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Formula maker sued

MELBOURNE-BASED Milk Powder Solutions is facing legal action from a group of Chinese investors, who are seeking almost \$4 million in compensation after the company allegedly sourced its milk powder from NZ, not Australia.

Court documents reveal that Heng Feng Investments claims that the Victorian company made “false and misleading statements” in order to secure a contract to supply baby formula to China.

The case being heard in the Federal Court cited statements by Milk Powder Solutions staff who said the firm had a “special relationship with farmers in [the Victorian region of] Tatura,” which meant that its product would be of “exceptional quality”.

However Heng Feng now alleges that after it signed an agreement to purchase 160,000 units of the product over three years the supplier said it would use milk powder from NZ rather than Tatura.

The case is continuing, with a directions hearing tomorrow.

Skills underutilised - PSA

THE extensive training and expertise of pharmacists is largely under-utilised in the Australian healthcare environment according to the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia.

Commenting on proposals for a \$5 co-payment fee to be applied for all visits to a GP, and possibly also for emergency department visits, the CEO of the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia, Liesel Wett, said Australia was lagging in making full use of pharmacists' abilities.

“Pharmacists are the most accessible of all health professionals and are trained and equipped to deal with a wide range of minor ailments which currently are often unnecessarily undertaken by doctors,” Ms Wett said.

Ms Wett went on to argue that because pharmacists are second only to nurses as “most-trusted health care professionals”, there would be a wide public acceptance of their increased role providing these additional services.

In addition, she added that the recent Grattan Institute report on *New solutions for GP shortages in rural Australia* underscored the need for GPs to be better supported by pharmacists and other health professionals.

“The report says, ‘The first step is to make much better use of pharmacists' skills.’

“Pharmacists are highly trained, have deep expertise in medicines, and are located in communities throughout Australia.

“But their role is far more limited in Australia than in many other countries.”

One immediately accessible service the report identified is immunisation which is managed by pharmacists in many countries such as the US, Canada, Portugal, Ireland and the UK and has been trialled successfully in New Zealand and Australia.

“The PSA has issued guidelines for providing immunisation services with a view to promoting best practice and the delivery of high-quality immunisation services in pharmacies and to ensure that no gaps exist in this public health program,” Wett added.

Pharmacy 2014 shifts

THE organisers of Pharmacy 2014 - The Pharmacy Management Conference have advised that the event will now be held from Wed 30 Jul to Fri 01 Aug 2014 at the Surfers Paradise Marriott Hotel on Queensland's Gold Coast.

The move is due to some “unavoidable timetable clashes,” with the conference brought forward “so that our delegates and sponsors can plan accordingly and not be hamstrung by conflicting events”.

Further details will be online at www.pharmacyconference.com.au.

Safety net update

THE Department of Health has advised that with the changes in the consumer price index, the PBS co-payment and safety net amounts have been revised.

Effective from 01 Jan 2014 the general patient co-payment has increased from \$36.10 to \$36.90.

The concessional co-payment moves from \$5.90 to \$6, while the general safety net threshold will increase from \$1390.60 to \$1421.20.

The new concessional safety net has increased to \$360 from the previous level of \$354.



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This Project is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health as part of the Fifth Community Pharmacy Agreement.

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Board issues 'ransomware' alert

THE Pharmacy Board of Australia has advised pharmacists to carefully protect their electronic patient records, after several reports of incidents where they have become the target of so-called computer 'ransomware'.

This is a type of malicious software which can block access to a computer system and encrypt data such as financial records and patient files.

The scammers then demand a sum of money in order to access the encrypted data.

In a communiqué issued by the Board just prior to Christmas, pharmacists were formally reminded of their serious obligations to maintain patient records securely, "especially when considering solutions for back-up storage of such information."

CHC urges NHMRC on CMs

THE Complementary Healthcare Council of Australia has taken exception to the title of one of the steering groups established last year as part of the National Health and Medical Research Council's "Research Translation Faculty".

The Faculty is an initiative which aims to support more effective and faster translation of health and medical research into improved policy and practice in Australia.

