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Friday's Comp winner

FRIDAY'S lucky winner of RosehipPLUS Rosehip Oil was **Natalie Bubica** from Priceline Pharmacy.

This week five readers will win a Plunkett's moisturiser pack. See **Page 2** for details.

Harvey: MA Code fail

WHILE acknowledging the collaborative consultative approach taken by Medicines Australia (MA) in developing its 18th Code of Conduct for the pharmaceutical industry, academic and industry watchdog Ken Harvey has said it "failed to deliver on key principles agreed to by Medicines Australia Transparency Working Group."

In a submission to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission Harvey said the edition did not deliver on transparency on individual payments made to healthcare professionals as well as on principles such as enabling consumers to make well informed healthcare decisions and covering all transactions and transfers of value between a company and a healthcare professional.

The Code encouraged healthcare professionals to consent to disclosure but allowed them to opt-out while retaining financial and related benefits of their interaction with member companies, he said. "This is Clayton's transparency."

Harvey said the main reason for this failure was MA's concern about a lack of level playing field and authorising the Code would be to the public detriment - **CLICK HERE** for more.

Guild on location rules

PHARMACY Guild of Australia national president George Tambassis has written to members to address concerns raised about pharmacy location rules.

Tambassis said members had voiced frustration with the process of Ministerial Discretion and that it was important that this was used "wisely and sparingly" by Guild members and "not seen as simply a right of appeal".

He said there were concerns in government about the increasing amount of time and cost entailed

in administering Location Rule applications, including Ministerial Discretions.

"It has been brought to my attention that consultants may be openly encouraging the use of the Ministerial Discretion option and I am concerned that any perception that pharmacists are attempting to game the system in any way only serve to undermine the Location Rules and potentially the Government's ongoing support for them."

The Australian Community Pharmacy Authority also had concern about the large number of applications being lodged, including some which were deemed to be vexatious or intended to block other interests, Tambassis said.

"This is a matter which the Authority could be forced to deal with, including through the imposition of an application fee that would discourage disingenuous applications."

In the lead up to the Sixth Agreement, it was likely that aspects of the location rules would be reviewed and assessed and everyone had a responsibility to work under the rules and not engage in behaviour seen to undermine them, he said.

He said the Guild would continue to advocate strongly to ensure the rules were maintained and anomalies or deficiencies addressed, as well as at a Ministerial level regarding the issue of PBS scripts dispensed from unapproved pharmacies.

Morning-after pill ok

EMERGENCY contraceptives containing levonorgestrel or ulipristal acetate remain suitable for women of all body weights in preventing pregnancy, following a review by the Committee for Medicinal Products for Human Use, which recommended that these could be used, as the benefits outweighed the risks with effectiveness not significantly impaired by excess body weight.

An EU-wide review was prompted by changes to product information for Norlevo in 2013 on the basis of results from two clinical studies, which stated it was less effective in women weighing 75kg and not effective in women weighing 80kg or more (**PD** 03 Mar).

The Therapeutic Goods Administration said it was aware of the EMA's recommendation and that its review, which was "almost complete", would include consideration of this finding.

Call for CM database

PSA national president Grant Kardachi called for a centralised, independent database for complementary medicine evidence at the Blackmores Institute Symposium on Friday.

Kardachi said evidence was the key for pharmacists and under the PSA's code of ethics, the emphasis on evidence based products was a priority; the complementary medicines industry and pharmacy should work together to develop a comprehensive information service that was an all-encompassing resource accessed by health professionals and consumers.

"Such a resource would enable the pharmacist to instantly check on any evidence behind the complementary medicine, any interactions and any other information which may affect the consumer's health outcomes."

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Weekly Comment

Welcome to **PD's** weekly comment feature.

This week's contributor is **Dr Jason Hawrelak**, **Snr Lecturer in Complementary & Alternative Medicine at the School of Medicine, University of Tasmania**



Complementary Medicines in Pharmacy

OVER two-thirds of Australians regularly use Complementary Medicines (CMs) as part of their healthcare regime. This contributes to an industry turnover in excess of \$1.8 billion spent in Australia on CMs each year. Interestingly, most CMs in Australia are sold from community pharmacies, yet many pharmacists report being uncomfortable when dealing with CM-related enquiries and believe they lack sufficient knowledge and expertise to appropriately advise their customers on CM-related topics. The end result is that many CMs, even those sold within pharmacies, are sold without professional guidance or advice.

