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Coronavirus warning

VISITORS to Saudi Arabia, especially pilgrims taking part in Hajj this October, are being advised by the country's government to wear masks in crowded places to stop the spread of the MERS coronavirus.

Millions of Muslims make the journey to Mecca each year to pray together before the Kaaba.

38 people have died so far of the so-called Middle East Respiratory Syndrome which emerged in the Arabian peninsula last Sep.

Advertising debate rages

PHARMACY academic Ken Harvey says that proposals in the TGA's consultation about advertising of therapeutic goods (PD Thu) deserve "thoughtful input from medical practitioners and other stakeholders," adding that "it would be a pity if their views were drowned out by a concerted campaign from naturopaths, herbalists, homeopaths and Blackmores".

Writing in the *Medical Journal of Australia* this week, Harvey acknowledged that the proposal is causing a "great deal of angst" among complementary medicine practitioners - and in particular one option which would remove them from a list of health professionals authorised to receive advertising of therapeutic goods.

The proposal relating to advertising directed to health professionals makes reference only to AHPRA-registered practitioners, thereby excluding herbalists, homeopaths, naturopaths and other complementary medicine practitioners who don't qualify.

"The reality is that naturopaths, herbalists and homeopaths have not achieved national registration for a number of reasons, including the plethora of organisations that represent them and their many and varied educational and professional standards," Harvey wrote.

Grover's disease

THIS week's edition of the RGH Pharmacy E-Bulletin gives an overview of Grover's disease, also known as transient and persistent acantholytic dermatosis, a non-immune mediated skin condition which usually presents as a rash on the trunk.

The free bulletin is available for download by [CLICKING HERE](#).

"Although there are well trained complementary health care practitioners whose practice is evidence-based," he said, "there are many others who use shonky diagnostic and therapeutic techniques such as bio-impedance analysis and live blood analysis, and who are unaware of their limitations."

Also under consideration is a proposal which would prohibit the advertising of higher risk medical devices to the public, which naturopaths say will reduce access to the tools of their trade.

Harvey countered this by saying this would in turn "produce an evidence-based debate about the public health risks of many of the devices they use".

He believes that the proposal about advertising of therapeutic goods to the public is appropriate, and "may also provide the stimulus required for the complementary health care professions to get their act together to achieve registration status".

Dr Harvey called for thoughtful input to ensure that a balanced perspective drives the result.

The TGA will accept submissions until this Friday 19 July.

Prostate support

HEALTH minister Tanya Plibersek has announced \$7m in funding to help expand and extend the national Prostate Cancer Specialist Nursing program to 50 nurses.

The move doubles the size of the scheme, giving about 1,000 men each year access to nursing services.

MEANWHILE Plibersek has also announced a \$2m national stroke campaign, to raise awareness of the 'FAST' (Face, Arms, Speech, Time) protocol to treat the condition.

Heart attacks decline

THE National Heart Foundation has released new data showing that between 2001 and 2011 the number of deaths from heart attacks dropped dramatically from 14,443 in 2001 to 9,811 in 2011.

Heart Foundation CEO Dr Lyn Roberts said that while the lower death rate is wonderful news, "people who have survived a heart attack are also at high risk of having another," with high survival rates meaning more people are living with heart damage and disability after their heart attacks, and urged ongoing cardiac rehabilitation.

"Many Australian men and women are missing the message that treatment for heart attack is not a cure for heart disease".

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Nutritional module

COMPLETE with a video feature, Aspen Nutritionals has launched a new interactive learning module as part of its online training program for pharmacy assistants.

The program aims to give all pharmacy staff a better understanding of nutrition for infants and toddlers, and is available online at no charge.

To register for the free training see www.pharmacyclub.com.au.

Disclosure hits industry

THE Australian pharmaceutical industry continues to face significant headwinds, with a new report from consulting firm PricewaterhouseCoopers revealing the ongoing impact of PBS reforms and price disclosure.

Conducted in conjunction with Medicines Australia, the *Issues and Decisions* report is the outcome of a confidential survey of a wide cross-section of industry participants.

The study highlights a range of issues, including the fact that about a third of suppliers are considering direct-to-pharmacy distribution.

Price disclosure is also predicted to hurt pharmaceutical wholesalers, with the report saying the more competitive environment is likely to see wholesalers review which services and products they offer.

“Similarly, community pharmacy will be required to examine new business strategies and revenue streams to counter the loss of revenue from PBS items.

“As the government pays less and patients pay the same for

medicines, it is pharmacy that will suffer reduced margins and profitability,” the report warns.

The full PwC report is available for download by **CLICKING HERE**.

ASMI on Omega-3

THE Australian Self-Medication Industry has joined the Complementary Healthcare Council (PD yesterday) in encouraging health professionals to consider the research linking omega-3 and prostate cancer alongside “pre-existing robust evidence that demonstrates the positive health benefits of fish oil”.

ASMI said it believes that the widely publicised study findings linking omega-3 to prostate cancer are inconclusive, and therefore “they do not warrant any changes to the way in which omega-3 supplements are used”.

“The study findings indicate an association, but do not demonstrate cause and effect,” said ASMI’s Steve Scarff.



DISPENSARY CORNER

THE mental state of the population is set to be highlighted in the Lithuanian capital of Vilnius, where the local mayor has announced plans to install a public ‘happiness barometer’.

A gigantic display, to be built on top of the town hall, will show a number between one and ten which reflects online votes lodged by citizens.

The system is already running on TVs inside the council office, with mayor Aturas Zuokas saying it’s a “great tool for politicians.

“If we take a decision and see a sharp fall in the mood of the city, then we know we have done something horribly wrong,” he said, with the barometer this week hovering around six to seven points, according to *Reuters*.

The report also cites recent statistics from polling group WIN Association which found that Lithuania was among the most unhappy countries in the world, just ahead of Serbia, Palestine, Egypt and Romania.

A MILKMAN in the UK has been banned from whistling on his early-morning round after complaints from residents.

Kevin Gifford’s bosses took the action after five people complained about him whistling his favourite songs, including God Save The Queen by the Sex Pistols, Love To Love You Baby by Donna Summer and King Creole by Elvis Presley.

Delivering to 340 houses a day, the 52-year-old said four of the complaints were not even from customers, saying that they had accused him of breaching the peace “or something ridiculous”.

The father of three complained to *The Sun* that a whistling milkman was a “part of British life”, and for the dairy to issue him with a formal warning was “madness”.

“Are they going to complain about the birds singing as well?” Mr Gifford asked, adding: “they make more noise than I do”.

Guild Update

Tackle Workplace Bullying

In response to the report Workplace Bullying ‘We just want it to stop’ the Federal Government has introduced changes to the Fair Work Act (FW Act) which were passed on 6 June 2013, with a start date yet to be confirmed. The changes that relate to bullying and harassment will enable a worker who reasonably believes that they have been bullied at work to apply to the Fair Work Commission (FWC) for an order to stop the bullying.

The changes amend the FW Act by defining workplace bullying as repeated, unreasonable behaviours that are directed towards a worker or group of workers, that creates a risk to health and safety. In light of the amendments, it would be prudent for employers to reassess their policies and procedures related to workplace bullying, to ensure compliance with the proposed legislative framework and promote a workplace which is free from bullying.

Resources to assist both employers and employees can be accessed by contacting the work safety authorities in each state or territory.



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