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NCE 2014 registration

THE National Convention and Exhibition 2014, with 70 education sessions, is being held at Australian Technology Park 20-22 June and will be opening registration soon. See **Page 4** for details.

High-cost meds in NZ

PHARMAC in NZ has announced its intention to trial a contestable fund, for high cost medicines for rare disorders, which could be seeking proposals from pharmaceutical companies by the end of 2014.

Promoting competition among suppliers could be the key to improving patients' access to high cost medicines for rare disorders, said chief executive Steffan Crausaz.

"We know competition leads to lower prices, and that's an area where PHARMAC has an established track record.

"Our activities in promoting competition enable New Zealand to achieve some of the lowest prices for medicines in the world.

The competition model is intended to enable patients to get funded access to rare disease therapies he said.

BPharm food safety

PHARMACY associations in India are urging the government to reinstate BPharm as a qualification required for the role of food safety officer to ensure "safe and unadulterated" food products.

According to *Pharmabiz.com* the BPharm requirement has been lifted under new regulations of the Indian Food Safety and Standards Rules 2011, which state that a food inspector should possess a degree in food technology, dairy technology, biotechnology, oil technology, agricultural science, veterinary sciences, bio-chemistry or microbiology.

Also acceptable are a masters degree in chemistry from a recognized university, any other equivalent qualification notified by the Central Government, or a graduate in medicine who has received training in food safety, sampling and surveillance approved for the purpose by the central government or state government.

Call for generic scripts

THE Australia Institute has called for a higher uptake of generic medicines by seeking a ruling that forces GPs to write computer generated scripts generically.

In a submission to parliament, the Institute argued that published data from 2009-10 shows that 16.7m prescriptions were dispensed with a brand premium, adding an estimated approximately \$62.1m to healthcare costs.

A key submission point sought regulation to mandate that prescription software default to prescribe by active ingredient rather than by brand name except where the 'no brand substitution' box is marked.

"Automatically prescribing medications by their active ingredient would reduce reliance on consumer awareness of generics and incentive payments to pharmacists with cost savings for individuals and the government."

The Australian Medical Association had no comment on the proposal at this stage.

Pharmaceutical Society of Australia national president Grant Kardachi said the organisation would support processes that encouraged the use of generic medicines to help the consumer and government save, while at the same time acknowledging that price competitiveness is "part of the landscape."

Kardachi said while generics use was encouraged in the country, more could be achieved with better understanding by health professionals and consumers.

"Education of generic medicines is important to remove the myth that generics are inferior of the original brand."

SHPA seminar dates

THE Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) has announced new dates for seminars on Clinical Pharmacy Practice, Infectious Diseases and Laboratory Tests, all attracting CPD points.

Members are reminded to book online for discounted registration.

CLICK HERE for details.

"Sometimes there can be a need for the original brand to be maintained, for example to avoid patient confusion."

Consumers could talk to their pharmacist to address any queries about the use of generics, he said.

A Pharmacy Guild of Australia spokesman said generics provided the opportunity for major savings and prescribing drugs by their generic name and requesting pharmacists to dispense generics were often proposed as a way to lower the national health bill.

"The practice of generic substitution is strongly supported by health authorities in many countries including Australia.

"At the same time, the benefits of lifting generic substitution rates need to be balanced with prescriber and patient choice."

Redundancy rights

PROFESSIONAL Pharmacists Australia (PPA) is reminding non-owner pharmacists of their rights regarding redundancy.

President Geoff March said the organisation was concerned the Guild report warning of the potential loss of 2,200 jobs (**PD 07 Apr**) could be used to let staff go and then re-hire pharmacists at a lower wage, particularly by larger chain pharmacies.

He said while the PPA recognised the flawed nature of the CPA, it encouraged pharmacists to be aware of their rights.

"The Fair Work Act as well as the Pharmacy Industry Award make it very clear that redundancies have to be legitimate and that the process must involve consultation and payment of entitlements if the employer employs more than 15 people."

Life Saving Drugs

THE Australian Government will review the Life Saving Drugs Programme - a move aimed at ensuring that Australians with very rare conditions continue to have subsidised access to much-needed expensive medicines - **CLICK HERE**.

Sensaslim misleading

THE Federal Court of Australia has found that weight loss company SensaSlim Australia Pty Ltd, now in liquidation, engaged in misleading or deceptive conduct by failing to disclose Peter Foster's involvement in its franchise system's disclosure document.

The Court also found that the company engaged in misleading conduct with regards to the role of SensaSlim's officers, Peter O'Brien and Michael Boyle, the "worldwide clinical trial" of the solution and the earning potential of its franchisees.

Justice Yates described Foster as a puppeteer in his judgement, and said the failure to disclose his involvement was deliberate.

