

“eRx Express creates loyalty with customers helping them return to us rather than have scripts dispensed elsewhere”

Steve Speirs – Exhibition Pharmacy

## \$133m research boost

**THE** Australian Government has announced \$133 million in funding to support 153 grants across five National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) schemes.

The grants will address broad areas of research, such as infections in cancer patients, building immunity and childhood eczema and allergies.

The funding announcement follows the \$559.1 million for new medical research discoveries announced in October last year, and aims to fill gaps in indigenous health.

“Health and medical research is a major priority of the government and these new grants will support innovative projects aimed at finding better treatments for common diseases such as cancer, diabetes, asthma, arthritis and cardiovascular disease,” Mr Dutton said.

## Call for pharmacist unity

**GUILD** ceo David Quilty has called for a show of unity among pharmacists.

“The pharmacy sector faces a clear choice,” he said in *forefront*, challenging that, “We can unite and fight for our collective future by focussing on our shared interests and objectives... or we can turn on each other.”

In the face of severe attacks on the viability of community pharmacy, especially the impact of the expanded & accelerated price disclosure (EAPD), the Guild’s recent arrangement with the federal government to allow changes to the Fifth Community Pharmacy Agreement has generated a flurry of objections from various pharmacy sectors.

While the new agreement was announced before consultations could be undertaken, Quilty explained, “In fact, in the current fiscal climate, there was a very real risk that if these programs were overrunning their budgets, they would be discontinued altogether. “Unfortunately, for reasons beyond the Guild’s control,” he continued, “we were unable to provide a longer lead time between announcing these changes and their commencement.”

“I readily acknowledge this is less than ideal for those directly impacted.

“We had no choice but to work within the Agreement funding pool.

“Any other decision, including holding out in the hope for more money, would only have inflicted much greater pain on a larger number of pharmacies and pharmacists.”

Quilty went on to argue that while this is a particularly difficult time for pharmacy to seek funding from the federal government, “that shouldn’t stop us all from continuing to put our case as strongly as possible.”

“United and working together with the level of passion that pharmacists regularly display for their profession, gives us the best chance of making headway in the most trying of budgetary circumstances,” he concluded.

President of the Pharmacy Guild George Tambassis, has added his voice to the discussion, saying that he can “genuinely empathise with any pharmacists who believe they have been hard done by in any way by the Guild, particularly if they consider their remuneration and employment prospects have been impacted in what they feel is an unfair manner.”

He points out however that after a HMR budget blowout in March 2013, and a 30% increase in the budget for the remainder of the agreement, it placed pressure on other programs resulting in a tight budgetary environment with no flexibility, making a focus on sustainability the only practical option looking ahead.

## Omega-3 in spotlight

**ANTI-INFLAMMATORY** agents, such as acetyl-salicylic acid (ASA), celecoxib, anti-TNF- $\alpha$  agents, minocycline, curcumin and omega-3 fatty acids, are being investigated for use in mood disorders summarises some new Canada and Brazil universities’ research.

Current evidence shows improved outcomes in mood disorder patients when anti-inflammatory agents are used as an adjunct to conventional therapy; however, further research is needed to establish the therapeutic benefit and appropriate dosage the authors said.

**CLICK HERE** to read the abstract.

**MEANWHILE** Omega-3 supplements have also been demonstrated to improve the symptoms of dry eye syndrome reducing the need for eye drops in three recent studies published in *Clinical Ophthalmology*, *Clinical & experimental ophthalmology* and *The International Journal of Ophthalmology*.

According to the Optometrists Association of Australia, it is estimated that almost half of all office workers suffer from dry eye syndrome due to long exposure to computer screens and a dry, air-conditioned environment.

## ‘Stand together’: PA

**PHARMACY** Alliance held their first round of 2014 Members Meetings in February with more than 230 members in attendance rallying to a theme of ‘It’s not all doom and gloom’ and the call to ‘stand together’.

