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HILARY KAHN & ROGER SIMPSON

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## Med device incidents

**THE** UK's Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has published a list of medical device adverse incidents reported to the Agency 2011-2013. [CLICK HERE](#) to read the report.

## Drug samples vs Rx

**IN** a recent study published in *JAMA Dermatology* online, the relationship between samples of dermatology products and prescription patterns for acne and rosacea was explored to "help inform policy guidelines on the use of free samples in a physician's office."

The authors, from Stanford University School of Medicine in California, concluded that "free drug samples can alter the prescribing habits of physicians away from the use of less expensive generic medications," adding that the benefits of free samples must be weighed against potential negative effects on prescribing behaviour and prescription costs. [CLICK HERE](#) to read the abstract.

## 10% to drop 1 trading day

**THE** Pharmacy Guild of Australia has released a survey which showed that one in 10 pharmacies would drop at least one trading day per week.

The 'Pharmacy Services Expectations Report' was conducted in April online and had responses from 548 pharmacies from all states and territories in Australia, the Guild said.

The survey also found that one in four pharmacies would reduce hours, by an average of 5.4 hours per week, which the Guild said was due to lower remuneration from the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS), due to price disclosure.

More than 40% of surveyed pharmacies, or 200, said they were planning to discontinue their home delivery service, with 33% saying they would increase the cost of this service to patients; the Guild said this service was currently offered by more than 4,000 pharmacies.

Dose administration aids, offered

by 94% of pharmacies, would also see an increase in the cost of the service according to around 60% of respondents, the Guild said.

"This survey confirms that the funding crisis facing community pharmacies will mean a significant number of vulnerable patients face reduced access to the services they rely upon, and an increase in their costs making it less affordable to remain living independently in their home."

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

## No more PBS measures

**MEDICINES** Partnership of Australia (MPA) has said that no further Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) savings measures are justified in the Federal Budget.

The MPA said it assumed the upcoming budget would not contain further changes to price disclosure, but that it was clear the government was looking at PBS co-payment and safety net levels, and concessional PBS co-payments.

It needed to recognise that medicines were an important investment in better health care for all Australians and that PBS medicines along with professional advice and support kept people alive and out of hospital.

"If changes to PBS co-payment levels and eligibility are not intelligently managed with a strong commitment to professionally supported medication adherence and management, there is a great risk that sick, elderly and less well-off Australians will be discouraged from taking their medicines."

## Kadcyla not so NICE

**THE** UK National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) in its evaluation of trastuzumab emtansine (Kadcyla by Roche) as a treatment option for people with HER2-positive breast cancer, is challenging the cost-effectiveness of the product based on "the price the NHS is being asked to pay."

The breast cancer treatment can cost more than £90,000 per patient and is presently funded through the special Cancer Drugs Fund but is unlikely at this stage to be listed on the NHS, according to NICE.

Kadcyla was registered in Australia by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) on 03 Sep 2013 "as a single agent, indicated for the treatment of patients with HER2 positive metastatic (Stage IV) breast cancer who previously received trastuzumab and a taxane, separately or in combination," the TGA said.

Other conditions also apply to its use but the product is not listed on the Australian PBS.

## PwC report at year end

**THE** Pricewaterhouse Coopers (PwC) report on consumers' needs under the Fifth Community Pharmacy Agreement (5CPA) R&D program was expected to be completed by the end of the financial year, the Department of Health has said.

The project involved research into consumer needs, experiences and expectations with regards to community pharmacy services, to inform further development of consumer focused policy and pharmacy services, it said.

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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**



#### Be the master of your future

**THE** healthcare landscape is shifting dramatically due to the rapidly aging population and increased incidence of chronic disease. As healthcare changes to meet these challenges, pharmacists' expertise and responsibilities are evolving.

There are new opportunities emerging for practitioners to undertake extended and advanced roles and a master's degree is becoming the international benchmark for pharmacists moving into these roles. Planning your future requires measured decision making even at the undergraduate and intern level and decisions regarding postgraduate study should include consideration of the ability to articulate to higher level degrees.

