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Patent controversy

THE Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia has expressed its disappointment over a Federal Court decision to refuse to revoke a patent over a genetic mutation for breast cancer, BRCA1, held by Myriad Genetics.

The controversial ruling, which sets a new precedent in the Australian legal system for gene patenting, confirms the ability to hold patents on naturally occurring human DNA that has been isolated from the cells of the human body.

The RCPA believe however that gene mutations are a natural consequence and should lie beyond the scope of patenting.

"Gene patents potentially compromise quality in healthcare, increase costs and restrict doctors' abilities to make diagnoses," said RCPA President Professor Yee Khong.

"Although patents are an essential component of contemporary medical care, it is critical that a distinction is made between a discovery and an invention".

New therapies on the PBS

TWO new treatments for chronic hepatitis C have been added to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) as part of a raft of new and extended subsidies announced this week.

As such, the Government will provide more than \$220 million over five years to subsidise Victrelis (boceprevir) and Incivo (telaprevir), for people at least 18 years old with a certain type of chronic hepatitis C (genotype 1).

At present hepatitis C is one of the most commonly reported notifiable diseases in Australia.

According to Department of Health estimates, in 2011 more than 300,000 Australians had been exposed to the hepatitis C virus and at least 220,000 were living with chronic hepatitis C.

Currently there is no vaccine to prevent hepatitis C, with the only way to manage the disease being medication.

"Our decision to list boceprevir and telaprevir reflects the Government's continuing commitment to consumers and industry to consider and decide on high-cost listings within the timeframes agreed with Medicines Australia," said the Minister for Health Tanya Plibersek.

"Patients would have to pay up to \$78,000 per year for these medicines without subsidised access through the PBS," she added.

The Government has also announced that it will list Femme-Tab ED (evonorgestrel with 20 mg ethinylloestradiol) for use as an oral

contraceptive; Neupro (rotigotine) for the treatment of Parkinson disease as additional therapy for patients being treated with other medicine for this condition; and Juvicor (sitagliptin with simvastatin) – for the treatment of type 2 diabetes and high cholesterol.

Extended listings will also be granted to Protos (strontium ranelate) - for the treatment of osteoporosis (the listing will be extended to include male patients at least 70 years of age with a certain bone mineral density).

MEANWHILE the changes will also see price increases for eight medicines, including: Zovirax (aciclovir) - for the treatment of herpes simplex virus infections of the eye; BenPen (benzylpenicillin) for the treatment of serious bacterial infections; and Aquae (carmellose) and Aquae Gel (hypromellose) - for the treatment of dry mouth in the palliative care setting.

Price increases will also affect E-Mycin (erythromycin) - for the treatment of respiratory tract infections; Alphapress (hydralazine) - for the treatment of high blood pressure; Colifoam (hydrocortisone) - for the treatment of inflammatory bowel disease; Macrodantin (nitrofurantoin) - for the treatment of urinary tract infections; and Ulcyte (sucralfate) - for the treatment of stomach ulcers.

All PBS listings and price changes are subject to final arrangements being met by the suppliers of the medicines, see pbs.gov.au for details.

Today in pharmacy

TODAY'S Pharmacy Daily features three pages full of all the latest pharmacy news PLUS a full page from Pharmacy Alliance, see **p4** for more details.

Kiwis plan to go plain

NEW Zealand is set to join Australia in introducing plain packaging laws for tobacco products.

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Masterson steps down

THE Chairman of Medicines Australia, Mark Masterson, will step down from his role at the end of February.

Masterson cited a new business opportunity in a leadership role within a technology company as his reason for his resignation.

"It has been an enormous privilege to serve this great industry as Medicines Australia Chairman," said Masterson.

"The medicines industry in Australia has navigated some significant policy and business challenges during my tenure, and has shown extraordinary resilience in the face of those challenges.

In Masterson's absence, Mark Fladrich, the MD of AstraZeneca Australia and NZ, will be acting Chairman until a new independent Chair is appointed.

Good school hygiene

TWO thirds of Australian children are not made to wash their hands before having lunch, according to a new Hygiene Council study.

The global survey, which surveyed 14,000 mothers of primary school aged children across 14 countries, identified the hygiene standards and concerns of mothers around the world, as well as knowledge gaps about how germs spread in the school environment.