Executive general manager Darren Dye and the team of industry experts from Pharmacy Alliance said that with continuous industry change it is vital for members to stand together as independent pharmacists in order to collectively utilise the strength of the Alliance’s membership, currently at 440 stores nationally.

Increased personal visits to individual pharmacies by Pharmacy Group Managers, enhanced catalogue programs and free point of sale packs are part of the new level of support for member pharmacies.



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## Total Beauty & INIKA

**TOTAL** Beauty Network is now the sole distributor of the INIKA Cosmetics.

After acquisition of the company in November, Total Beauty Network (TBN) has brought the INIKA distribution in-house, it said.

Ceo Tony Rechtman said the company's distribution network would increase the exposure and availability of the cosmetics locally and overseas.

## FDA nods Northera

**THE** U.S. Food and Drug Administration today approved Northera capsules (droxidopa) for the treatment of neurogenic orthostatic hypotension (NOH).

NOH is a rare, chronic and often debilitating drop in blood pressure upon standing that is associated with Parkinson's disease, multiple-system atrophy, and pure autonomic failure.

At this stage droxidopa is available on the TGA's Special Access Scheme in Australia.

## FDA & EMA to 'cluster'

**THE** US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the European Medicines Agency (EMA) have set up a cluster on pharmacovigilance topics.

The monthly teleconference meetings on shared pharmacovigilance issues would focus on topic areas needing more exchange of information and collaboration, the FDA said, which would allow the agencies to work faster in the area and coordinate communications.

"This cluster will provide a forum for a more systematic and focused exchange of information on the safety of medicines."

It builds on video conferences between the two regulatory bodies which were previously held in this area, and the creation of the EMA's Pharmacovigilance Risk Assessment Committee, the FDA said.

Clusters already exist for issues such as medicines to treat cancer and orphan medicines, with Health Canada and other

regulatory bodies involved, and Canadian and Japanese regulatory bodies would participate in the pharmacovigilance meetings as observers, the FDA said.

FDA Centre for Drug Evaluation and Research director Jane Woodcock said the cluster was part of a larger collaborative effort between the FDA and international regulatory partners to ensure the health and safety of all citizens.

## TGA bans capsules

**THE** Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has tested Lian Zhan Qi Tian capsules and found that they contain sildenafil, the active ingredient in Viagra.

Lian Zhan Qi Tian capsules have not been assessed by the TGA for quality, safety or efficacy as required under Australian legislation, and the place of manufacture is not approved by the TGA and as a prescription-only substance, supply is illegal.

## Call for herbal quality

**A STUDY** found 18% of herbal medicines in South Australia were not registered with the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods (ARTG).

'Forensic problems with the composition and content of herbal medicines', published in the *Journal of Forensic and Legal Medicine*, looked at herbal medicines available from the internet and OTC in South Australia, with 121 products in total.

Twenty two were not registered.

Of those that were, 59 had different ingredient concentrations on the website compared with their ARTG listing, the study found, with only three of the 15 purchased products having consistent ingredient concentrations with the website, ARTG listing and product packaging.

American Botanical Council founder Mark Blumenthal advised pharmacists and practitioners to recommend products from reputable reliable and responsible suppliers with clinically researched ingredients.

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## Women manage stress

OVER 21,000 Australians have completed Blackmores Stress Quiz ([CLICK HERE](#)) and the results reveal that more than half of participants reported that they were stressed.

Women are handling stress better than men, claiming less stress than men across almost all surveyed stress triggers.

Men are more stressed than women about their diet, messiness or untidiness and their self esteem.

Other stressors are lack of sleep, bills and work issues while of those surveyed, 63% feel like their lives are out of control, 49% report they are more stressed now than the same time last year, and 30 – 39 year olds are the most stressed.

### Travel Specials

**WELCOME** to *Pharmacy Daily's* travel feature. Each week we highlight a couple of great travel deals for the pharmacy industry.

**TRAVEL** On Sale

This weeks travel specials are brought to you by Travel on Sale.

