

Phebra opens plant

THE Federal Industry and Innovation Minister, Greg Combet, officially opened Phebra's new \$25 million sterile manufacturing plant in Lane Cove West this month.

At the ceremony to open the plant, Minister Combet remarked that "the Australian pharmaceutical industry is a major high tech industry".

"It employs more than 40,000 Australians, generates export earnings of around \$4 billion a year and invests more than \$1 billion a year in research and development," he added.

Phebra's new plant will deliver extra production capacity for its range of medicines, and will also expand the company's capacity to conduct development programs.

Stivarga approval

THE US Food and Drug Administration has expanded the approved use of Stivarga (regorafenib) to treat patients with advanced gastrointestinal stromal tumors that cannot be surgically removed and no longer respond to other FDA-approved treatments for this disease.

Stivarga is a multi-kinase inhibitor, blocks several enzymes that promote cancer growth.

Anxiety over heart attacks

ONLY a small number of Australians that suffer a heart attack receive mental health advice during their recovery stages, despite the health scare leaving them at a higher risk of anxiety and depression, according to *beyondblue*.

"A recent analysis of people in a large Victorian town shows only about a third of people who've had a non-fatal heart attack or coronary disease get the mental health information they need, and this is not uncommon across the rest of Australia," said *beyondblue* CEO Kate Carnell.

"This means thousands of Australians who urgently need guidance on how to protect themselves from mental illness miss out, despite being almost twice as likely to develop an anxiety condition when compared to the general population.

"They are also more likely to become depressed," she added.

The comments come in the lead up to the release of a new pamphlet, by *beyondblue* and the Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association, the first of its kind in Australia, to raise awareness about the increased mental health risks

people face after a serious health issue has landed them in hospital.

According to the *beyondblue* research up to 50% of people who survive a heart attack or coronary artery disease then develop an anxiety condition, compared with 26% of the general population who will experience one over a lifetime.

Despite this, only between 31% and 37% heart attack or coronary artery disease survivors receive information about how to cope emotionally as they recover.

"People need to know that a sudden health event can leave them emotionally vulnerable and this pamphlet shows the simple steps they can take to ensure they don't develop depression or anxiety," said Carnell.

"These pamphlets meet the urgent need to educate hospital patients about how they can protect themselves.

"People often make a full recovery from a physical illness, but their mental health suffers because they're not aware of the risks they face," she added.

To order the pamphlet, see www.beyondblue.org.au.

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Guild Update

Emergency Locum Service Success

In remote Western Australia, a community pharmacist was suffering urgent health concerns.

With no one to run the pharmacy, this might have left the community without access to vital pharmacy services.

The Emergency Locum Service was able to quickly place a locum pharmacist to continue operation until the owner was able to return to work.

During the New South Wales floods of early 2012, many business owners were unable to continue operating due to the recovery work that was required on their own homes and properties.

With the assistance of the Service, community pharmacies were able to continue business operations, providing pharmacy services to their customers with locum pharmacists.

These are just two of the many examples of how the Service assists pharmacies in rural and remote areas.

In the past 12 months the Service has allowed a number of pharmacies in rural and remote locations to continue operating when otherwise they would have had to close their doors.

It provides 24 hour a day, seven day a week telephone access (1800 357 001) and aims to place a pharmacy locum in any rural or remote location in Australia within 24 hours of a request, for a maximum of seven days.

The Emergency Locum Service is managed by the Pharmacy Guild of Australia, and assists with the cost and logistics of supplying locums to rural and remote pharmacies in emergency circumstances.

This program is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing as part of the Fifth Community Pharmacy Agreement.

To access the Service or to find out more about it, or if you wish to register as an emergency locum, please visit www.els.com.au



The Pharmacy
Guild of Australia

Guild to minimise impacts

THE Pharmacy Guild of Australia has said that it is doing "absolutely everything within its powers" to minimise the impact on its members of the cost blowout in the Home Medicines Review (HMR) program.

The comments follow industry concern over speculation that Guild members might be required to cross-subsidise the cost of a rorted system, and a statement from the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia which suggested that the HMR controversy highlights failures in the Community Pharmacy Agreement negotiations.

"It is grossly unfair that community pharmacies now face having remuneration cuts in this financial year because the Guild's repeated calls to bring the HMR program under control have gone unheeded for so long," the Guild said in a statement.

"Worst of all, some of the 200% blowout in the \$8.6 million HMR program is a direct result of business practices by a small number of consultant pharmacists that are nothing short of rorting the public purse," the Guild added.

In addition, the Guild went on to state that there is fairly clear evidence of consultant pharmacists churning through very large numbers of HMRs outside of patients' homes in a cosy relationship with medical corporate groups.

"At least one large medical corporation has been flying

consultant pharmacists around the country, to regional locations, to their clinics to maximise their revenue from conducting 'assembly line' HMRs in medical centres," the Guild said.

"Up to 100 HMRs have been done in a week and the pharmacist did not even meet the local practice doctor nor the local community pharmacist," the Guild added.

According to the Guild, there is also evidence of medical practices seeking commissions (disguised as rent) from consultant pharmacists in return for HMR referrals.

"The Guild warned the Department before the 2011 decision to introduce direct referrals for HMRs that it would put the future sustainability of the program at risk.

"We have been highlighting examples of questionable HMR practices for at least six months," the Guild said.

"Under the terms of the Agreement, it is clear that the blowout in the HMR budget must be funded from within the Agreement.

"Unfortunately this means that innocent community pharmacists will bear some of the burden of this cost overrun.

"The Guild is doing everything in its powers to minimise this burden. First, we are targeting programs that are underspent.

"Second, we are doing all we can to minimise the impact on the bottom line of community," the Guild added.

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DISPENSARY CORNER

WHAT makes more sense than chasing away a bad odour with fresh cow manure!

Well that's exactly what two Indonesian students have done, via the creation of an air freshener crafted from cow manure.

The students, Dwi Nailul Izzah and Rintya Aprianti Miki, took out first prize at Indonesia's Science Project Olympiad with their creation, which is said to be an environmentally friendly air freshener.

Originating from farm fresh cow dung, the air freshener was created after the students left the dung to ferment for three days, and then extracted the water from the dung and mixed it with coconut water.

From there the coconut cow pat flavoured water was distilled to remove impurities, before being canned and entered into the competition.

According to reports, rather than smelling like effluence, the air freshener has a natural herbal scent.

After winning first place, the students and their creation will now represent their country at the International Environment Project Olympiad race.

Electronic cigarettes

THE Department of Health has said that it is concerned over the use of electronic cigarettes in Australia, saying the impact of wide scale use of these devices on tobacco use is not known, and the outcome in the community could be harmful.

"Unlike Nicotine Replacement Therapy products, which have been rigorously assessed for efficacy and safety and, therefore, approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration for use as aids in withdrawal from smoking, no assessment of electronic cigarettes has been undertaken and, therefore, the quality and safety of electronic cigarettes is not known," the Department said.

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