

Pregnancy and Hg⁺⁺

THE US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have stated that pregnant and breastfeeding women, those who might become pregnant and young children should eat more fish that is lower in mercury in order to gain important developmental and health benefits.

Draft advice issued this week advised that fish choices lower in mercury levels included salmon, shrimp, pollock, tuna (light canned), tilapia, catfish and cod, recommending a diet that includes eight to 12 oz per day.

At the same time, the authorities warned against ingesting fish with higher levels of mercury such as tilefish from the gulf of Mexico, shark, swordfish and king mackerel.

AF anticoagulation

NATIONAL Stroke Foundation clinical council member Associate Professor Timothy Kleinig said the release of the UK's National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) draft guidelines on atrial fibrillation (PD 11 Jun) would help focus people's attention on the fact that most patients with AF should be anticoagulated with warfarin or one of the novel oral anticoagulants but said NICE guidelines were not necessarily accepted worldwide; for the new oral anticoagulants, the recommendation would not affect Australia, as the country was guided by Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme prescribing criteria, based on the CHADS₂ score.

"Regarding warfarin, most GPs are now aware of the CHA₂DS₂-VASc score and should use this to guide decision making.

"NSF guidelines do not address primary prevention of stroke – all patients with AF who have had an AF-related stroke should be anticoagulated, unless there is a clear contraindication, and this guideline will not change.

"Whether or not use of the NOACs should be used in patients with CHA₂DS₂-VASc scores of 0 or 1 is uncertain, and would require new trials."

Pharmacy can bridge gap

PHARMACY Guild of Australia executive director David Quilty has said pharmacy could play a role in bridging the health gap between major cities and rural and remote Australia.

Writing in *forefront*, Quilty said the disparity in health services and outcomes between these areas, including the National Rural Health Alliance estimate that there was a \$2.4b a year deficit in access to primary health care services in rural Australia, was unacceptable.

Pharmacy could help bridge the divide, with more than 800 pharmacies in rural areas sometimes being the first port of call and only readily accessible health support, Quilty said.

Policy makers should recognise this potential including for pharmacies to take a greater role in the likes of vaccines and collaborative care, Quilty said.

Other opportunities included tele-health hubs, diagnosing of minor ailments and supplying identified treatments through a recordable, pharmacist-only medicines schedule, he said.

National Rural Health Alliance executive director Gordon Gregory said the Alliance was delighted to have the Guild advocating for action to improve country people's health.

It was hoping to put together a consortium to do a more thorough study of the deficits and to provide government with evidence of ways to modify them, Gregory said.

A three pronged approach was needed, including that health graduates spent some time in rural areas, that health care demand be moderated through illness prevention and that workforce redesign occurred, where the amount of clinical practice needed was shared more efficiently, with other members of the health team performing what only more specialised workers usually did in urban areas, he said.

Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) ceo Jenny Johnson said rural doctors acknowledged the importance of the pharmacist's role, however the RDAA would

have a number of reservations about pharmacies extending their role too much.

There did not appear to be any evidence that it was easier to attract a pharmacist to a rural role, she said.

Rural GPs were important because they were most likely acting as a visiting medical officer performing other roles such as on call and emergency duties for the local hospital, and shifting focus to other issues could detract from the focus of attracting doctors to rural areas, and these other services would suffer, she said.

There was a lot of potential for collaborative care arrangements and providing continuity of care when it came to doctors and pharmacists working together, she said - [CLICK HERE](#) for more.

Statin safety

THE UK's National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) responded to criticism of its draft guidance on statins (PD 14 Feb) from a group of doctors who believed the data supporting the decision was too greatly influenced by drug company-sponsored trials.

NICE proposed that the threshold for offering statins to people to prevent cardiovascular disease (CVD) be halved from 20% risk of developing CVD in 10 years to 10%.

NICE Centre for Clinical Practice director Professor Mark Baker said the draft guideline did not propose that statins should be used instead of lifestyle adjustments that people at risk of CVD needed to make.

"The independent committee of experts found that if a patient and their doctor measure the risk and decide statins are the right choice, the evidence clearly shows there is no credible argument against their safety and clinical effectiveness for use in people with a 10% risk over 10 years."

Baker said all NICE guidance was developed by independent expert committees and that other countries had reached similar conclusions.

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

Govt inquiry welcome

THE Victorian Legislative council has passed a motion to inquire into the role and opportunities for community pharmacy in primary and preventative care in Victoria.

The move has been welcomed by Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) Victorian branch president Michelle Lynch and Pharmacy Guild of Australia Victorian branch president Anthony Tassone.

Lynch said the inquiry would hopefully result in better recognition of the contribution pharmacists could play in improving health outcomes of consumers.

"The health system in Australia is facing a crisis and we need to use every resource we can to help avert this crisis.

"This inquiry will give us a further opportunity to show where pharmacists can help improve health outcomes while also meeting the Government's health agenda and helping to contain rising costs."

Tassone said the Guild and the PSA had made "extensive and ongoing" representations to the Health Minister and Department in Victoria and it was pleasing there had been progress to date.

"This includes areas such as post-acute healthcare, aged care, personalised medication management and vaccinations."

The inquiry is to report by 14 Oct and the Guild and PSA submissions will be made public following their lodgement in June.

TGA OTC monographs

FOLLOWING Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) consultations (PD 29 Nov 13), new OTC monographs have been released relating to topical nasal decongestants, topical imidazole antifungals and pholcodine.

The nasal decongestants are oxymetazoline and xylometazoline.

Clotrimazole and miconazole containing medicines are the dermal antifungals monographed while the recently controversial pholcodine (PD 03 Jun) has its parameters defined in the last monograph.

