

Safety update

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration has released the latest version of its Medicines Safety Update, including a section on progressive multifocal leukoencephalopathy which has been associated with the use of immunomodulatory medicines.

There's also advice that the Product Information for thyroxine has recently been updated to include a precaution about the increased risk of osteoporotic fracture associated with excessive thyroxine doses.

The TGA has also noted 51 adverse event reports since 2002 of serious electrolyte disturbances associated with oral bowel cleansing products which are part of the preparation for a range of medical and diagnostic procedures.

The full Medicines Safety Update is available on the TGA website at tga.gov.au/hp/msu-2013-01.htm.

APESMA slams Guild

THE Pharmacists' division of the Association of Professional Engineers, Scientists and Managers (APESMA) says that instead of scrapping the HMR program "the Pharmacy Guild should fund the Home Medicines Review funding gap by forgoing a small amount of their income from the government for managing the \$15.4 billion Community Pharmacy Agreement".

APESMA has accused the Guild of "trying to exert its influence to ensure that payments are only directed to the pharmacy owners they represent without any consideration for the impact on patients or employee pharmacists".

CHF releases HMR paper

THE controversy over the Home Medicines Review program is continuing this week, with the Consumers Health Forum today releasing a consultation paper which explores issues relating to the uptake and sustainability of the scheme.

The move follows last week's calls by the Pharmacy Guild of Australia for a suspension of the program due to significant cost overruns.

The CHF has analysed the funding for the HMR program, which has been allocated \$52.11 million under the Fifth Community Pharmacy Agreement.

Looking at medication errors and the need for HMRs, the CHF paper points out the significant impact that the program can have on adverse events and hospitalisation.

The CHF has staunchly rejected the Guild call for a moratorium, saying that it "sees no justification for additional criteria or restrictions, and would consider any such measure to restrict access to the program to be counter-productive".

Instead the Forum argues that any changes to the program should aim to remove barriers to access for high-risk consumers who would benefit from HMRs.

Citing several "major pieces of research" the CHF report also notes that community pharmacy representatives have previously acknowledged barriers to access, low levels of awareness of HMRs among consumers, as well as low rates of participation among certain populations.

The CHF report also notes the 2010 Guild-commissioned document *Increasing Patient Demand for HMR: A Marketing Plan* and points out that any recent increase in uptake of the HMR program "is positive and consistent with previous strategies".

According to the report the overspend to date has amounted to \$4.2 million, largely due to a recent spike in demand, and argues that the HMR program should be considered "within the broader context of the \$15.4 billion provided to community pharmacists under the 5CPA."

MEANWHILE the release of the paper this morning follows confirmation of "urgent talks" between the Guild and the Health Department (**PD** breaking news Fri).

"The Department and the Guild agreed that they would work together as a matter of urgency to find the earliest possible solution that puts the HMR program back on a sustainable financial footing," the Guild said in a statement.

"The Guild continues to believe that a temporary pause in the HMR program is the responsible course of action to enable these solutions to be expeditiously agreed and put in place without making the current regrettable financial situation even worse," the Guild added.

Other industry stakeholders have also expressed dismay at a possible suspension of the program, including NAPSA and APESMA - see other stories on this page.

The CHF consultation paper can be viewed by clicking **HERE**.

NAPSA HMR concern

A MORATORIUM on the Home Medicines Review program will impact on future pharmacists, according to the National Australian Pharmacy Students' Association.

"Many universities have embedded HMRs within the curriculum and this provides students an insight into a potential career path," said NAPSA President, Chris Braithwaite.

"If a moratorium occurs, students could see their aspirations put on hold," Braithwaite added.

HMRs also provide an "invaluable opportunity to work collaboratively with other health professionals, which NAPSA sees as an important step to moving forward as a profession," added NAPSA Secretary, Bronwyn Jones.

NAPSA said it understood the funding issue, but believes further investigation and review of how the service is being delivered should be implemented prior to its stoppage.

\$10.6m for cancer

HEALTH minister Tanya Plibersek on Fri announced \$10.6 million in new funding for 38 research projects looking at cancer.

Successful recipients include joint ventures between Cancer Australia and Australian Rotary Health; Cancer Council Australia; Cancer Council NSW; Cure Cancer Australia Foundation; National Breast Cancer Foundation; and the Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia.

Plibersek noted that one in two men and one in three women will be diagnosed with cancer during their lifetime in Australia.

WANT TO TURN YOUR PHARMACY INTO A SALES AND PROFIT JUGGERNAUT BUT DON'T HAVE THE EXPERTISE, TIME, OR MONEY?

Join Chemsave and not only will you get our expertise and time, but you'll also get our money! In fact...

WE'LL SPEND \$50,000 UPFRONT ON YOUR PHARMACY...

to quickly get it to where it needs to be so you can quickly get the results you need!



Just pay a low \$999 monthly membership fee! IT'S THAT EASY!



