



Discounted discounts

WHOLESALERS have recently reduced PBS discounts to pharmacy customers Australia-wide with most, if not all, pharmacies in Australia having their PBS discounts reduced by 0.6% due to 01 Apr government PBS price reductions.

"This now makes the average wholesaler PBS discount around 3% (cost+4%), a far cry from the 6% discount (cost+1%) possible just a few years ago," said Chemsave ceo Michael Dixon.

To reduce the impact of these changes, Chemsave are offering, for a membership price, to provide ongoing wholesaler PBS discounts of 4.5% (cost+2.5%) across the whole PBS range.

This represented 50% more discount than the average, directly off invoices through API, and available on top of benefits that Chemsave offers, said Dixon.

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Is Tamiflu a waste?

RESEARCH has questioned the effectiveness of the antiviral Tamiflu (oseltamivir) in reducing admissions to hospital or the complications of influenza.

An evidence review conducted by the Cochrane Collaboration and published in the *British Medical Journal*, found that the influenza treatment shortened symptoms by half a day but found "little to justify any belief that it reduces hospital admission or the risk of developing confirmed pneumonia."

The review was based on internal reports of 20 Tamiflu and 26 Relenza trials, involving more than 24,000 people, the Cochrane Collaboration said.

Access to more complete reports from manufacturers had aided the updated review, following originally incomplete evidence presented to agencies in 2009, the organisation said.

"Along with the evidence of harms from the medication, it

SELECTive reporting

THE Australasian Integrative Medicine Association (AIMA) has defended the role of vitamin E and selenium and their possible effects on prostate cancer, highlighting the 'selective' media reporting on the SELECT (*SE*Lenium and vitamin *E* Cancer prevention Trial) study.

AIMA claim that the SELECT work and other vitamin E research "has used a form of vitamin E called 'all rac-alpha tocopherol'.

"The form of vitamin E chosen to be used in research is critical to the outcome," said the organisation, pointing out that when science isolates individual elements of naturally occurring products, it alters the impact and the resultant product does not act as a "perfect substitute".

AIMA would like to see all future vitamin E research use a mixed natural form of vitamin E as well as a design that combines natural vitamin E with vitamin C and bioflavonoids.

To source the original SELECT study [CLICK HERE](#) and for the AIMA response [CLICK HERE](#).

raises the question of whether global stockpiling of the drugs is still justifiable given the lack of reliable evidence to support the original claims of its benefits."

The group said the US had spent over US\$1.3b buying a reserve of antivirals, while the UK government spent £424m on about 40m doses.

A Federal Department of Health (DoH) spokeswoman said the National Medical Stockpile, which contained both drugs in quantities "comparable with other nations' stockpiles", was valued at \$192m.

The DoH looked forward to the publication of the review, and took advice from key agencies including the World Health Organisation when determining stockpile requirements and levels, she said.

"The Department continuously reviews available evidence and advises the Australian Government on policies as necessary on a range of health protection activities including antivirals."

Australia was currently revising its Pandemic Plan, with points being taken into consideration including that antivirals could be used during a pandemic to treat infected cases or as a prophylactic, she said.

The New Zealand government threw out almost 1.5m doses of expired Tamiflu after only 55,000 doses were used during the 2009 H1N1 pandemic ([PD 27 Feb](#)).

To read the Cochrane study, [CLICK HERE](#).

CHC backs free trade

THE Complementary Healthcare Council of Australia (CHC) has said the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between Australia and Japan would see a reduction or removal of tariffs and duties on 97% of Australian exports to Japan.

CHC ceo Carl Gibson said that he had no doubt Australian complementary medicines would benefit from the trade relationship.

"Complementary medicines produced in Australia are highly sought after because they are recognised as meeting the highest global standards of quality, safety and efficacy."

TGA monitors Bexsero

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) said it is performing intensive monitoring of the safety and risk profile of Bexsero, Novartis' meningococcal B vaccine, following its introduction to the Australian market.

While fever occurred after administration of many vaccines, the TGA said, it had identified that Bexsero commonly induced fever in infants and children, including a high fever.

The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation had recommended prophylactic use of paracetamol with Bexsero when administered to children under two years old, it said.

The TGA is encouraging the reporting of any seizures associated with the use of Bexsero to help with monitoring.

NAPSA on post grad

THE National Australian Pharmacy Students' Association president Xavier Agostino has welcomed the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia's (PSA) Intern Training Program being recognised by the Australian Skills Quality Authority ([PD 10 Apr](#)).

He said a post graduate qualification would equip graduates with the necessary knowledge and skills required to fulfil the "ever changing and expanding role of the pharmacist."

"It is fantastic to see programs such as the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia's Intern Training Program offer graduates new opportunities that will allow them to pursue a number of career pathways."