The Australian Competition & Consumer Commission started proceedings against the company in July 2011.

To read more, **CLICK HERE**.



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This week **PD** is giving 5 lucky readers the chance to win **John Plunkett's Eczema Cream**.

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comp@pharmacydaily.com.au.

Hint! Visit **www.plunketts.com.au**.

John Plunkett Eczema Cream is a proud sponsor of which Association?

Congratulations to yesterday's lucky winner, **Donna Delgado** from **Jardines Chemmart Pharmacy**.

Real outcomes for misuse

THE Australian Medical Association (AMA) Victorian branch has called for tangible outcomes from the Victorian Pharmaceutical Misuse Summit.

Convened by the Department of Health, the summit was held yesterday to share evidence and identify solutions to pharmaceutical drug misuse, with advisory groups including the Pharmacy Guild of Victoria and the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA).

AMA Victoria president Dr Stephen Parnis said more Victorians died from prescription overdoses each year than the state's road toll.

This followed the Victorian Coroners Court prevention unit's release about overdose deaths in September 2013, which showed that in 2012, 304 people died from pharmaceutical overdoses, compared with 131 due to illegal drugs and a road toll of 282, and in the six months to June 2013, 145 people died from pharmaceutical overdoses, compared with 77 from illegal drugs.

Parnis said the summit would provide an opportunity to discuss ways that the government, supported by the community, could reduce the forgery, dependency, misuse, abuse and "doctor

shopping" which lead to a high rate of pharmaceutical-related fatalities.

AMA Victoria said its budget submission recommended that \$55m in funding be given to prioritising the harms of pharmaceutical misuse and to introduce a real-time prescription monitoring system, such as that used in Tasmania (PD 20 Mar).

PSA Victoria director Bill Suen said the summit had gone well and that there were many useful ideas that surfaced.

Key among these was the need for medical history to be shared across health professionals and carers; the importance of adequate communication among all sectors, from hospitals to GPs to pharmacists; the importance of a real time monitoring system; the recognition that misuse was a complex disease, which was an international issue and not a social problem; and the desire for participants to work together to find solutions.

However a lot of support at different levels of government and across different disciplines was needed for this, Suen said.

Solutions would be collated and presented to participants, he said.

Ranbaxy India sold

DAIICHI Sankyo is selling its stake in the Indian company, Ranbaxy Laboratories.

The company has been dogged by trouble with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), which prohibited its Toansa facility from producing and distributing drugs for the US (PD 24 Jan).

This followed the FDA's prohibiting of drug manufacturing and imports from Ranbaxy's Mohali plant, the *Wall Street Journal* reported.

Daiichi Sankyo holds 63.4% in Ranbaxy and has voted in favour of Sun Pharma's acquisition of the company in its entirety, after which it will receive a stake of around 9% in the expanded Sun Pharma.

The acquisition is expected to be completed by December.

Guild services survey

THE Pharmacy Guild of Australia is seeking input from pharmacies around Australia to identify services that they provide.

Executive director David Quilty said in his *Forefront* editorial that, as part of the next stage of the 'Pharmacy Under Threat' campaign, the Guild wanted to understand the behind the scenes work that pharmacists provided, which he said could often go unnoticed by political decision makers.

The survey results would be used to feed ongoing political advocacy work, Quilty said, particularly between now and when the Federal Budget is released in May.

The survey looked to gather evidence about what services pharmacies might cut back on or start charging more for, as a result of the impact of the changes of price disclosure, he said.

The campaign also involved a petition of 1.2m signatures, calling on the House of Representatives to ensure community pharmacists received support to stay in business.

CLICK HERE to go to the survey.

Parkinson's Passport

THIS World Parkinson's Day on 11 Apr, Parkinson's Australia and NPS MedicineWise are encouraging anyone with Parkinson's Disease (PD), or carers, to order a Parkinson's Passport to help avoid medicine problems.

The Parkinson's Passport is a pack of materials that includes a plastic card stating that you need your Parkinson's medicine on time, to show if you go to a hospital.

It also includes other checklists, facts, tips and a Medicines List.

Copies of the passport booklet and information sheets are available by calling 1800 644 189.

Seniors want eHealth

ACCENTURE found 63% of seniors want digital options for health management.

The survey of 175 Australian over the age of 65 was conducted online in July last year, found that 55% wanted access to online prescription refill requests and 68% wanted access to electronic reminders.

Eighteen percent of respondents said that they were aware that their healthcare providers provided these capabilities.

Half said they wanted to be able to email healthcare providers but only 6% said they had that capability.

Asthma diet effects

RECENT research has shown that eating fast food and using sugary drinks can interfere severely with the most common asthma inhaler, salbutamol.

Two abstracts, one from a study soon to be published and one under review, were presented at the annual meeting of the Thoracic Society of ANZ.