When asked whether their child was made to wash their hands with soap at school, more than half of Aussie mums said their child is made to wash their hands after going to the toilet/using the bathroom/using the restroom, however only 34% of Australian respondents said their child is made to wash their hands before lunch.

24% said they were unaware if their child is made to wash their hands at school.

Speaking about the findings, Professor Dominic Dwyer, Hygiene Council spokesperson said "While the Hygiene Council agrees that exposure to some microbes is an important step in the process of "natural immunisation" of as child, exposure to harmful pathogens that can cause serious infections is unnecessary and preventable by good hygiene habits".

Don't blacklist calcium yet

NATURAL healthcare company Blackmores has come out swinging in defence of calcium supplementation, saying that new research linking high intakes of calcium in women and cardiovascular mortality (*PD* yest) does not establish that calcium supplementation as a preventative measure for osteoporosis should be ceased.

The Swedish study investigated the link between calcium intake in women and incidence of CVD and concluded that women with calcium intakes (corresponding to diet and supplements) greater than 1400mg per day were more than twice as likely to die compared to women with calcium intakes between 600mg and 999mg per day.

"As this is not a cause and effect study, it should not be interpreted as one," said Blackmores Institute Research Director Chris Oliver.

"It is important data for considering high dose routine

calcium supplementation and one that may instigate further research," he added.

Meanwhile Senior Director, Scientific and Regulatory Affairs at the Council for Responsible Nutrition has also come out in defence of the mineral saying that while high intakes of calcium were associated with a higher risk of death from all causes but cardiovascular disease in particular, the study was not set up to address the question it answered.

Guild NSW workshop

GUILD NSW has announced further dates for its half-day workshops on Preventing Venous Thromboembolism - A Community Guide to Intervention.

The first workshop will be held St Leonards on 06 March and is open to pharmacists, pharmacy assistants, interns and nurses.

Guild NSW has said that places are limited and those interested should register soon to secure their spot.

Contact 02 9467 7127 or click here to access the registration form.

Research grants

THE Institute for Safety, Compensation and Recovery Research (ISCRR) 2013 Development Grants Program has provided funds for 12 new research projects focusing on improving outcomes for TAC and WorkSafe Victoria clients.

A total funding pool of almost \$530,000 has been allocated to projects that can deliver tangible benefits in the short term to ISCRR's partner organisations, including \$340,000 toward neurotrauma research.

Grant winners include Monash University, La Trobe University, the University of Sydney, Austin Health, the University of Melbourne, Florey Neurosciences Institutes and Murdoch Children's Research Institute.

The successful research projects cover a wide range of topics, including the use of tablet computers for people living with quadriplegia, seating modification for occupational car drivers with lower back pain, achieving successful employment outcomes following traumatic spinal cord injury, and the support needs of children with traumatic brain injury.

BMI research rubbish?

RESEARCH published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* which suggests that being overweight may lead to a long life is being hailed as "rubbish" by obesity experts.

The paper looked at 97 studies involving 2.9m people, and compared BMIs with death rates, finding that those with an overweight BMI of between 25-30 were 6% less likely to die early than those with a healthy BMI.

The research did note that those with high BMIs may live longer due to treatment and medication, with the researchers careful to note that they only looked at death rates, not quality of life.

New eye in the US

THE US FDA has approved the Argus II Retinal Prosthesis System, the first implanted device to treat adult patients with advanced retinitis pigmentosa.

The device, includes a small video camera, transmitter mounted on a pair of eyeglasses, video processing unit and an implanted retinal prosthesis, replaces the function of degenerated cells in the retina and may improve a patient's ability to perceive images and movement.

WIN A BOSISTO'S TEA TREE PACK

Pharmacy Daily has teamed up with **Bosisto's** this week and is giving ten lucky readers the chance to win a Bosisto's Tea Tree prize pack, valued at \$45 each.

What's the secret to natural first aid? Bosisto's Tea Tree.

This Australian favourite contains 100%

pure tea tree oil - and is the perfect natural remedy for treating minor cuts and scrapes, soothing the itch of insect bites and relieving Tinea.

It can also be used in so many other ways throughout the home - from deodorising

bins and pet areas to killing bacteria and eliminating odours.

