



Gene patents debate

THE Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia (RCPA) has expressed discontent with the Federal Court's decision to turn down an appeal against the Court's previous decision to allow a patent for a gene which causes familial breast cancer held by the company, Myriad Genetics.

The ruling confirms the patentability of human genes under Australian law and has been applauded by Medicines Australia (**PD** 08 Sep).

RCPA spokesperson Professor Graeme Suthers said that genetic testing for mutations represented discovery of a natural phenomenon and hence should lie beyond the scope of patenting.

A statement from the University of Newcastle, Australia (UON), has also weighed in strongly against the ruling citing the BRCA1 and BRCA2 patent monopolies also by Myriad and the USA Supreme Court ruling in June 2012 against patents over naturally occurring DNA sequences.

Cancer Council Australia similarly criticised the court's decision, saying the law itself needed to change to protect healthcare consumers from gene monopolies, which could stymie research and increase costs.

Sigma buys DDS for \$26m

SIGMA Pharmaceuticals Limited has bought Discount Drug Stores (DDS) for \$26.7m (**PD** breaking news yesterday).

The move adds 121 pharmacies to Sigma's network, which would remain DDS branded, a Sigma spokesperson said.

DDS would sit within Sigma's Central Healthcare Services (CHS), which had itself been acquired earlier in the year and which operated as a stand-alone business, Sigma said.

The spokesperson said this was because Sigma wanted DDS to be run as a stand-alone business also, and because DDS and CHS had been in discussions about a similar prospect prior to Sigma's acquisition of CHS.

Sigma said DDS had a "strong pipeline of growth", which the spokesperson confirmed meant more pharmacies were planned.

DDS executive director John Clark

said the group had a goal of being in the top three retail pharmacy brands in the country.

Sigma said the combination of additional wholesale business over time, CHS hospital and retail distribution business and the expanded network of branded pharmacy member was expected to contribute more than \$400m in sales revenue to Sigma and Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation and Amortisation (EBITDA) of between \$8m to \$10m in the first year of operation.

The acquisition was immediately earnings accretive and was expected to be ROIC accretive in the first year of operations, it said.

CLICK HERE for more.

FDA likes Keytruda

THE U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has granted accelerated approval to Keytruda (pembrolizumab) for treatment of patients with advanced or unresectable melanoma who are no longer responding to other drugs.

Pembrolizumab is not available in Australia.

Phcy lecture today

THE Barry L. Reed Distinguished Lecture for 2014 at Monash University this year will be titled 'Translating science into practice'.

Professor Andrew McLachlan will be this year's guest speaker.

McLachlan is a pharmacist, academic and researcher with experience in clinical pharmacology, research into variability in response to medicines, and the quality use of medicines.

The lecture is on this afternoon at 5.00 pm.

Ring 03 9903 4841 to register.

Arthur Boyd tour

DELEGATES to PAC14 in Canberra who attend the Gala Dinner will have the opportunity to attend a private viewing of the Arthur Boyd Agony and Ecstasy exhibition at the National Gallery of Australia.

The masque Gala Dinner on 11 Oct will also see the Pharmacy Student of the Year announced from the eight state and territory finalists, as well as the NAPSA wildcard finalist.

The Congress will be held at the National Convention Centre from 10 to 12 Oct.

For more information, go to www.psa.org.au/pac.

National Stroke Week

FROM 08 to 14 Sep, it is National Stroke Week.

Stroke was the second leading cause of death and a major cause of disability, the National Stroke Foundation said.

Receiving the right care at the right time in the right place could significantly improve an individual's chance of surviving a stroke and recovering to lead a full and independent life, it said.

CLICK HERE for more information.

Support for pharm

HEALTH Minister Peter Dutton has said the government hoped to "support" community pharmacies in the negotiations for the next Community Pharmacy Agreement.

In an interview with *Lateline*, Dutton also reaffirmed that Coles and Woolworths would be kept out of pharmacy ownership, and that location and ownership rules would not change, saying the government believed pharmacy ownership at a community level was an "important policy" for it to adopt ongoing.

To read more, **CLICK HERE**.



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Cannabis research call

SYNTHETIC cannabinoids are among an increasing number of drugs being misused and leading to death, a new article published in the *Medical Journal of Australia (MJA)* has said.

While there were “pockets of high-quality research on synthetic cannabinoids” throughout Australia, including work by the National Drug and Research Institute, and nascent toxicology research in several states, the research lagged behind the prolific drug development, the paper said.

At least a partial solution proposed in the review was a national sharing of clinical and laboratory data, similar to the operation of the American Association of Poison Control Centres or the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction.

The authors listed a 15 point set of proposals to share information between various organisations including police and poisons centres - [CLICK HERE](#) to read.

SHPA int'l tweeting

THE Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) will take to Twitter on 02 Oct as part of the second annual Pharmacist Global Tweet-a-Thon.

The National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA) said the event involved pharmacists sharing stories of how they had made a positive impact on the lives of their patients.

Participants will use the hashtag #Pharmacist, and SHPA would be joined in Australasia by the Pharmaceutical Society of New Zealand and the Pharmacy Guild of New Zealand in tweeting.

Other organisations involved included the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy and the Irish Pharmacy Union, NCPA said.