The first showed that asthmatics had a higher mean Dietary Inflammatory Index (DII) than healthy controls, indicating diets were pro-inflammatory.

DII score was associated with lower lung function and increased systemic inflammation, it said.

"Hence, consumption of pro-inflammatory foods in the diet may contribute to worse asthma status."

The second abstract showed that asthmatics who consumed a high fat meal, with a mixture of saturated fatty acids (SFAs) and polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFAs) had a reduced bronchodilator response to salbutamol and that the transport of the drug was sensitive to alterations in the fatty acid environment.

To read the abstracts, **CLICK HERE**.

Free Health Talk

'AGE Well and Stay Young' is the topic of a free talk at the Wesley Research Institute, QLD, from 10.30 am on 07 May 2014, which will explore the issues of aging.

Guest speaker Cameron McDonald is an accredited exercise physiologist (AAESS) and accredited practising dietician.

Registration is a must so email rsvp@wesleyresearch.com.au.

EMA final trial policy

EUROPEAN Medicines Agency (EMA) is soon to start a final round of consultations with stakeholders on the draft policy for publication and access to clinical trial data.

The beginning of May is the date for the final round of fine tuning before the final policy is presented to the EMA management board in June.

The EMA said the publication of trial data would contribute to establishing trust and confidence in the system.

The EMA and Australia's Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) have increasingly been working together on a variety of initiatives, the most recent being an agreement to share full assessment reports for marketing authorisation of orphan medicines (PD 08 Apr).

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www.travelonsale.com.au.

Guild letter to the editor

THE letter to the editor expressing concern about the Guild's survey of pharmacies' employment expectations has prompted this response from Pharmacy Guild of Australia Victoria branch president Anthony Tassone:

I read with interest Joe Lamhut's letter in your PD 07 Apr edition.

I agree, the survey results from the 944 pharmacies is indeed disturbing and of significant concern to the Pharmacy Guild with an estimated almost 9,000 job losses in the next 12 months from community pharmacies (including 2,229 pharmacists and 4,400 pharmacy assistants).

Furthermore I agree that the level of positivity displayed by a range of pharmacy owners at APP on the Gold Coast recently was very encouraging.

Underlying this level of positivity however was a sense of uncertainty – particularly given the Federal Government effectively broke the Agreement by legislating Simplified Price Disclosure (or accelerated price disclosure) which was part of Labor's pre-election announcement last year.

This prompted the Guild to call on its members to undertake the 'Pharmacy Under Threat' campaign, compiling a petition with a record 1.2 million signatures that sends a very clear signal from the Australian public of the value they place in their local pharmacy. The Guild will not give up the fight for an offset to the pre-election announcements around price disclosure to ameliorate its impact on the viability of community

pharmacies.

I have recently travelled throughout Victoria hosting members' forums in metropolitan and regional areas such as Bendigo, Benalla and Geelong.

The ongoing feedback I receive is that pharmacy owners fully understand and recognise the importance of offering a high quality service in a sustainable manner to best serve their patients and customers.

Pharmacy owners want to embrace new technology and new initiatives to provide superior service levels – but need certainty to foster investment and innovation. Reducing staff numbers and making redundancies is not 'Plan A', but it is an unfortunate reality in the current climate without an offset from the breaking of the Community Pharmacy Agreement.

The Guild will continue to provide training, education, support and other resources for its members to help adapt and meet the challenges of the current and looming climate.

The Guild understands the distress and concern of what these results indicate, but feels it has an obligation on behalf of community pharmacy to highlight these facts to the Australian public and government to demonstrate the risks of not providing certainty and appropriate sustainable remuneration that recognises the value of community pharmacy.

We welcome any comments.

If you would like to weigh in on this or other subjects, email us at info@pharmacydaily.com.au.

DISPENSARY CORNER

NOTHING short of amazing.

US researchers have said that four paralysed men have been able to move their legs again following electrical stimulation of the spinal cord.

Researchers at the University of Louisville and the University of California electrically stimulated the spinal cord of Rob Summers three years ago, applying the stimulus below his paralysis injury, the BBC reported.

At that time, they reported that he was able to move his legs while supported on a treadmill and they have repeated the treatment on three others, who were able to control their legs at a precise pace, with two able to control the force of the movement, the publication reported.

Researchers believe that some signals still cross the injury but aren't strong enough to get through - stimulation makes the lower spinal cord more receptive to receiving these messages, the BBC said.

To watch a video of the frankly fairly miraculous treatment, **CLICK HERE**.

BUT I wanted to quit smoking.

A barmaid's dress was set on fire in a Yorkshire pub after an e-cigarette exploded.

Laura Baty's arms were singed when the e-cigarette, while charging behind the bar, burst into flames, the *Telegraph* reported.

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