There are 14 steering groups led by eminent academics, with the one covering allied health such as complementary medicines as well as physiotherapy, podiatry and occupational therapy controversially entitled "Claiming benefits for human health not based on evidence".

CHC ceo Carl Gibson said that to date the contribution that

complementary medicines can make to health in Australia has failed to be recognised.

"Over the last 20 years, there has been a growing body of scientific knowledge on the efficacy of complementary medicines, and recent economic analyses suggest robust links between several of the more well-known complementary medicine products with major potential cost savings across several chronic conditions."

Break out dancing

THE New Zealand Ministry of Health has confirmed further cases of measles linked to a dance festival in Sydney.

Four of the cases attended the 2013 World Supremacy Battleground hip hop competition in Sydney in December, with the remaining cases either family or known to those who attended.

No one has been hospitalised but those infected were being kept isolated at home, the MoH said.

Acting deputy director public health Dr Harriette Carr said it could be a serious disease easily spread to those not immunised or who had not had it before.

FDA approves Tretten

THE US Food and Drug Administration has approved Tretten (coagulation factor XIII A-subunit recombinant), which it says is the first recombinant product for use in the routine prevention of bleeding in adults and children who have a rare clotting disorder known as congenital Factor XIII A-subunit deficiency.

Tretten, made by Novo Nordisk, has also been designated by the FDA as an orphan drug.

IMS Health to float

IMS Health has filed a public registration statement with the US Securities and Exchange Commission related to a proposed initial public offering of its shares.

To float under the name of IMS Health Holdings Inc, copies of a preliminary prospectus can be obtained from JP Morgan or Goldman Sachs, with the number of shares and the price range not having yet been determined.

However the documents reveal that the move could raise as much as US\$100 million.

IMS Health said it expects to use the net proceeds from the offering to repay a portion of its existing long-term debt, as well as for "general corporate purposes".

IMS is currently owned by private equity firm TPG along with other investors who privatised it in 2010 for US\$5.2 billion.

The company's total revenue for the year to 30 Sep was \$1.87 billion, up 4%.

TGA capsule warning

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration has issued a formal alert about Grease Discharging Machine Capsules, which it says pose a serious risk to health and should not be taken.

TGA testing of the product has revealed that it contains the undeclared prescription substance sibutramine, in levels well above those previously permitted under prescription medications.

Sibutramine was the active ingredient in Reductil, which was withdrawn in Oct 2010 after a study showed increased risk of major cardiac events.

The TGA said its investigations had shown that a number of people in Australia may have purchased the illicit product online.

Shake It Up with IsoWhey® - WIN



This week **Pharmacy Daily** has teamed up with **IsoWhey** for a daily giveaway. Every day one lucky reader will have the chance to win a selected flavour from the IsoWhey range.

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Weekly Comment

Welcome to *PD's* weekly comment feature.

This week's contributor is **Peter Marshall**, CEO of **Pharmacy Solutions Australia**.



A new year

WITH a new year comes renewed enthusiasm and confidence and it is my opinion that this will be the case with the sale of pharmacies in 2014.

This is not a big leap as sales in the latter part of 2013 were rising in line with the number of buyers seeking opportunities.

I believe that the PBS changes have now been fully factored into buyers' considerations, and certainly into valuations provided to financial institutions.

There is no appetite for unreasonably high priced pharmacies but with a small increase in competition there is certainly more optimism that sellers will achieve satisfactory sales results.

The returns being achieved have eased considerably since the heady days of three years ago and I do not expect that we will return to these EBIT multiples, but with time will come increased confidence.

Hopefully the Christmas retail sales results will all be very positive and will go some way in providing a general increase in business confidence.

The majority of delinquent businesses have been eliminated, although there will be several more in the coming months but that said, welcome to 2014 and a return to positive thinking about the pharmacy industry.

To discuss, contact peterm@pharmacysolutions.com.au.

Kiwi pharmacies in crisis

NEW Zealand Guild Chief Executive Lee Hohaia has sent a letter to the Chief Executive Officers at each DHB in the country highlighting serious challenges NZ pharmacists are facing.

