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Pharmacy 4 Less national expansion

PHARMACISTS are being invited to join the Australia wide expansion program of Pharmacy 4 Less with special inducements until 30 Nov.

See **page three** for details and to order an information pack.

Regulatory capture concerns

THE Senate Select Committee on Health heard from Health Consumers' Council of WA acting executive director Dr Martin Whitely that the organisation was concerned the Therapeutic Goods Administration and the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme "frequently act in the best interests of the pharmaceutical companies at the expense of health consumers".

Whitely said the influence of the pharmaceutical industry on these agencies was an example of regulatory capture, where those with the greatest resource and most foreseeable gains from a regulatory process sought to dominate it.

"Put simply, we end up paying too much in taxes and at the pharmacies for drugs that are too often unsafe or ineffective."

Pharm assistant of the year

DIMITY Doddridge from Priceline Pharmacy Goolwa has been awarded the Pharmacy Guild/GuildSuper National Pharmacy Assistant of the Year.

Guild Queensland branch president Tim Logan said the award was important in its recognition of the contribution pharmacy assistants made to community pharmacy.

He said Doddridge was a "brilliant role model".

RGH E-Bulletin

THIS weeks E-Bulletin summarises the adverse effects of cholinesterase inhibitors, the therapeutic class of drugs used to treat mild to moderate Alzheimer's disease.

CLICK HERE to access.

Adverse reports down

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has released its half yearly report to June, showing total adverse event reports were down 8% to 9,284 from more than 10,000 in the months from July to December (**PD** 30 May).

This reduction was largely due to fewer sponsor reports, the TGA said, with the number expected to vary for each six month period.

The number coming from pharmacists was also down, from 717 to 630, the report found.

Between January and June, the TGA dealt with 558 alleged offences, but in general the number of compliance investigations was

similar to the previous reporting period, the TGA said.

However the number of warnings issued increased from 223 between July and December 2013 to 371.

Just under 850 new prescription medicine entries were recorded, compared with 1013 from July to December, with 305 cancellations compared with 77 from July to December, and 332 from January to June 2013.

There was only one new application received for a registered complementary medicine.

The TGA said the number of new listed complementary medicines and sunscreens showed variability over time and had increased sharply between January and June.

CLICK HERE to read more.

Drs dis pharmacy skin cancer check service

SKIN cancer checks in Chemmart, Amcal and Guardian Pharmacy chains across Australia have come under attack from the NSW branch of the Australian Medical Association.

Branch president and dermatologist Dr Saxon Smith told **PD** there were "fundamental flaws" with the examination of one to three spots of concern, including that 60% of melanomas found by dermatologists were spots of which a patient was unaware.

He said the potential for mistakes, mainly misses, was great and the technology pharmacists were using was not suitable as a diagnostic tool to give a definitive diagnosis.

Pharmacists could make major contributions to uncovering skin cancer by raising awareness and asking patients if they had had a skin check in the last 12 months, he said, as well as reminding patients about sun protection measures, including selling quality sunscreens.

Sigma chief operating officer Gary Dunne told the *Sydney Morning Herald* the pharmacists aimed to complement, not replace, the GP's work, saying studies had shown when pharmacists referred patients to their GP, the patients often took action.

Scream for healthy bones

MIRANDA Day and Night pharmacy is set to support Scream for Halloween, a fundraising campaign by Healthy Bones Australia to support osteoporosis prevention and awareness initiatives, by holding a Scream for Halloween Morning Tea.

On 31 Oct, the pharmacy will sell cupcakes, cookies and coffee coupons donated by Georgie Porgies Cafe, a fitness trainer will talk customers through weight bearing exercises, and be-costumed staff will be required to take a five minute break outdoors to avoid a penalty.

Osteoporosis Australia said pharmacies were key to health education for many customers, as local community hubs.

CLICK HERE to find out more.

Embeda labelling - FDA

THE US Food and Drug Administration has approved new labelling for Embeda (morphine sulfate and naltrexone hydrochloride) extended-release capsules, marketed in the US by Pfizer.

The labelling describes the product's abuse-deterrent properties consistent with the FDA's 2013 draft guidance.

CLICK HERE for more details.

Save \$2b by treating at pharm

THE Royal Pharmaceutical Society has said an extra £1.1b (AUD\$2.0b) a year could be saved by treating common ailments such as coughs or sore throats at community pharmacies rather than at GP clinics or A&E, and is calling for a national service in English pharmacies.

Referencing research presented to Pharmacy Research UK in January, the Society said the cost of treating ailments in pharmacies was £29.30 per patient, compared with £147.09 at A&E and £82.34 at GP practices.

The research, involving a cohort study of 377 patients and a systematic review, estimated that 5% of A&E consultations and 13% of GP consultations for common ailments could be managed in pharmacies - **CLICK HERE** to access.



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Cannabidiol feedback

PUBLIC submissions are now open for the proposal to create a new Schedule Four entry for cannabidiol for therapeutic use.

The proposed amendment has been referred for scheduling advice to expert advisory committees and submissions to be considered by these committees close on 17 Nov.

An interim decision is expected by 05 Feb 2015.

