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Variations in care

A REPORT from the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care has praised the standard of healthcare service and healthcare staff in the country by worldwide standards while highlighting the variation of quality depending on location.

The Commission is developing an Australian Atlas of Healthcare Variation to inform strategies, resources and tools to reduce variation, due for release in 2015.

The Commission has also published an analysis of the OECD study.

CLICK HERE to access.

NPS focus on fatigue

LOGGED as 3-7% of all presentations to GPs, NPS MedicineWise has launched a new program called 'Back to basics for fatigue: a diagnostic approach'.

NPS clinical advisor Dr Andrew Boyden commented on the difficulties of diagnosis with so many different individual reasons citing an over-reliance on pathology tests by GPs in initial consultations.

Initially fatigue could be addressed by managing lifestyle, psychosocial and physical causes, he said.

"Fatigue is often not associated with underlying disease and may remain unexplained."

Panel: remove location rules

THE Competition Review panel has released its draft report, which recommends the removal of the pharmacy ownership and location rules.

The panel said some regulation of pharmacy was justified to recognise patient and community safety, to ensure pharmacists provided appropriate information and advice, that equitable access to medication was provided and costs were managed.

However it did not consider that the ownership and location restrictions in pharmacy were necessary to ensure the quality of advice and care provided.

"Such restrictions limit the ability of consumers to choose where to obtain pharmacy products and services, and the ability of providers to meet consumers' preferences."

Protecting consumers from market dominance and inappropriate market conduct, as highlighted in the submissions to the Review, was "adequately handled" by the Competition and Consumer Act.

The panel said a range of alternatives were available to ensure pharmacies met safety, access and standard of care

expectations, including "imposing obligations" on pharmacies as a condition of licensing or remuneration.

"The Panel recognises that such a change will have a significant impact on the pharmacy sector and a transition period will be necessary."

Negotiations for the Sixth Community Pharmacy Agreement provided the government with an opportunity to remove the location rules with appropriate transitional arrangements, the panel said.

Public forums to discuss the report will be held in various cities. Submissions on the draft report close on 17 Nov.

See **page two** for pharmacy groups' reactions to the recommendations.

To make a submission or register for the public forums, **CLICK HERE**.

Serotonin syndrome

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration is advising healthcare professionals and consumers of the risk of serotonin syndrome being associated with serotonin-blocking medicines such as 5-HT₃ receptor antagonists.

When used to manage nausea and vomiting for example post surgery, on patients already on serotonergic medicines, 5-HT₃ receptor antagonists could induce the syndrome, it said.

CLICK HERE for more details.

MHRA fast-tracks vax

THE University of Oxford has praised the Medicines and Healthcare Products and Regulatory Agency (MHRA) for fast-tracking the authorisation of the clinical trial application for the new Ebola vaccine.

University of Oxford Jenner Institute director Professor Adrian Hill said the trials were initial safety trials of the vaccine and it would be some time before it was known whether the vaccine could protect people against Ebola.

"But we are optimistic that the candidate vaccine may prove useful against the disease in the future."

Deprescribing call

TWO clinical focus articles published in the latest edition of *Medical Journal of Australia* have highlighted the value of appropriate deprescribing or the practice of reducing the number of medications an individual patient is taking.

Associate Professor Ian Scott from the Princess Alexandra Hospital in Brisbane, and colleagues wrote that one in five prescriptions issued to older adults were "inappropriate".

The authors contend that with up to 30% of hospital admissions of patients aged over 75 years old being medication related, as many as three quarters of these could be prevented.

The second article, by Dr Emily Reeve and her coauthors, from the University of South Australia in Adelaide, called for more research on the benefits and risks of deprescribing.

For more, go to www.mja.com.au.

FDA antibiotic plans

THE US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has outlined its strategies to combat antibiotic abuse which leads to resistance, including a focus on vaccines where possible to prevent infections and devices to aid in the accurate diagnosis of the cause of infection and of resistant infections.

The FDA has made available a series of presentations titled 'The Development of New Antibacterial Products: Charting a Course for the Future' - **CLICK HERE** to view.

New MS Rx research

AUSTRALIAN biotech Antisense Therapeutics has had a phase II trial of its gene silencing treatment in patients with relapsing-remitting MS (RRMS) published in *Neurology*. **CLICK HERE** to access the paper.

APC exam dates

EXAMINATION dates for students sitting the Intern Written examinations and the CAOP examinations for 2015 have been posted on the website of the Australian Pharmacy Council (APC). **CLICK HERE** for details.

Soliris stalemate p2

IN RESPONSE to the chair of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee's statement that it was not recommending all atypical haemolytic uraemic syndrome patients must stop receiving treatment with Soliris (eculizumab) after 12 months (**PD 22 Sep**), Soliris manufacturer Alexion has said it was focused on accelerating a meeting with key decision makers in government to try to "more urgently focus on patient needs".