For more information or a free handy hints

pack visit www.fgb.com.au.

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

True or False: Bosisto's Tea Tree products can be used around the home to kill bacteria?

Congratulations to yesterday's lucky winners, Emily Keleher from Good Price Pharmacy and Jolyon Hawley of Aspen Australia.



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Health, Beauty and New Products

Welcome to our weekly feature with all the latest health, beauty and new products for pharmacy!

Suppliers wanting to promote products in this feature should email advertising@pharmacydaily.com.au.



Design your own eternally kissable lips

Designer Brands Eternal Colour collection offers wearers eternally kissable lips. Each lipstick provides long-lasting wear, but rather than drying lips (as some long-stay lippies do), the formula is packed with moisturising goodies such as Vitamin E to counteract dryness. The collection includes 12 lip-loving shades: Party Pink, Ice Coral, Red Robin, Madly Mauve, Perfect Pink, Plum Purple, Rose Brown, Current Kiss, Cherry Love, Pink Rouge, Blushing Rose and Pink Carousel.

Stockist: 1300 765 332

RRP: \$9.99 (each)

Website: www.dbcosmetics.com.au

Get rid of those little coughs

Little Coughs is a new cough syrup specially developed to soothe coughs and chest congestion for children under the age of six years, and can be given to children under the age of two years, after consultation with a physician. The main active ingredient in Little Coughs, Ivy Leaf extract, is a natural expectorant which helps thin and loosen mucus, easing throat and chest inflammation, while also reducing and calming coughing. Little Coughs is free of sugar, preservatives, artificial colours and flavours. The product will be available from 25 February.

Stockist: 1800 788 870

RRP: \$13.95 (100ml), \$18.95 (200ml)

Website: www.littlecoughs.com.au



Say goodbye to arthritis pain

Nagestic Forte (formally Nagesic Forte) is designed to provide effective, fast and long-lasting relief for arthritis pain and inflammation. The key ingredient in the formula is the curcumin, a component of the spice turmeric, a natural analgesic, which in testing was found to help arthritis sufferers improve their grip strength and decrease pain for up to six hours. According to the manufacturers, Nagestic Forte has a three-way mode of action and works by: providing symptomatic relief of arthritis pain, providing symptomatic relief of inflammation, and inhibiting the process of cartilage destruction. The treatment can work as a stand-alone, or in conjunction with glucosamine or fish oil.



Stockist: 1300 790 978

RRP: \$29.95

Website: www.biorevive.com

Time to wrap up

Groove Child's Spaghetti Wrap is crafted from natural bamboo fabric to provide the perfect solution for warmer weather climate sleeping without the risk of overheating. In addition, the soft-to-touch fabric draws moisture away from babies skin, so it's ideal for newborns that haven't yet learnt to regulate their body temperature. According to Groove Child, what's great about this product is that by wrapping only the arms and torso, the baby's hips and legs remain free and unrestricted to move naturally, helping to prevent conditions such as hip dysplasia, and allows for nappy changes without the need for unwrapping.

Stockist: 0400 600 918

RRP: \$55 (2 pack)

Website: www.groovechild.com.au



DISPENSARY CORNER

PUSHING up daisies.

Bratislav Stojanovic is redefining what it means to push up daisies, after taking up residence in a used grave.

The Serbian man found himself homeless a few months ago after having racked up debts, and spent many nights battling the bitter cold on the streets before bunking down with the dead.

"It is dry and it is warm," he said.

"I have some lamps and my personal possessions.

"It isn't a palace but it is more comfortable than the street," he added.

Surprisingly graveyard officials are not angling to get rid of their live squatter, saying "The family who owned the tomb are long gone so technically it belongs to no-one".

"If he behaves himself there are no plans to evict him," they added.



TASTE is an individual thing.

In some cases taste can be as individual as a fingerprint, and in one particular instance that fingerprint got the taste for magnets, fridge magnets.

A 12-month old Russian child recently underwent a procedure to remove a whopping 42 fridge magnets after developing a taste for the delicacy.

"Over the years, I had to take a variety of foreign bodies including magnets from young patients," said the child's surgeon, Nikolay Rostovtsev.

"Once I removed about 20 of them, but this incident of our little patient has broken all records," he added.





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