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AHEAD of national TV and print marketing campaigns, Percutane's offer of special pricing on its range of sports and pain relief creams ends at the close of business today.

Go to **page four** for full details of pricing discounts on offer.

\$20m threshold locked in

FEDERAL health minister Peter Dutton has announced that the government will "fast-track approvals of medicines that have received a positive recommendation for funding" by the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee.

Under the new process, Dutton will be able to approve medicines that would cost the government \$20 million or less to subsidise in each of the first four years.

It's the fulfilment of an election commitment, and reverses the former Labor government policy which held up medicines approvals in Cabinet.

"The Coalition Government is streamlining approvals processes to improve access for patients and give business more certainty," Dutton said.

In 2001 the Howard Government established a \$10 million threshold to streamline approvals for new

medicines, but this initiative was abandoned by the Rudd-Gillard administration, "to the detriment of sick Australians."

"The Coalition Government has not only restored, but increased the threshold which will mean that more patients can access new and improved medicines sooner and at an affordable price," Dutton said.

Medicines Australia welcomed the move, with ceo Brendan Shaw saying the policy change had been advocated by the industry for a number of years.

"It is a common sense administrative change that improves the PBS listing process," Shaw said.

He said companies would benefit from greater predictability, while the new procedure would also give the government more efficient processes "and ultimately good news for patients who'll get access to new medicines sooner."

"Together with the new PBS listings announced earlier this week, this announcement shows the government understands the importance of a predictable policy approach to the PBS," Shaw added.

Aspen pricing drop

ASPEN Australia has confirmed that selected products will be reduced in price as per the 01 Dec schedule as part of the government's accelerated price disclosure regime for the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.

Daily aspirin debate

IN a recent study published in *Health Technology Assessment*, the risks and benefits of daily aspirin were assessed, showing that healthy people without risk of cardiovascular events should not take aspirin daily.

For those with known risks, the evidence is still in favour of the prophylaxis.

Out of 2572 potentially relevant papers identified, 27 met the inclusion criteria and included primary sources, reviews and meta-analyses.

The research was funded by the US National Institute for Health Research Health Technology Assessment programme.

Benefits of aspirin ranged from 6% reduction in relative risk (RR) for all-cause mortality and 10% reduction in major cardiovascular events to a reduction in total coronary heart disease of 15%.

Increased RR from bleeds range from 37% for GI bleeding, to 62% for major bleeds and 32% to 38% for haemorrhagic stroke.

The study's authors concluded that "there is a fine balance between benefits and risks from regular aspirin use in primary prevention of CVD."

CLICK HERE to access the paper.

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Teva ceo resigns

THE chief executive officer of pharmaceutical company Teva, Jeremy Levin, has resigned and will be replaced on an interim basis by the firm's chief financial officer, Eyal Desheh.

A committee has been formed by the Teva board to search for a permanent replacement.

Earlier this week a US TV report suggesting a rift between Levin and Teva's board of directors was dismissed as "baseless".

Levin was appointed as ceo of Teva just last year.

APPFSC clarification

THE Advanced Pharmacy Practice Framework Steering Committee (**PD** yesterday) is a profession wide collaboration, with the committee funded by a range of organisations including AACP, SHPA, APC, ACP, PDL, PSA, the Pharmacy Board of Australia, Professional Pharmacists Australia, the Guild and CPANZ.

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Actelion attractive

THE FDA approval of Actelion's new pulmonary arterial hypertension therapy Opsumit (**PD** 22 Oct), has reportedly made the company a key takeover target.

Actelion's existing product for the PAH market, Tracleer, comes out of patent in 2015 but the new product has renewed interest from several potential suitors including Bayer, Novartis and GlaxoSmithKline, according to a *Bloomberg* report.

The European Medicines Agency has also recommended approving the drug, with Actelion's share price up 62% so far this year.

Smith at ASMI event

THE upcoming Australian Self Medication Industry conference will feature pharmacist and naturopath Michael Smith, exploring the evolving role of complementary medicines in preventative health.