This follows the company's statement that the government was requiring all patients cease treatment after 12 months, to which it said it would supply the medication if the government agreed to allow physicians to determine when treatment should stop.

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HCPs need flu-vax

TWO reports published in *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* called for increased influenza vaccination coverage for healthcare workers to reduce the risk for them and their patients.

"The Advisory Committee on Immunisation Practices recommends annual influenza vaccination for all [HCPs] to reduce influenza-related morbidity and mortality in health care settings," said Dr Carla L. Black from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Guild Update

Unapproved Pharmacies

THE Guild welcomes the recent announcement by the Federal Government that it will move to support pharmacists who are being undermined by a small number of businesses claiming payment for dispensing Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) medicines from unapproved premises. Under federal legislation, pharmacists can only claim financial reimbursement for medicines dispensed from premises which have been approved by the Government to supply PBS medicines. The Department of Health has become aware of a small number of instances where approved pharmacists appear to be claiming for the supply of pharmaceutical benefits where the supply was not made at or from approved premises. The Guild welcomes the move because approved pharmacies have invested in their businesses on the basis that PBS medicines will be dispensed only through approved pharmacies. The claiming of PBS payments on behalf of unapproved pharmacies undermines the integrity of the network and the viability of the model which provides timely access to PBS medicines for all Australian patients.

Guild: we reject Review

THE Pharmacy Guild has rejected the Competition Policy Review's draft recommendations.

Executive director David Quilty said community pharmacies needed certainty and stability, given they were struggling under the pressure of price disclosure, "not a constant push to abolish a system that's working and replace it with an economic theory".

Pharmacy regulation ensured consumers could get timely and equitable access to Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme medicines wherever they lived, the Guild said.

"The regulation has a clear public benefit, to which the competition review panel seems completely oblivious."

The Guild said it would be making a formal submission on the draft report to the Review.

Pharmaceutical Society of Australia national president Grant Kardachi said the organisation had long stated its commitment to maintaining the current system of pharmacy, including ownership and location rules, and the recommendation of the Review had not changed this stance.

"The Government has stated its commitment to the current system on a number of occasions and so I see no reason for the Government to change its opinion based on a recommendation by the committee.

"We must remember this is a recommendation only."

MEANWHILE Professional Pharmacists Australia ceo Chris Walton said the location rules artificially increased the cost of pharmacies and stifled efficiency and innovation.

The rules should be up for negotiation in the next Pharmacy Agreement, Walton said.

They were a "cruel hoax" to employee pharmacists, who had little opportunity to own their own pharmacies, he said.

Consumers and employee pharmacists should be involved in the next Agreement negotiations, rather than just the Guild, he said.

Removing the rules would "unlock" the contribution pharmacists could make to frontline healthcare.

"It is time that all stakeholders in pharmacy discussed alternatives."



DISPENSARY CORNER

DECLUTTER to slim.

Here's a novel weight loss technique, but we're not sure of the efficacy, so maybe hold off before recommending to customers.

New research has found that if you declutter your kitchen you are likely to snack half as much as before and find you weigh some nine kilograms less than those who don't, reports *USA Today*.

"It's easier to become slim by design than slim by willpower," Cornell University Food and Brand Lab director Brian Wansink says.

Similarly, Wansink who has been studying eating behaviour for 25 years, said that people almost always eat everything on their plate, actually 92%, making the visibility of accessible food an immensely powerful influence on our intake volumes.

AN INTERESTING move...

We're not sure whether you'd recommend this treatment either, but Jasmine Tridevil has apparently spent US\$20,000 to have a third breast surgically implanted on her chest.

The move was reportedly an attempt to appear less attractive to men, with Tridevil saying she no longer wanted to date, *Huffington Post* reported.

Appearing on camera is apparently not as much of an issue, with Tridevil having hired a camera crew to pitch a reality TV show to MTV.

The inevitable Total Recall comparisons have been made and, of course, no one's quite sure whether the surgery was real.

GOOD morning!

If you're a fan of coffee on the way to work but want something that tastes a little stronger, Starbucks has just launched 'Guinness flavoured' coffee, or Dark Barrel Latte, which reportedly tastes like the famed Irish drink, but doesn't contain any beer or alcohol, the *Scotsman* reported.

WIN A HYDRALYTE PACK

This week **Pharmacy Daily** is giving five readers the chance to win a **Hydralyte** pack.

Did you know? Dehydration is the biggest health risk associated with vomiting and diarrhoea - you can lose up to 3L of fluid.*

Hydralyte's scientific formulation contains the correct balance of fluid, glucose and electrolytes for rapid and effective hydration. When sickness strikes, offer fluid replacement (Hydralyte) immediately.

*Mild Hydration, 4% fluid deficit, in an 80kg adult.

See [HERE](#) for more details.

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



How much fluid can you lose in a case of vomiting and diarrhoea?

Congratulations to yesterday's winner, **Kelly Gourlay** from the **Pharmacy Guild of Australia**.