Recent Australian research has suggested that CMs and prescription medicines are taken concurrently by a substantial proportion of pharmacy customers – equating to a significant risk of deleterious CM-drug interactions. This research also suggested that many pharmacy customers believe that pharmacists should provide safety information about CMs, be conversant with evidence of efficacy, and routinely check for CM-drug interactions. However, most pharmacists are currently inadequately prepared for these tasks.

Due to their level of consumer trust and their prime market position, pharmacists are in a unique position to provide guidance on OTC CM products and help mitigate potential deleterious CM-drug interactions, but they will be able to do so only if they improve their knowledge and confidence in the field of Complementary Medicine.

Poorer for co-pay increase

THE Grattan Institute has said the proposed increase to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) co-payment (**PD 14 May**) is the wrong way to save.

In a submission made to the Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs regarding the proposed increase and restrictions on access to the safety net, the Institute said there was strong evidence that out of pocket costs for people stopped them getting healthcare, particularly for co-payments for medicines.

This would result in savings in the short term but some people missing out on needed care, it said.

Out of pocket costs for prescription drugs had tripled between 1991 and 2007 and the proposal would see a jump of 15% in out of pocket patient fees, it said.

The argument that the increase would stop people from seeking unnecessary care was “dubious” particularly when applied to PBS co-payments, the Institute said.

“PBS co-payments apply to medicine that a doctor has ordered.

“Unless the doctor is wrong, the medicine is necessary.”

The Institute suggested other ways to cut PBS spend, including saving \$580m in matching prices for 20 drugs in England.

While this would create challenges for community pharmacy, it would be manageable if pharmacists could provide more services and “if necessary, receive temporary, targeted industry support,” it said.

The Pharmacy Guild also made a submission saying increases could discourage patients from taking medication and strategies to address this should be put in place.

Increases in price signals should be accompanied by greater commitment to funding of medication management services, it said - to read more, **CLICK HERE**.

Methadone suspended

EUROPE'S Coordination Group for Mutual Recognition and Decentralised Procedures – Human (CMDh) has endorsed the recommendation to suspend the marketing authorisation of methadone oral (by mouth) solutions containing high molecular weight povidone (K90).

The safety of the combination was reviewed by the Pharmacovigilance Risk Assessment Committee following reports of serious adverse events in Norway which led to the suspension of methadone oral solutions containing povidone K90 from the Norwegian market.

Oral tablets containing povidone of lower molecular weight (e.g. K25 and K30) were successfully excreted and would remain on the market.

WIN A PLUNKETTS PACK

This week **Pharmacy Daily & Plunketts** are giving five readers the chance to win a Plunketts moisturiser pack.

John Plunkett Multi Vitamin Moisturiser has been reformulated with natural emollients & an improved odour profile. The formulation is free from parabens, mineral oil, colour and perfume and its therapeutic levels of the five vital vitamins help fight early signs of ageing. It is suitable for normal and sensitive skin. Plunketts are pharmacy quality cosmeceuticals at a realistic price and Australian made and owned.

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DISPENSARY CORNER

MYTHBUSTING Coke.

Part of the Blackmores Institute Symposium that was a little easier going at 4pm on a Friday was the MythBusting section about Coca Cola.

Sure, it doesn't seem very pharmacy oriented but Coke has all kinds of pharmacy history.

For instance, everyone knows it used to contain Cocaine, right up until 1929.

It was also apparently originally intended as a patent medicine and was invented in the late 1800s by a pharmacist.

However, apparently a Coke and an aspirin won't give you a lift - we can't say we've heard that one before.

NOW that's a mouthful.

Yikes! Thankfully, Ashik Gavai shouldn't be needing any more pain relief following the removal of a record 232 teeth in a seven hour operation.

The unfortunate patient had suffered for some 18 months before being brought by his parents to Mumbai's JJ Hospital dental department, according to **BBC News**.

The surprised doctors described the boy's condition as a very rare “complex composite odontoma where a single gum forms lots of teeth.

“It's a sort of benign tumour.”

The medical team said the previous record number of teeth extracted in such a situation was 37, the **BBC** reported.

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