Zhen de shou caps

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has warned against taking Zhen de shou fat loss capsules.

The capsules contained phenolphthalein, previously used as an oral laxative but no longer available in Australia due to serious safety concerns associated with long term use.

The supply of these capsules is illegal, the TGA said.

ACCC privacy breach

THE Australian Competition and Consumer Commission has warned that there was a breach of personal data collected from websites including Recalls Australia, Product Safety Australia and SCAMwatch.

The personal data involved were email addresses of some subscribers, which were made accessible online.

NPS RADAR updates

NPS MedicineWise has published a new edition of *RADAR*, including a review of glycopyrronium (Seebri Breezhaler), a new medicine for the treatment of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

The publication provides information for health professionals to put the new once-daily long-acting anticholinergic bronchodilator into clinical context.

It also details four new fixed-dose combination therapies of metformin and gliptin listed on the PBS for patients with type 2 diabetes: metformin with alogliptin (Nesina Met); metformin XR with saxagliptin (Kombiglyze XR); linagliptin with metformin (Trajentamet) and metformin XR; and sitagliptin (Janumet XR).

All four products are listed as Authority Required (streamlined) under specific conditions.

[CLICK HERE](#) to access *RADAR*.

Mapping the CM gap

BLACKMORES Institute has announced earlybird registration of their inaugural community pharmacy educational symposium.

Adjunct associate professor Gregg Mapp from Griffith University's Pharmacy School will bridge the knowledge gap that community pharmacists have identified, focusing on the role that evidence-based, natural medicines can play in improving Australian health outcomes.

The program for the symposium has been accredited with the Australian Pharmacy Council for 3.5 group 1 credits and 18 group 2 credits for inclusion on an individual pharmacist's CPD Record.

[CLICK HERE](#) to register.

NSAIDs study questioned

A STUDY reporting a possible link between current or recent use of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) and a heightened risk of atrial fibrillation (AF) has been called into question.

University of Oxford Nuffield Department of Anaesthetics director of pain research Professor Andrew Moore said that it was a "disgrace" that the study had been published by the *British Medical Journal Open*.

The population study monitored the heart health of 8,423 people in the Rotterdam Study and found 857 developed AF, 42 of whom were currently taking NSAIDs and 554 who used them in the past.

The report said current use was associated with a 76% greater risk of AF than never use and recent use was linked to an 84% greater risk of AF.

Moore said the number of current use patients was very small, with eight using NSAIDs for more than 30 days, and statistical significance would not have been achieved.

He said in research, a minimum of 200 events was needed before "you can trust what's going on."

Moore referenced a study of

more than 83,000 Australian veterans which looked at the association between NSAIDs and incident myocardial infarction (MI) and heart failure (HF).

Published in 2010 in the *British Journal of Clinical Pharmacology*, it found that NSAID use was not associated with an increased risk in either, but was associated with a reduction in all-cause mortality in the veterans.

Australian Self Medication Industry regulatory and scientific affairs director Steve Scarff said the study did not demonstrate AF increase in patients currently using NSAIDs for fewer than 15 days, a duration much longer than recommended.

"While the study suggests an association between prescription NSAIDs and increased risk of atrial fibrillation, it does not demonstrate that the NSAIDs caused the atrial fibrillation."

He said older people might have multiple conditions that could contribute to AF development.

To read the *BMJ* study, [CLICK HERE](#).

To read the *BJCP* study, [CLICK HERE](#).

Cyclone Ita assistance

THE Department of Health has launched temporary arrangements to help residents and pharmacists in far north Queensland, who might be affected by the tropical cyclone Ita.

The arrangements, launched on 11 Apr, were in effect until at least 11 May, the Department said.

Pharmacists supplying Pharmaceutical Benefit Schemes (PBS) medicines to patients in affected areas can visit a website offering advice on various topics, including patient entitlement, dispensing medicines under the three day emergency supply rule without a prescription and emergency relocation of a pharmacy, as well as contact numbers.

To visit the website, [CLICK HERE](#).

Canesten recall

BAYER Australia is recalling Canesten 6 Day Cream 35g AUST R 18699 packs from pharmacy wholesalers, retailers and consumers.

The packs affected have batch numbers 8B2009, 8B2010, 8B2011, 8B2020 and 8B2021.

Bayer said it was investigating an issue related to the vaginal applicators that come with the packs, as a production problem might have resulted in extruding plastic at the opening, or could have visible black marks or spots.

The tube containing the clotrimazole anti-fungal cream was not affected, Bayer said.

Consumers are being asked to return any affected products to pharmacists and pharmacists to wholesalers, Bayer said.