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Stay 4 nights in Anaheim at the Anabella Hotel including a \$100USD resort credit and Knott's Berry Farm Tour from \$249pp or see Los Angeles from \$615pp with a 4 nights stay at the 4-star Hotel Angeleno including 4 days car hire with free GPS!

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For more great value specials visit [www.travelonsale.com.au](http://www.travelonsale.com.au) or to book, call 1300 013 729.

## PBS sustainable: Robb

**MINISTER** for Trade and Investment, Andrew Robb has said the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) is sustainable.

In an interview with 702 ABC Sydney regarding the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) agreement negotiations, Robb said his mandate from Cabinet required that PBS remain *in situ*, having put a number of propositions to Cabinet across various sectors under negotiation in the agreement.

"And I got a mandate from Cabinet; Cabinet has said that the PBS must remain as it is."

Robb said the agreement would not be signed if it did not materially advance national interests; when asked if the one thing in the way of signing was jeopardising the PBS, Robb replied that if it were not in the country's interest, it did not have to accept any part of the agreement.

However the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that Health Minister Peter Dutton has said the Medicare system was unmanageable without an overhaul to curb costs.

Dutton said the Medicare Benefits

Schedule spending had grown rapidly over the decade and some argued this was unsustainable, *SMH* reported.

Dutton told the publication he was open to suggestions on how to make the system more sustainable, and said it would be foolish to rule out any ideas put forward, such as a \$6 co-payment for GP visits.

## Bowel cancer app

**BOWEL** Cancer Australia (BCA) is calling on patients to manage their home based therapies more actively with support in the form of a free app for IOS and android devices.

"With 65% of Australian households having a smartphone user and 33% having a tablet, the app is a very practical tool," said Bowel Cancer Australia ceo Julien Wiggins.

"In Australia, we have one of the highest rates of bowel cancer in the world.

"Despite the multitude of health apps available and the prevalence of bowel cancer, no one's really put the two together, until now."

For details call 02 9923 8269.

## DISPENSARY CORNER

**MEDICINE** misadventure?

A US pharmacy error is making the headlines after the pharmacist mistakenly dispensed the wrong medicine and then came up with a lame excuse for the mistake.

A woman visited the Walgreens pharmacy in the small town of Surprise, Arizona, after being prescribed a number of medications to help with an ear infection and a rash.

After a couple of days of taking the drugs she noticed that her condition was worsening, and then received a call from the pharmacy to warn that she'd been given blood pressure medication instead of antihistamines.

According to the woman, the caller said "Well, we probably couldn't read the doctor's handwriting."

"Then I said, 'Well, I know that's not possible because the prescription was printed out. 'She kind of paused and said, 'Well, you know they both begin with H.'"

A spokesperson for the pharmacy chain said it was reviewing the incident "and will work to prevent it from happening again".

**TRAVELLERS** wanting to really get an understanding of the human body are being welcomed to a hotel in Belgium which has been designed to resemble a gigantic intestinal tract.

Appropriately named the Hotel CasAnus, the property has been created by Dutch designer Joep van Lieshout, who said it's a "refreshing, unpretentious place to look at art and a subtle criticism of the art world".

There's only one bedroom, with the property starting with a foot at one end and finishing with a life-sized replica of an human anus.

There's a double bed, shower and naturally a toilet, with the UK's *Telegraph* newspaper reporting that it "hosts one couple per month on average" at a cost of about \$200 a night.

## WIN WITH PLUNKETTS

Every day this week **Pharmacy Daily** is giving two lucky readers the chance to win a **Plunketts Superfade UV Day Shield SPF30+** - a daily facial moisturiser which helps prevent pigmentation and sun damage.

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To win, be one of the first 2 people to send in the correct answer to the question below to: [comp@pharmacydaily.com.au](mailto:comp@pharmacydaily.com.au).

*Is Superfade a therapeutic pharmacy medicine or a simple cosmetic?*

Congratulations to yesterday's lucky winner **Helen Strachan** from **The Pharmacy Guild of Australia**. The correct answer was **\$24.95**.