Contact David Patton m: 0432 515 717
OVER 100 MEMBERS AUSTRALIA-WIDE!

Get the power to access every off-patent product on maximum discount.

Call 03 9860 3300
and we'll do the same for you.

pharmacy alliance
Your formula for independent strength



Your Business. Your name.
It's your business, built on your hard work and investment – so why shouldn't your name be over the door?
Pharmacy Choice® – a retail program for independent pharmacies.

Call 1800 036 367 or visit www.pharmacychoice.com.au

Pharmacy+
Choice

Weekly Comment

Welcome to PD's weekly comment feature. This week's contributor is **Giuliana Baggoley, Clinical Policy Adviser, Optometrists Association Australia and presenter at PSA NSW's Annual Therapeutic Update.**



Rheumatoid arthritis can affect your eyes

RHEUMATOID arthritis affects 1% of the Australian population.

Ocular complications include scleritis, episcleritis and retinal vasculitis, while a particular concern is dry eye which can become quite severe.

If severe dry eye is not managed appropriately, deterioration of vision can occur in the long term.

Latest evidence suggests that dry eye associated with rheumatoid arthritis arises from ocular surface inflammation that can further compromise tear secretion and cause ocular surface disease and symptoms.

Anti-inflammatory therapy is a reasonable consideration for patients using artificial tears who have clinically detectable ocular surface disease, particularly if inflammatory signs are present.

Optometrists have been prescribing topical ocular medicines since 2000 and practitioners registered with therapeutic endorsement can prescribe Schedule 4 medicines.

Initiating a relationship with the optometrist means patients will likely receive regular monitoring, and ongoing eye care that includes screening for other conditions associated with rheumatoid arthritis.

Pharmacists and optometrists can help each other by keeping informed of professional developments and expertise.

This, in turn, will strengthen collaborative health management and produce optimal outcomes.

Getting to the heart of it

HEART attack victims are being failed by Australian's health system, according to the George Institute for Global Health and the Heart Foundation.

The comments follow a report published this month in *The Medical Journal of Australia* which outlines five key reforms needed to reduce the alarming number of Australians who have repeat heart attacks.

The report is the result of a national summit of 30 key organisations from government agencies to health professionals and heart attack survivors who met to address the issue of secondary prevention in this country.

Currently half of all heart attacks in Australia are not the first, with thousands of Aussies dying from repeat events every year.

The report also found that the total cost of repeat heart attacks exceeds \$8.4 billion annually, over half the total acute coronary disease cost burden.

"The health system is failing heart attack survivors even though secondary prevention strategies including taking medicines and leading a healthy lifestyle can reduce death and future heart attacks," said report co-author Julie Redfern.

To remedy the problem, the report outlines a five point plan for reform, with the first recommendation being the development and implementation of a national approach to secondary heart attack prevention, by providing a clear path for

patients as well as a structured initial assessment and plan development following a heart attack, ongoing support for modifying risk factors and long term follow up and reassessments.

The second point calls for a bridging of the gap between hospital and primary care by implementing a case management approach that is recognised by Medicare and enables coordination between specialist, GP and allied health services and greater education on secondary prevention, behaviour change techniques and self-management strategies.

The report also calls for increased awareness and utilisation of existing services by patients via a web based national inventory of secondary prevention services, along with the development of a system for establishing performance measures to facilitate clinical practice improvement.

Lastly, it urges the implementation of a communication strategy to keep key stakeholders informed.



DISPENSARY CORNER

THERE'S an epidemic of bare baby bottoms in Southern Norway, which has been hit by an influx of visitors from Eastern Europe stocking up on disposable nappies.

It's the result of a supermarket price war which saw people from neighbouring companies cross the border to buy "every last diaper" in order to resell them in places like Poland and Lithuania.

VISITORS to the coastline near New Zealand's Nelson region have been bemused to see lots of what look suspiciously like breast implants washed up on the sand.

They're actually an unusual type of jellyfish (pictured below).



WIN A NS-8 PRIZE PACK

Every day this week **Pharmacy Daily** is giving two lucky readers the chance to win a NS-8 prize pack, courtesy of **Plunketts**.

Each prize pack includes NS-8 Foot & Leg Moisturiser 125g and NS-8 Heel Balm 100ml.

PREVENTION and CURE for dry, cracked heels and feet!

NS-8 Foot & Leg Moisturiser softens and cares for very dry feet and legs, preventing rough, cracked skin. Enriched with vitamins C, E & F and urea. NS-8 Heel Balm provides fast relief for rough, cracked heels, quickly restoring soft, smooth & supple skin. Non-greasy so socks are not needed and natural exfoliants mean you don't need pumice or foot files.

To win, simply be the first person to send in the correct answer to the question below to: comp@pharmacydaily.com.au.

Name one of the skincare vitamins in NS-8 Foot & Leg Moisturiser

Hint! Visit www.NS8.com.au

