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Inside Pharmacy Daily

TODAY'S Pharmacy Daily features three pages of news, **PLUS** a full page from the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia- see **p4** for details.

New Health Secretary

AS part of this week's Federal Government cabinet reshuffle, the Honourable Shayne Neumann has been appointed as Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Ageing.

Neumann is the Federal Member for Blair in Brisbane, and is also the Chair of the House of Representative Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs.



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Pneumonia vaccine concerns

HEALTHCARE professionals are being urged to actively identify and vaccinate those at higher risk of pneumococcal pneumonia this winter, following a significant decline in pneumococcal pneumonia revaccination rates among at-risk populations in the wake of changes to the National Immunisation Program guidelines in early 2012.

The comments follow a study by researchers from the University of Sydney's Family Medicine Research Centre, which analysed data from two sub-studies of the Bettering the Evaluation and Care of Health (BEACH) program, in which the GP specified the pneumococcal vaccination status of each patient.

The first study was conducted between March-May 2011, whilst the second between March-May 2012.

The investigation was limited to patients aged 70 years and over, with vaccination status determined by whether or not the patient had been vaccinated against pneumococcal disease in the past five years.

Presence or absence of pneumococcal risk factor(s) were determined by whether the patient had one or more of the following: diabetes, chronic lung disease,

immune deficiency, heart disease, were a tobacco smoker, or were an indigenous patient.

According to the study findings, among patients most at risk of pneumococcal pneumonia there was a drop in revaccination rates of 12.2% after the NIP changes were implemented (71.7% in May 2012 compared with 83.9% in May 2011 ($p < 0.01$)).

In 2011, under the NIP, non-indigenous Australians received one pneumococcal vaccination at 65 years of age and a second vaccination at 70 years of age (or at least five years after the first dose).

In April 2011, the TGA advised healthcare professionals not to administer a second dose of vaccine, pending a review.

In January 2012 the recommendations were reinstated, but changed to include a second dose only for patients at high risk of contracting invasive pneumococcal disease.

According to the research while the decrease in revaccination rates for older Australians with no additional risk factors, from 81.2% in 2011 to 65% in 2012, was anticipated, the 12.2% reduction in at-risk populations was less so.



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Leukemia breakthrough

A US RESEARCH team have announced that two children with an aggressive form of childhood leukemia had a complete remission of their disease.

According to the researchers, the children show no evidence of cancer cells in their bodies, after treatment with a novel cell therapy that reprogrammed their immune cells to rapidly multiply and destroy leukemia cells.

Published in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, the study used immunotherapy- a treatment which manipulates the immune system to increase its cancer-fighting capabilities.

As such, the researchers engineered T cells to selectively kill another type of immune cell called B cells, which had become cancerous.

To this end, the researchers removed some of each patient's own T cells and modified them to create a type of CAR (chimeric antigen receptor) cell called a CTL019 cell- designed to attack a protein called CD19 that occurs only on the surface of certain B cells.

By creating an antibody that recognises CD19 and then connecting that antibody to T cells, the researchers created in CTL019 cells a sort of guided missile that locks in on and kills B cells, thereby attacking B-cell leukemia.

After being returned to the patient's body, the CTL019 cells multiply a thousand times over and circulate throughout the body.

Importantly, they persist for months afterward, guarding against a recurrence of this specific type of leukemia.

Health literacy outcomes

A NEW study published in *The Journal of General Internal Medicine* has found that adult patients with diabetes who don't understand basic health information are significantly less likely to take newly prescribed antidepressant medication.

Conducted by the Kaiser Permanente Division of Research and the University of Washington School of Medicine, 72% of the 1,366 type 2 diabetic study participants had limited health literacy and had significantly poorer adherence to newly prescribed antidepressants, compared to patients with no limitations.

Health literacy was based on a self-reported scale in which participants with type 2 diabetes responded to three questions: How often do you have problems learning about your medical condition because of difficulty understanding written information?; How confident are you filling out medical forms by yourself?; and How often do you have someone like a family member, friend, hospital or clinic worker or caregiver, help you read health plan materials?

The study examined medication nonadherence during the 12 months after the initial antidepressant prescription, and researchers found that many patients failed to adhere to their treatment.

Although most patients filled the prescription at least once, 43% failed to fill the prescription a second time, and nearly two-thirds had discontinued the

antidepressant by the end of the 12-month period.

"Depression in adults with diabetes is frequently chronic, suggesting the need for long-term antidepressant therapy," said lead author Dr Amy Bauer of the University of Washington School of Medicine.

"The high rates of early discontinuation that were observed among adults with diabetes who had any health literacy limitation suggest that few of these individuals received an adequate course of antidepressant therapy.

"Getting that sufficient treatment is critical in preventing relapse and recurrence of depression.

"Physicians should be aware of this.

"For antidepressant treatment to succeed, patients with limited health literacy may require more intensive counseling and clearer explanations about use of antidepressant medications and closer follow-up," Dr Bauer added.

EU 2014 vaccine strains

THE European Medicines Agency has issued the European Union recommendations for the influenza virus strains that should be included in vaccines for the prevention of seasonal influenza next winter.

Trivalent vaccines for the 2013/2014 season should contain these virus strains: an A/California/7/2009 (H1N1)pdm09-like virus; an A(H3N2) virus antigenically like the cell-propagated prototype virus A/Victoria/361/2011; a B/Massachusetts/2/2012-like virus.

Quadrivalent vaccines containing two influenza-B viruses should also include a B/Brisbane/60/2008-like virus.

