists which focuses on five key areas: the consumer, the community, the pharmacy profession, business practices and other healthcare professionals.

"The core focus of the new Ethics Advisory Service is to provide help and support for pharmacists struggling with ethical dilemmas and issues in their professional practice," said PSA National President, Grant Kardachi.

He said the Code of Ethics had been endorsed by the Pharmacy Board of Australia, with the service to be piloted for an initial 18 month period.

"PSA has engaged in high-level discussions with a number of key stakeholders all of whom have agreed that the Ethics Advisory Service will be of benefit to the profession and be widely welcomed," Kardachi said.

He emphasised that the new service would operate alongside (and in no way seeks to replace) existing services provided by other key organisations such as the Pharmacy Board of Australia, Pharmaceutical Defence Limited and the Pharmacists' Support Service.

A new Ethics Advisory Panel will be established, comprising a group of experts who will offer advice and assistance in response to enquiries which may vary from "pharmacists in a difficult work environment to pharmacists facing an ethical dilemma situation".

The service can be accessed by PSA members at www.psa.org.au.

NAPSA Charity Cup

NATIONAL Australian Pharmacy Students' Association members across the country are inviting the pharmacy industry to contribute to the organisation's annual Charity Cup campaign.

Pharmacy students across 16 universities are currently competing in the Cup, in which the winning branch is the one which raises the most money per member for a chosen charity.

The Day of Difference foundation, which supports critically injured children and their families, is once again the beneficiary of the Cup.

To contribute to the efforts of a specific NAPSA branch email pharmacy.awareness@napsa.org.au.

RAPS "virtual" event

THE Regulatory Affairs Professionals Society will next Mon host a virtual online workshop for stakeholders interested in medicines regulation in the USA.

Titled 'Advertising, Promotion and Labeling: the US Regulated Environment' the program features a range of experts detailing current communications guidelines and expectations for companies marketing healthcare products in America.

The workshop will also cover false claims enforcement activities by both the FDA and the US Federal Trade Commission, the use of social media to discuss medications and devices, management of intended use and off-label promotion, and a look at how the new *Sunshine Act* affects promotional activities.

See www.RAPS.org.

WIN A DREAMBABY® ESSENTIALS GROOMING KIT



Every day this week, **Pharmacy Daily** is giving one lucky reader the chance to win a Dreambaby® Essentials Grooming Kit (pictured left).

The new Dreambaby® Essentials Grooming Kit is an ideal investment for all new babies! It is a perfect purchase for new parents, and makes an ideal gift

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**What is the Facebook address
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Congratulations to yesterday's lucky winner, Tracy Lim from Pharmore Pharmacies.

New York puffed out

THE latest public health initiative in New York is a proposal which would raise the legal age for the purchase of tobacco products to 21.

It's part of an ongoing campaign by the city's billionaire mayor Michael Bloomberg, who during his term has imposed high taxes and banned smoking in city parks.

Advocates of the move say that 80% of New York smokers started before they turned 21.

Other proposals include keeping cigarettes out of sight in stores unless asked for by an adult.



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Stockists: 1800 369 273

RRP: \$17.95 (100g tube); \$31.95 (500ml pump)

Website: www.carolineskincare.com



DISPENSARY CORNER

RESEARCHERS in Canada have found that playing the popular Tetris video game can be a way of fixing "lazy eye".

A team from McGill University reported on a study in the latest edition of *Current Biology*, in which they compared playing the falling-block game with conventional treatment for the condition which involves patching of the good eye to make the bad one work faster.

An estimated one in 50 children has the condition known as amblyopia, where eyes do not look in the same direction.

The eye-patching solution can be frustrating and unpleasant, according to the *BBC*, and the Canadian team set out to find a better solution.

They found the vision of children who played Tetris for an hour a day over two weeks showed a significant improvement in their eyesight, with a larger study now under way to validate the result.

JUST like many pharmacies, Sydney's funky new QT hotel is targeting the new mum market with the launch of what it's describing as the "ultimate parent package".

The BabyQ Designer Baby two-night deal includes a QT King Deluxe room with daily breakfast - including freshly made baby food of course.

There's also his and hers SpaQ treatments plus a bottle of French Champagne for mum and dad - and to make sure baby isn't left out guests also receive a complimentary iiamo Go designer baby bottle - valued at a staggering \$129.

The iiamo Go self-heats to the perfect temperature, simplifying keeping the little one topped up when out and about.

The QT room also comes with a baby changing mat, designer linen and a baby cot in the room.

Bookings are available now, with the offer valid for 12 months - see www.qthotels.com.au.

Active Q10 for healthy hearts

BioCeuticals is one of the first Australian companies to release ubiquinol supplements which can assist in maintaining healthy LDL cholesterol levels and a healthy cardiovascular system. Ubiquinol is the reduced (active) form of coenzyme Q10 which has superior absorption and higher bioavailability than other forms of coenzyme Q10. It is an efficient antioxidant which may be of benefit to people experiencing increased oxidative stress which occurs with normal healthy ageing. **Ubiquinol BioActive** comes in two strengths: 100 mg (30/90 capsules) and 150 mg (30/60 capsules).

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Website: www.biocuticals.com.au



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