On July 1 2013, the new Community Pharmacy Services Agreement (CPSA) was introduced to manage a range of issues around costs of healthcare affected by community pharmacy.

While Hohaia indicated in her communication that there has been wide acceptance in community pharmacy of the CPSA, there are many who have expressed "their rightful concern for the sustainability of their business through this time of change" saying it "has taken some of their focus off enhancing their service delivery to patients."

"The issues causing the most financial distress to our members," she said are:

1. Margins not compensating for procurement costs
2. The inability to recover co-payments in some areas of New Zealand
3. Difficulty understanding finances through the transitional process,
4. The absence of dispensing efficiencies promised in the CPSA.

Some margins the letter emphasised, fail to cover the cost of procurement alone, before

considering other costs such as stock holding, staffing and other overheads forcing the pharmacies to run at a loss.

Lower socio-economic areas have special challenges around the inability of some to pay the co-payment of \$5.00 when on multiple chronic medications.

The letter also calls upon the government to assist pharmacists with a simplified financial system with appropriate summaries of payments made, and investment in an updated IT support system to maximise efficiencies in dispensing.

The NZ Ministry of Health had not provided comment at the time of writing.

Mass Destruction alert

NO it's not the end of the world but the Federal Drug Administration (FDA) has warned against the use of *Mass Destruction*, marketed as a dietary supplement for muscle growth.

The product has been evaluated and shown to contain a synthetic anabolic steroid which has been linked to at least one reported serious illness.

Mass Destruction is manufactured for Blunt Force Nutrition in Sims, N.C. and sold in retail stores, fitness gyms, and on the internet.

Vit D pumps muscles

IN a UK study of 678 mother-child pairs, it was demonstrated that serum levels of Vitamin D in late pregnancy positively correlated with offspring muscle strength which persisted for up to 4 years.

The recent work was e-published in the *Journal of Clinical Endocrinological Metabolism* and the abstract can be found on *PubMed* by **CLICKING HERE**.

New ACP phone no

THE Australian College of Pharmacy has advised that it recently changed its telephone number to 02 6188 4320.

The previous number will continue to be active until 10 Mar 2014.

DISPENSARY CORNER

HIGH Times

The widely publicised legalisation of marijuana sales in the US state of Colorado last week may have come just in time for Aussie pharmacists heading to resorts such as Vail or Aspen for their northern winter holidays.

The move has seen 24 legal drug shops open across the state already, as well as signs erected at Denver International Airport warning travellers not to take cannabis home with them.

As you'd expect, the sensation has led to many puns and plays on words, with one of the most popular being that in Colorado it's now much easier to get a Rocky Mountain high.

NO brainer

Apparently you can buy almost anything on eBay - a 21 year old California man has been arrested after allegedly stealing human brain samples from a medical history museum and selling them on the auction website.

David Charles was arrested in mid December after investigators were contacted by a man who became suspicious when buying six jars of brain tissue on eBay for \$US600 (plus \$US70 shipping).

The *Indianapolis Star* reported that Charles was accused of breaking into the Indiana Medical History Museum multiple times and stealing human brain tissue and "other preserved material".

Authorities claimed Charles stole 60 jars of human tissue on December 15, the *Indianapolis Star* reported.

The police sting began when the purchaser rang the museum after noticing labels on the containers.

The police then contacted the seller, who had obtained the brain tissue from Charles, police said.

The *Indianapolis Star* reported Charles faced charges of theft, marijuana possession and paraphernalia possession, according to court documents.

To read more **CLICK HERE**.

AusPARs additions

THE Australian Public Assessment Reports for prescription medicines (AusPARs) have added Gilead's cobicistat (Tybost), a pharmacokinetic enhancer of appropriate HIV-1 protease inhibitors in adults, and elvitegravir (Vitekta) for treatment of HIV-1 infection under certain conditions.

CLICK HERE for more details.

PBS changes Jan 2014

THE Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme has posted its update on Jan 01, for the new year including co-payment and safety net details.

To access, **CLICK HERE**.