Smith's presentation will focus on the responsibility of industry to give consumers information they need to make informed choices.

The ASMI conference is on Thu 14 Nov in Sydney - **CLICK HERE**.

NPS weighs in on statins

NPS MedicineWise has joined the debate sparked by the ABC *Catalyst* program (**PD** yesterday) which has stirred responses from several quarters.

Academics from Sydney University and ANU as well as now NPS MedicineWise have made unequivocal statements of their position opposing the information presented in the program, which will screen tonight and is expected to downplay the importance of statins in the treatment of cardiovascular disease.

In response NPS Medicinewise has published information for health professionals on its website summarising up to date information on the use of statins.

NPS said the debate on whether management of cardiovascular risk places undue emphasis on blood cholesterol has raised questions about current prescribing practices for lipid lowering medicines and the role of statins in the prevention of cardiovascular events.

"The guidelines are clear and the evidence is strong - statins

remain one of the most effective strategies for reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease, but patient selection is key," said NPS.

"The prescribing of statins should follow national guidelines based on absolute CVD risk assessment.

"In people who are deemed moderate to high risk, statins have an important, clinically proven role to play in the prevention of CVD."

Pharmacists are seen as key in educating patients about statin medications to ensure higher rates of adherence, particularly since hypercholesterolaemia doesn't exhibit with symptoms.

CLICK HERE to access the NPS position on the use of statins.

\$20m for Pharmaxis

AUSTRALIAN pharmaceutical developer Pharmaxis has elected to take a further \$20 million under a financing agreement with US based investment fund NovaQuest.

The deal was entered into earlier this year, with the extra funding conditional on certain commercial and regulatory criteria as it pursues the US approval of Bronchitol for cystic fibrosis.

The innovative financing model gives NovaQuest quarterly payments based on Bronchitol sales in the US and EU.

EMA involves patients

THE European Medicines Agency is exploring ways to increasingly involve patients in the benefit-risk assessment of medicines following a report on their workshop held on 26 Sep 2013.

Measures will be taken as part of an on-going review of the existing formal framework of interaction between the Agency and patient and consumer organisations.

In addition, a permanent forum for dialogue between the Agency and patient representatives, the Patients' and Consumers' Working Party (PCWP), provides recommendations to the Agency and its human scientific committees on all matters of interest to patients in relation to medicines.

MHRA Imigran recall

THE UK's Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has alerted pharmacies, dispensing clinics and wholesalers to return stocks of Imigran injectable.

GSK UK has recalled five batches of the migraine headache medication due to a manufacturing fault which causes a small number of needles to protrude from the protective shield.

It's not a patient level recall, with the number of affected items thought to be very small and the risk to members of the public finding an affected syringe "extremely low".

However there's a slight risk of infection from an unprotected needle, with patients urged to take extra care when using these syringes.

Australian stocks are unaffected.

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Congratulations to yesterday's lucky winner, **Amanda Pippia** from **Leeton Pharmacy**. The correct answer was Natural Wrinkle Fighter.

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TEMPO Holidays has released an amazing special offer on a European river cruise next year.

The 7 night *Classical Rhine* voyage, which cruises aboard the *Amadeus Princess* through the Netherlands, Germany, France and Switzerland, is available for the incredible price of just \$2033 per couple.

It's a special deal to launch the company's new brochure, and is only accessible for bookings made by 15 November, for cruises departing on 12 April or 16 October 2014.

There's also the 10 day *Portraits of the Rhone* cruise which includes two nights in Paris, rail transfers to Lyon and a 7 night voyage through Macon and Avignon aboard the *Amadeus Symphony*.

The vessels offer five star accommodation in outside cabins, all meals on board, complimentary wine with dinner, on-shore excursions and entertainment.

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CHF urges Medicare revamp

CONSUMERS Health Forum ceo Carol Bennett says that the time has come to rethink Medicare, with the existing system crying out for re-engineering towards "wellness services" rather than the "one-off disconnected medical services that the current fee-for-service system encourages".