AusPAR additions

MSD'S Ezalo Composite Pack and Rosuzet Composite Pack (ezetimide and rosuvastatin) for hypercholesterolaemia, Novartis' Exjade (deferasirox) for chronic iron overload and Specialised Therapeutics' Gliolan (aminolevulinic acid) for glioma visualisation have been added to AusPARS.

[CLICK HERE](#) for details.

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Weekly Comment

Welcome to *PD's* weekly comment feature. This week's contributor is **Kirstie Galbraith, Director of PSPDU at the Faculty of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences - Monash University**



Universal Applications of the Advanced Pharmacy Practice Framework

With the recent announcement that the Australian Pharmacy Council (APC) will take on the role of credentialing Advanced Practitioners and the ongoing discussions around the Advanced Pharmacy Practice Framework (APPF), it is a good time to consider how this topic has relevance to our entire profession – not just those practising at the most advanced level who will be seeking credentialing.

Advanced Practice is defined as "practice that is so significantly different from that achieved at initial registration that it warrants recognition by professional peers and the public of the expertise of the practitioner and the education, training and experience from which that capability was derived."

There is a risk the Advanced Practice agenda will be seen as relevant to only a small group in our profession but the APPF can be useful for everyone, not just those seeking credentialing. The APPF provides a framework for individual professional development that can be used to map evidence of performance and identify areas for advancement, starting soon after registration. I strongly encourage individuals to familiarise themselves with the latest initiatives relating to Advanced Pharmacy Practice in Australia.

There will be many organisations and universities across the country who have offerings to assist practitioners in their journey to advanced practice. This includes Monash University and NAPE postgraduate courses which are focused on advancing practice.

Analgesics & food

A **PAIN** expert has said that there is no obvious evidence that taking non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) with food reduced gastrointestinal problems.

Speaking at a Reckitt Benckiser hosted event, University of Oxford Nuffield Department of Anaesthetics director of pain research Professor Andrew Moore said in actuality, taking ibuprofen and paracetamol with food delayed absorption and lowered the drugs' peak plasma concentration, which in turn made it more likely people would take an additional analgesic.

Moore also spoke about tension type headaches (TTH) and the current theory that they are referred pain from muscles in the head, neck and shoulders.

TTH were the second most common pain related condition and the issue was one of sensitisation of muscles due to inflammation in all or various foci of the affected muscles, he said.

Moore also spoke about how drug formulations affected speed and length of analgesia, with combinations of ibuprofen and paracetamol giving the best performance.

To view the talk, [CLICK HERE](#).

Letter to editor - rural scene

REFERRING to Joe Lamhut's letter (*PD* 07 Apr), a rural pharmacist writes:

What's suggested by the letter is what we hear and read by many commentators on the effect of the recent cuts; that is compensating the cuts through attracting more revenues by the customers, let it be through increasing prices (called improving profit margins in the letter) charging for existing and new services.

I'm working in a rural pharmacy and I can tell you: that is not possible.

More than 90% of the pharmacy income is driven by concession subsidised PBS scripts. The below than average socioeconomics of such areas make customers struggle to afford even their subsidised medications.

As for using technology to connect to customers more readily, ... many of our customers wouldn't have network coverage, and the elderly were not able to respond to the messages.

However, pharmacies in rural areas are dealing with a highly vulnerable group, where age, prevalence of diabetes and related

CVD are above the average.

With the forthcoming PBS cuts, and irrelevance of 'extracting' more money of our customers to compensate these cuts, many rural pharmacies would be lucky to escape with just some staff cuts. Unless we are happy to leave it up to the market and let these pharmacies go unviable.

I hope the answer is no.

Otherwise, we are risking having highly vulnerable group of patients with no timely access for their medications, which would put them at higher risk of hospitalisation.

And I thought that PBS cuts were all about saving taxpayers' money.

[Edited for space and name withheld by request.]

We welcome any comments; to weigh in on this or any other subject, email us at info@pharmacydaily.com.au.



DISPENSARY CORNER

I'M not a weirdo, honestly.

As a journalist, you're often attendant at events where you don't have many (or any) acquaintances.

Alex's general stand by is to walk up to a random group of people and introduce herself with a 'Hi, I don't know anyone.'

This doesn't always go swimmingly, particularly when the people concerned are a) a group of friends b) having a nice conversation before you blundered in and c) you're choking on an hors d'oeuvre.

At a recent event at which **PD** tried this technique out, some very kindly pharmacy students politely curtailed their conversation and tried to answer questions which, upon reflection, were probably too heavy for 7pm on a Thursday, and ignore the watering of **PD's** eyes as the vol au vent got slightly stuck.

My apologies to the students (you know who you are) but you'll make great health care professionals!

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This week **Pharmacy Daily** is giving four lucky readers the chance to win a **Designer Brands** prize pack, valued at \$33.

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Name three colours that Quick Colour Nail Polish comes in?