This follows several states' moves to introduce legislation allowing medical cannabis trials (**PD** 18 Sep).

CLICK HERE for more.

Guild Update

Get involved with the multi-media campaign

NOW that the Guild's public campaign 'Discover more. Ask your pharmacist,' is underway it is vital that as many pharmacies as possible across Australia get involved by displaying campaign materials in-store. The campaign will work best for community pharmacy and for the industry if everybody gets involved. The multi-media campaign is designed to advance the community's knowledge of the value of their local pharmacy.

The cornerstone of the campaign is an animated television commercial which went to air for the first time on Sunday night.

Online and pay television advertisements also commenced this week.

Below are three simple steps to action which will directly link pharmacies to this major television, digital and social media blitz.

1. Display the Guild 'gold cross' Tile prominently in your pharmacy (sent to pharmacies in August)
2. Display the campaign materials in the FREE Starter Kit (sent to pharmacies in September)
3. Purchase more campaign material from the Campaign portal and display in pharmacy.

If you are need more information about how to get involved, please email askyourpharmacist@guild.org.au and one of the Guild's Campaign team members will get back to you.

Letter to the Editor

A LETTER to the editor about a literature review of complementary medicines (**PD** 15 Oct) has prompted this response from ASMI executive director Dr Deon Schoombie:

The Australian Self Medication Industry (ASMI) welcomes the debate triggered by the complementary medicines report: 'Targeted Use of Complementary Medicines: Potential Health Outcomes and Cost Savings in Australia'.

A Letter to the Editor on Friday 17 October says that of the six complementary medicines examined in the report, including calcium, vitamin D, and St John's wort, amongst others, – only the St John's wort is a complementary medicine and the remainder are 'conventional' medicines. By way of clarification, the report uses the definition of complementary medicines used in Australia's therapeutic goods legislation, which includes vitamins, minerals and nutritional supplements.

We believed the researchers adopted a conservative approach and were surprised by the suggestion that the results were overstated. Interestingly, a general practitioner at the launch of the report mentioned that the results "vastly understated" the costs, which the researcher also acknowledged as only medical incidents requiring hospitalisation were included in the analysis - other quality of life considerations were not considered.

The letter claimed that the "report did not examine some of the latest systematic reviews on omega-3 fatty acids." The studies analysed in the report were identified using a 2014 search and included research from 2012 and 2013.

Finally, the letter raises concerns about using St John's wort for depression. The report does not claim that all people with depression should take St John's wort, but rather, what the potential economic impact would be if certain relevant populations used St John's wort.

This report examined six specific substances and four conditions and is not a statement about all complementary medicines.

ASMI will continue to build the evidence base for complementary medicines by commissioning more research on complementary medicines in the future. We hope the dialogue stimulated by this and future research will continue.

We welcome any comments. If you would like to weigh in on this or other subjects, email us at info@pharmacydaily.com.au.

WIN A Natural footcare PACK

This week **Pharmacy Daily** and **Plunketts** are giving five readers the chance to win a NS-8 Natural Footcare pack.



Give your feet some love! Spring is here and it's time to make sure your feet are ready – soft, smooth and odour-free. NS-8 Natural Footcare formulations are based on carefully selected naturally active ingredients to deliver superior results. NS-8 Heel Balm is not greasy, so you don't need socks, and natural exfoliants gradually remove dry, thickened skin, so you don't need foot files. NS-8 Foot & Leg Moisturiser refreshes and moisturises hot, tired legs, softening and smoothing dry skin. NS-8 Foot and Shoe Deodoriser is a non-aerosol spray that kills odour causing bacteria on shoes and feet, and is Australian owned and made. Visit: www.NS8.com.au

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

True or false: NS-8 Heel Balm means no socks and no foot files.

Congratulations to yesterday's winner, **Jack Huang** from **Alphapharm**.

DISPENSARY CORNER

SYMBIOTIC bug relationships.

Whether or not you will find yourself dispensing supplies of maggots and hookworms to your customers in the future could depend on studies being undertaken in Victoria and Queensland under grants from the NHMRC and reported on by *The Conversation*.

Celiac disease could be moderated by friendly parasitic helminths such as hookworm, so new research is investigating - **CLICK HERE** to read.

Maggots have also been proven to assist in the cleansing of open wounds, called maggot debridement therapy (MDT).

Further work on MDT is found by **CLICKING HERE** and **HERE**, while leeches have made microsurgery and plastic surgery more successful by preventing venous blood clotting.

PHARMACY in space!

Look, it's not that we're obsessed, but you have to admit, the idea of performing pharmacy research in space is pretty dang exciting.

So must University of Southern California (USC) School of Pharmacy Associate Professor Clay Wang be feeling, having received a US\$600,000 grant last month from NASA's Space Biology program.

The three year funding was granted for Wang's project looking at how microgravity environments influence the effectiveness of drugs, with a focus on fungi.

This would be the first time any study of fungi in space would be undertaken, USC said.

Wang said he hoped his research would lead to the discovery of new drugs that could be used in space as well as the potential for drug creation off Earth.

NASA said the research could help uncover basic knowledge that it could use to solve problems confronting "human exploration of space" - eep!

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