In an editorial published in the *Australian*, Bennett argues in favour of a well-resourced integrated primary care system, which would offer a more comprehensive and effective response to many of today's chronic diseases.

In such a situation the GP would lead a team of other health professionals who would oversee much of the regular that chronically ill patients need.

Bennett said the current approach

offers limited avenues for doctors and patients to harness the most appropriate care of support, with a possibility being a "performance based payment system" which provides incentives for both doctors and patients to reach shared goals.

"Personalised health budgets and outcomes-based payments warrant consideration," Bennett wrote.

She highlighted the surging costs of Medicare, which is forecasted to account for \$23.6 billion in government spending in the next four years, a rise of \$4.5 billion.

And despite this, growing out-of-pocket costs for medical care are unacceptable and for many people unaffordable, Bennett said.

She was writing in response to the "annual ritual" of the Australian Medical Association which "is reminding us how Medicare benefit payments fail to meet general practitioners' income aspirations".

GP's receive \$36.30 for a standard consultation, less than half the AMA's recommended \$73.

Clinical pharmacists

A pharmacist-managed metabolic clinic has been able to demonstrate the critical role of clinical pharmacists in the management of type 2 diabetes.

In a recent article published in the American Diabetes Association organ, *Clinical Diabetes*, it was shown that the impact of the pharmacy professional enhanced treatment planning, medication selection, and goal achievement.

Patient therapy adherence is particularly important with chronic disease states such as diabetes in terms of health outcomes and pharmacist engagement is proven to enhance both.

CLICK HERE to read the article.

EMA seeks feedback

THE Health and Consumers Directorate-General of the European Commission is seeking feedback from all stakeholders on a concept paper on the revision of a guideline on the format and content of applications for paediatric investigation plans (PIPs).

The consultation period for this concept paper has been extended.

The concept paper can be seen by **CLICKING HERE** and comments are invited until 03 January 2014.

DISPENSARY CORNER

LIPOSUCTION is apparently the latest rage in the US military, with a plastic surgeon revealing that he's often called in by soldiers who are concerned about passing the Pentagon's body fat test.

Fitness standards mandate a so-called "tape test" which estimates body fat by taking measurements of the waist and neck.

Dr Adam Tattelbaum specialises in the fat removal procedure, which is apparently not banned but not encouraged either.

"They come in panicked about getting kicked out or getting a demerit that will hurt their chances at a promotion," he said.

Apparently those who fail the test are ordered to join a vigorous exercise program, known among Marines as the "doughnut brigade" or the "pork chop platoon".

SPEAKING of body proportions, a huge row has broken out in Brazil, with allegations of bribery and corruption in the country's annual "Miss Bumbum" competition to determine who has the most attractive backside.

Two contestants in the 2013 Bumbum pageant have been accused of paying thousands of dollars to rig the contest, after local newspaper *O Dia* reported the names of the winner and runner-up a week before the results are due to be announced.

Social media has gone crazy over the claims, with rival contestants venting their frustration.

"It's no longer a secret to anyone that Miss Bumbum has been bought and already has a winner," wrote one.

The winner receives \$5000 in cash plus a \$50,000 advertising contract - plus an appearance in a special reality TV show tastefully titled "Miss Butt Brazil".



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Product Description	API	Symbion	CHS	Size	Deal	Discount	Units Ordered
Percutane Pain Relief Pre-pack counter unit 25g (x 8 units) (RRP per SKU \$7.99)	385808	374636	306160	25g	Buy 1 pk 8 units	20%	
Percutane Sports Cream Pre-pack counter unit 25g (x 8 units) (RRP per SKU \$7.99)	385794	374644	306155	25g	Buy 2+ pk 8 units	25%	

Always read the label. If symptoms persist, consult your healthcare professional. Do not use on children under six years. Do not apply to broken or irritated skin. Avoid contact with eyes, lips or other sensitive body areas. Avoid use under heat pad or thermal support. Cold sponge to reduce warmth if necessary. Contains sodium benzoate, hydroxybenzoates and diazolidinylurea.

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