Natural pain solution

FISIocremsOLUGEL launched at APP last week, with sporting Olympic beach volleyballer, Kerri Pottharst as its ambassador.

FisiocremSOLUGEL is a natural solution for treating common muscular aches and pains and soft tissue trauma, including bumps and bruises.

See www.fisiocrem.com/australia.



Pharmacy Practice Incentives (PPI)

DAA's/Clinical Interventions claim form due by 14 April 2013

The DAAs/Clinical Interventions claim form MUST be lodged with Medicare between 1-14 April 2013

Click to access Claim form

IMPORTANT: Claims received by Medicare after 14 April 2013 will be rejected.



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The Pharmacy
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Guild Update

The Guild is pleased that agreement was reached with the Government last week to resolve the overspend which was threatening the future of the highly valued Home Medicines Review (HMR) program.

The solution that has been agreed is in the interests of patients, community pharmacy, the pharmacy profession, and taxpayers.

Under the agreed arrangements:

- There will be no reduction in fees for any of the medication management programs over the remainder of the Fifth Community Pharmacy Agreement
- The HMR budget will be increased by more than 30% in each of the next two financial years
- The 2012/13 overspend will be funded through a combination of underspends in other Agreement programs and reductions in incentive payments for Dose Administration Aids (DAA) and Clinical Interventions (CI) for the remainder of this financial year
- The reductions in DAA and CI incentives will be repaid to community pharmacies through increased incentive payments over the remaining two financial years of the Agreement.
- All the professional programs will be closely managed to ensure they remain within budget for the rest of the Agreement.
- Medication management programs will be subject to coning or shaping arrangements targeted at the highest volume providers whereby payments for an individual service provider will be reduced once they reach a certain volume of services. The aim of this measure is to maintain the sustainability of the programs and ensure maximum patient access. The vast majority of providers will not be affected by this arrangement.
- Capping of the rate of Clinical Interventions per PBS prescription dispensed will be introduced.
- A research project will be commissioned to collate the clinical evidence required to make future recommendations regarding the targeting criteria for HMR patient eligibility.

The Guild will continue to focus on ensuring that quality services are delivered and will not sit idly by when there is evidence of inappropriate business practices that undermine quality patient outcomes.



The Pharmacy
Guild of Australia

Hope for herpes prevention

RESEARCHERS at Albert Einstein College of Medicine of Yeshiva University have discovered a novel strategy for preventing herpes simplex viruses infections, the microbes responsible for causing genital herpes (herpes simplex virus 2) and cold sores (herpes simplex virus 1).

Published online in *The FASEB Journal*, the research identified the molecular 'key' that herpes viruses use to penetrate cell membranes and infect cells of the human body, and could lead to new drugs for treating or suppressing herpes virus infections.

The researchers worked with the proposition that infection by the herpes viruses depends on calcium released within the cells.

In this study, the researchers found that calcium release occurs because the viruses activate a critical cell-signaling molecule called Akt at the cell membrane.

As part of their investigation of Akt's role in herpes infections, the

researchers took laboratory cultures of those human cell types and mixed them for 15 minutes with four different drugs known to inhibit Akt.

The cells were then exposed for one hour to herpes simplex virus 2.

All four drugs significantly inhibited herpes virus infection in each of the cell types.

By contrast, cells not pretreated with the Akt inhibitors were readily infected on exposure to the virus.

"For people infected with herpes, the drug acyclovir helps prevent herpes outbreaks from recurring and lowers the risk of transmitting the infection to others," said lead author Dr Betsy Herold.

"But some people have herpes infections that don't respond to acyclovir, and unfortunately there is no effective vaccine.

"So new approaches for suppressing and treating herpes infections are badly needed, and our findings indicate that inhibiting Akt should be a useful therapeutic strategy to pursue," she added.

WIN THE DIVACUP PRIZE PACK



Every day this week **Pharmacy Daily** is giving one lucky reader the chance to win a **DivaCup** prize pack, valued at \$69.90 each.

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True or False: Is Diva International Inc. the only ISO certified menstrual cup manufacture and head office in the world?

Hint! Visit www.divacup.com.au

Congratulations to yesterday's lucky winner, **Adrian Sung** from **Pharmacy Online Discount Outlet**.

DISPENSARY CORNER

PREHISTORIC theft.

Canberra's National Dinosaur Museum is offering a \$500 reward for the return of its beloved Utahaptor statue which was stolen this month.

The fibreglass statue is a fan favourite, and its loss has taken a bite out of the museum's morale, however staff are confident that the dinosaur will soon find its way home.

NOT performing to peak?

A groundhog named Punxsutawney Phil may be in need of some R&R to get him back on form.

Punxsutawney Phil is currently in the bad books of the good people of Ohio after he wrongly predicted an early spring.

For his actions, Phil has been charged with a felony by the state prosecutor, Mike Gmoser, who told media that the actions of the groundhog represented a felony against "the peace and dignity of the state of Ohio".

"Punxsutawney Phil did purposely, and with prior calculation and design, cause the people to believe that spring would come early," he said, quipping that the penalty for the crime was "death".

Coming out in defence of the overwhelmed Phil, Bill Deeley, president of the Punxsutawney club that organizes Groundhog Day, told media that the penalty was "harsh".

The chubby critter does however have some good protections in place, to stave off the wrath of the state, with his enclosure being right beside the police station, and with officers vowing to watch over the slightly misinformed munchkin.



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