A master's degree allows you to focus your learning in an area of special interest or to increase your expertise in a range of areas and will assist you in demonstrating more advanced practice across the competency domains in the Advanced Pharmacy Practice Framework (APPF).

When mapping out your future, my biggest tip would be to do your research and ensure the course you are studying is the best option for you in the long term. A Graduate Certificate in Pharmacy Practice (Internship) from a NAPE university is the only pathway that will give you up to 50% credit towards a master's degree at Monash University, ranked number one in Australia and in the top ten in the world for Pharmacy and Pharmacology.

Be your own master; plan now for a bright future.

## CHF: Cost-inequity tension

**ADAM** Stankevicius, ceo of the Consumers Health Forum of Australia (CHF), has summarised findings from the CHF journal *Health Voices*, which asked about 20 experts to explain how we could get a "better bang for the buck" out of Australia's \$140b a year health expenditure.

Considering the cost challenges facing maintenance of a universal health scheme, Stankevicius said there was a wide range of apparently feasible options available to make health care better and more cost effective.

"CHF believes that the nub of the health system dilemma is the tension between equity and cost of health care."

Referring to health minister Peter Dutton's thinking to expand health insurance cover, Stankevicius said this would further inflate premiums and even more deeply stratify the two tiered system.

In his contribution to *Health Voices*, Emeritus Professor of Public Health Stephen Leeder said there was no reason for government to back away from universal health care but that it was more a matter of getting the system right and managing it well.

A theme throughout many

responses to the *Health Voices* survey revolved around self-care, an issue raised by CHF's Deborah Smith and Sarah Spiller.

Health economist Jennifer Doggett identified five steps Australia could take: focus on prevention, set up uniform federal-state health standards, foster co-ordinated care for chronic conditions and redirect health insurance rebates to support patient choice of private or public systems.

Stankevicius said in all options, the organisation asked that consumers, as the reason which the system exists, should be the beneficiaries of health system change, not poorer because of it.

### FDA extends to e-cigs

**THE** US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has proposed that it extend its authority to cover additional tobacco products, including e-cigarettes.

Products which met the statutory definition of a tobacco product would come under FDA regulation, including nicotine gels and hookah tobacco, the FDA said.

This was the latest step in making the next generation tobacco-free, the FDA said.



### DISPENSARY CORNER

#### HORSEPOWER hike.

Miniature horses create special problems when you need to transport them - so a German woman found when her 60cm four year old Argentinian Falabella miniature stallion called Sammy seemed rather "lost" in a normal horse float.

Her solution? Strap him into the boot of her smart car.

According to *Orange News*, frequent police stops have all been successfully negotiated as they see that Sammy is securely strapped in and is in fact safer than he would be in a large horse float trailer.

#### HUGELY clumsy.

Recognised as highly intelligent and one of the few animals with self-awareness, elephants usually command considerable respect, but not this time.

According to the UK's *Telegraph*, Ross Couper, a field guide at Singita Kruger National Park in South Africa, and his clients, were witness to a number of the gargantuan beasts performing less than majestic stunts following a binge session on ripened marula fruit.

Apparently the South African wild fruit has an intoxicating effect on animals.

"We watched in awe because the youngsters definitely seemed to display signs of being rather tipsy," said Couper.

#### CUTE furry little ... billboard?

Known for its controversial style of marketing, New Zealand pizza chain Hells Pizza signalled the arrival of Easter not only with a billboard made from actual rabbit pelts - 550 of them according to *iol news* - but by also including a rabbit pizza on the menu.

While upsetting many locals, sales soared as the pizzas hopped out the door, delighting farmers for whom the furry little fellows are actually recognised as a pest.

Incidentally, Hells Pizza has the tag line, 'Go to Hell'.

### WIN A LAPURETE OKURU PACK

Every day this week **Pharmacy Daily** is giving five lucky readers the chance to win a **Lapurete Okuru** Pack, valued at \$119.80 each.

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**In which country does the Okuru plant grow?**