Last year's effort saw more than 7,000 tweets, averaging almost 300 an hour, with examples including one pharmacist showing a newly diagnosed diabetic patient how to use his glucose meter and another delivering an antibiotic after hours.

To find out more, [CLICK HERE](#).

CRP pings Natures Family online adverts

THE Complaints Resolution Panel (CRP) has found that complaints against Natures Family Australia P/L around statements in online advertisements were justified.

The CRP ordered the company to withdraw the claims for a number of its products and advertisements.

Complaints around some aspects of advertising claims for Millilodge and Medical Imports' TENS machines were also found to be justified by the CRP.

[CLICK HERE](#) for more detail.

ARGCM guide change

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration has posted changes to the Australian regulatory guidelines for complementary medicines (ARGCM) on its website.

Changes relate to formatting, corrections and clarification of information, as well as corrections to hyperlinks through the document.

[CLICK HERE](#) to see changes.

ADRs via smartphone

THE Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) is leading a consortium of organisations, including European medicines regulators, academics and the pharmaceutical industry, in a three year project to develop new ways of gathering information on suspected adverse drug reactions (ADRs).

Dubbed WEB-RADR, the project is in response to the broad uptake of smartphones, apps, and social media for discussing issues with medicines and health.

The project working group would develop a mobile app for healthcare professionals and the public to report suspected ADRs to national EU regulators, MHRA said.

In addition, the potential for publicly available social media data for identifying potential drug safety issues would be explored.

WEB-RADR would also examine the value of these new tools for monitoring drug safety and helping to develop recommendations for medicines regulators, said MHRA.



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Grattan on Oz health

THE Grattan Institute has published a global health report on longevity versus costs.

As a share of GDP, Australia's total health spend at 9.1% was slightly lower than the OECD average of 9.3%, with 68% of the health spend funded by public sources, as against the OECD average of 72%.

Average life expectancy at birth for Australians was 82.1 years, almost two years higher than the OECD average of 80.2 years.

CLICK HERE to read more.

Guild Update

Cosmetics labelling audit

THE Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) has advised that between now and November it will be conducting a product safety surveillance operation targeting the supply of non-compliant cosmetics at retailers across Australia. The ACCC is responsible for the administration of the mandatory standard for ingredients labelling on cosmetics.

The mandatory standard specifies marking and labelling requirements to ensure cosmetics supplied in Australia meet minimum safety standards. Consumer labelling of ingredients on cosmetics is important for consumers who have sensitive skin or allergic reactions. If ingredient labels are missing or inaccurate, a consumer can be exposed to ingredients that may cause harmful allergic reactions.

There are several things retailers can do to help ensure that the cosmetics comply with the mandatory standard, including:

1. Source products from reputable manufacturers/suppliers that comply with the mandatory standard.
2. Ask for documentary evidence of compliance with the mandatory standard from your suppliers.

35% pharm found errors

RESEARCH presented at the Royal Pharmaceutical Society Annual Conference yesterday found only 35% of pharmacists and 25% of pharmacy students detected all dispensing errors during a study.

As first reported by the *Pharmaceutical Journal*, the study, which looked at 104 community pharmacists in total, found labelling errors were the most often missed by pharmacists in experiments involving distraction conditions and high or low working memory conditions.

While most errors missed would

not have harmed patients, one error on a label of pethidine 50mg was missed 30% of the time, it said.

The report recommended that distractions and interruptions should be reduced, consideration should be made of the cognitive processes involved in pharmacy tasks, with error detection likely hampered by natural unconscious cognitive processes, and support for pharmacists in managing workload and mental workload should be provided.

The *Journal* reported the data was published yesterday.

To read the report in full, **CLICK HERE**.

Clinical quality reg

THE Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care has released national arrangements for organisations which monitor or report on the appropriateness and effectiveness of health care (clinical quality registries).

These arrangements were covered in its Framework for Australian clinical quality registries, which described a mechanism that jurisdictions could use to authorise and secure data to measure, monitor and report on appropriateness and effectiveness.

CLICK HERE for more.

Adaptive education

RESEARCH out of Denmark published in the *International Journal of Clinical Pharmacy* examined reduction of medicine-related problems among Arabic-speaking ethnic minorities living in Denmark, aiming to explore the perceptions, barriers and needs of the minority group in the context of providing an education program to enhance knowledge and competencies around use of medicines.

CLICK HERE to read the abstract.



DISPENSARY CORNER

PRINTED medicines?

Maybe in the not-so-very-distant future, you'll be able to print medications rather than dispense them, since Sydney hospitals are reportedly now preparing to use 3D printers to produce replicas of patients' hearts.

Albeit, the replicas would be used to help surgeons better prepare for surgery by understanding the patient's problem, the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported.

The Liverpool and St Vincent's hospitals would likely see access to this technique within a year, which would help reduce patient deaths and injury by reducing the time operations took and preventing unexpected problems, the publication reported.

MOST likely to experience regret.

If you've finished pharmacy school, did you have a yearbook? And if so, was your 'Most Likely To...' entry finished with 'Skinny Dip'? No? Then you probably won't have received the same complaints as a New Mexico high school, which published a photo of students who appear to be naked, posing behind a tree under the category 'Most Likely To Skinny Dip', *Associated Press* reported.

Portales High School assistant principal Garrick Matthews told *AP* while the students were trying to be funny, the district had received several complaints and different people would now view the yearbook prior to publication.

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