To read the changes [CLICK HERE](#).

WHAT'S YOUR SCAN RATE?

“eRx is the best innovation to be added to dispense programs for the last 5 years”

– Chris Walsh, Amcal Pharmacy Drysdale

eRx.com.au/ScanRate 

PSA to Berlin, Paris

BERLIN and Paris are the venues for the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia's (PSA) Offshore Refresher Course celebrating its 40th anniversary.

Forty years represented the ruby anniversary, said the PSA, and built on the previous initiative of holding the conference in two cities to give delegates maximum educational and networking opportunities.

Chair of the Offshore Refresher Conference Organising Committee Warwick Plunkett said the 2015 event was drawing on the experience of this year's Washington and New York event which attracted more than 400 delegates - [CLICK HERE](#) for details.

Travel Specials

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



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

For this week's travel specials, Travel on Sale has a wide selection of luxurious and award winning properties on sale. The stylish and sophisticated Modern Honolulu in Hawaii starts from \$595pp and includes a five night stay, including one free night, free WiFi and more. Or experience the unique Likuliku Lagoon Resort in Fiji with six nights, including one free night and all meals daily from \$2,759pp. The ultimate Bali getaway starts from \$1,399pp staying seven nights at the iconic Anantara Seminyak Resort & Spa including one free night, breakfast daily, dinner for two plus an exclusive Bali Concierge service bonus.

For more great value deals visit travelonsale.com.au or to book, call 1300 013 729.

NHMRC research awards

FEDERAL Minister for Health Peter Dutton presented the top prizes for excellence in health and medical research at the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) 200th Council Dinner yesterday.

Dr Sandra Campbell from James Cook University was presented with the Rising Star Award for her research seeking to maximise health outcomes for indigenous women during pregnancy.

NHMRC ceo Professor Warwick Anderson said among this year's 20 recipients were researchers whose work aimed to deliver breakthroughs in areas such as Alzheimer's Disease, cancer and immune disease.

Professor Jamie Rossjohn from Monash University was the recipient of the 'Highest ranked

Project Grant' for his work with infection and immunity with the potential to pave the way for the development of T-cell regulating drugs that could serve as improved treatments for conditions such as tuberculosis.

The University of South Australia team led by Professor Angel Lopez was awarded the 'Highest ranked Program Grant' for their study of the function of normal blood cells and leukaemia cells to identify new drug targets and develop new drugs for the treatment of leukaemia.

For the full list, [CLICK HERE](#).

Head, neck cancer drop

THE rate of head and neck cancer cases in Australia is dropping, according to a new report released by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW).

Between 1982 and 2009, the rate of head and neck cancers fell from 19.3 cases to 16.8 cases diagnosed per 100,000 people, AIHW spokesperson Justin Harvey said.

However, the total number diagnosed in Australia rose from 2,475 to 3,896 in the same time period, attributable to the country's increasing and ageing population, AIHW said - [CLICK HERE](#) for more.

FDA diet drugs alerts

THE US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has advised consumers not to purchase or use La Jiao Shou Shen, a product promoted and sold for weight loss on various websites and in some retail stores.

La Jiao Shou Shen contains sibutramine.

WIN A CANCER COUNCIL PACK

This week *Pharmacy Daily* is giving four readers the chance to win a **Cancer Council** BB Crème & Body Lotion, valued at \$33.90.

Cancer Council BB Crème is a 3 in 1 formula that corrects skin tone and offers SPF 30 protection. The crème is made with ingredients including grape seed extract to help reduce signs of ageing, vitamin E to increase moisture, mushroom extract to fight bacteria build up and mica to help reflect light, giving skin a flawless finish. The BB Crème is available in light and medium tint.

Cancer Council Body Moisturiser with SPF 30 is a rich creamy emulsion with aloe vera to soothe dry skin, and vitamin E to nourish, hydrate and protect skin.

To win, be first to send in the correct answer to the question to: comp@pharmacydaily.com.au.

True/false: All Cancer Council cosmetics contain SPF 30?

Congratulations to yesterday's winner, **Mirandah Crossett** from **Coral Coast Pharmacies**.



DISPENSARY CORNER

PSA of a different kind.

Not the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia but a Public Service Announcement - Volkswagen has released a pretty clever and pretty spooky PSA about texting and driving.

In the short clip, movie goers in Hong Kong settle down for the film, first watching what looks like a car advertisement play onscreen for a while.

Volkswagen sends a "location based text" in the cinema and people swoop to check their phones - only to look up at the moment the car swerves off the road and crashes.

It's an effective way to remind people to keep their, as the PSA is called, Eyes on the Road.

It's worth noting however, as *Yahoo News* points out, that it's unclear whether these are unsuspecting movie goers as the PSA claims or whether they are in on the whole thing.

View the PSA [HERE](#).

BEARD you didn't think it.

If you're a pharmacist working in a hospital who's thinking of what they can do for charity, here's one for you - the Reverend Ken Gehling shaved off his beard of 32 years after hospital staff at Mercy Medical Centre - North Iowa surpassed their goal of collecting more than 750 pounds of food for a food bank, *Associated Press* reported.

Gehling quipped the shave, which took off his moustache as well, was like the electric chair but said he was just happy the team had collected so much food, the *AP* reported.

THE size of an elephant.

Poor old Tess - the pregnant Asian elephant in Houston has been put on a weight loss and exercise regimen to help her lose 228kg in time for delivery of her calf in about a year, *Reuters* reported.

About 6% overweight, if she got larger, she might have trouble giving birth, the publication said.