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RGH: antidepressants and seizure threshold

EPILEPSY patients have a higher reported incidence of depressive disorders than the general population, according to this week's RGH Pharmacy E-Bulletin.

Possible rationales for this increased prevalence are developed in the bulletin along with issues around proconvulsive potential and pharmacokinetic interactions associated with selective serotonin re-uptake inhibitors and other antidepressants.

CLICK HERE for the bulletin.

SGLT2 inhibitor alert

HEALTH professionals are being advised by the Therapeutic Goods Administration that serious cases of diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA) have been reported in patients taking prescription medicines that are inhibitors of sodium glucose co-transporter 2 (SGLT2), namely canagliflozin, dapagliflozin or empagliflozin.

For details see www.tga.gov.au.

PSA on medical cannabis

THE Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) has released a position paper on the investigation of the potential therapeutic value of and therefore possible medicinal uses for cannabis.

Titled *Therapeutic use of cannabis*, the paper does not attempt to address legal issues around the supply of the drug in Australia, bearing in mind the ongoing discussions on the subject, the PSA said.

The main tenets of the position statement are that in some medical conditions cannabis has provided positive outcomes to individuals who may not have experienced comparable therapeutic benefits from other clinically proven medicines or treatment protocols.

"Consistent with Australia's National Medicines Policy, the pharmacy profession supports timely access to medicines for all Australians," the position paper states.

"We therefore support the

development of an appropriate regulatory framework which would allow formal research to be undertaken to investigate the potential benefits of therapeutic use of cannabis.

"We welcome the announcement of clinical trials with appropriate medical oversight and informed consent provided by the patient and carer," the paper states.

The PSA added that when standardised products containing cannabis have been evaluated for quality and safety, they must be used, with open availability of research outcomes to establish a body of evidence.

The paper also calls for pharmacist education in relation to medicinal cannabis.

The PSA also said it would support pharmacists working in collaboration with health care team members to provide advice on all medicines which are tailored to the needs of the patient and carers.

CLICK HERE to access the paper.

TPP opposition

THE Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) and New Zealand's opposition Labour Party have both expressed concern over the conditions being imposed on the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade pact that could see patents on drugs increased by up to five years, reports *FiercePharma*.

MMA President Ashok Zachariah Philip called upon the government negotiators to understand the deeper potential and perhaps unintended consequences of such an agreement.

New Zealand Labour Party spokeswoman Annette King told *Stuff.co.nz* the data exclusivity for drugs measures could cost NZ taxpayers \$1b over five years.

Data exclusivity periods are a key sticking point for the TPP agreement with separate issues around biologics which enjoy a 12 year period under US law, while Australia is supporting eight years and other countries in the 12 nation talks are opposing any period exceeding 10 years, *Nikkai* reports.

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Stroke Foundation honoured

THE National Stroke Foundation has been honoured with an Outstanding Achievement Award (OAA) in The Australian Charity Awards 2015.

The awards recognise efforts by charities to raise the public profile of their group through awareness campaigns.

The Stroke Foundation's success in raising awareness through its Fight Stroke campaign, has lifted the issue from 29th position as a health issue of concern to



Australians to seventh in just seven years.

National Stroke Foundation ceo Dr Erin Lalor thanked the Awards for the honour and the community for its ongoing support of the campaign.

"We have come a long way over the past ten years," she said.

"Community support has enabled the National Stroke Foundation to improve the awareness of stroke, deliver vital services to stroke survivors and their families, and advocate for the Government to recognise stroke as a serious problem."

The awards for 2015 also honoured MS Research Australia as Charity of the Year.

Pictured are model personality Kris Smith and Chemmart Pharmacist Carolyn Wynen getting behind the Fight Stroke campaign at Australia's Biggest Blood Pressure Check.

OxyContin approval

THE US Food and Drug Administration has allowed the prescribing of OxyContin for children aged 11 to 16.

The move followed studies commissioned by the FDA looking at use of the drug in children with pain caused by cancer, trauma or major surgery.

The approval is for the use of OxyContin for children in the age range who need "daily, round-the-clock, long-term" pain relief for which there is no alternative, in those who have already been treated with opiate painkillers.

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US drug prices rise

A NEW survey conducted by US group Consumer Reports has found that a third of consumers taking prescription medications have reported paying higher prices at the pharmacy.

The non-profit American consumer organisation said price rises were on average US\$39, with those affected also finding difficulty in paying for other medical care.

They said they economised in other ways to afford their medications including paying less at the grocery store and postponing the payment of other bills.

40% of the respondents in the "nationally representative poll" said their doctor "sometimes" or "never" recommended generics over brand-name drugs.

Consumer Reports publishes a free electronic publication called Best Drugs for Less which lays out strategies for economising on prescription drugs.

See CRBestDrugsforLess.org.

Early career meeting

THE SA/NT branch of the Society of Hospital Pharmacists (SHPA) of Australia will meet on 28 Aug at the Caledonian Hotel, North Adelaide, to hear two specialist pharmacists who will talk to the topic, "Confessions of an Early Career Pharmacist".

As well as networking, the event creates an opportunity to hear about the new SHPA SA/NT Early Career Pharmacist Group.

Email Fares.AISarawi@sa.gov.au.

Britain considering hospital error change

A PROPOSAL which would allow a defence for hospital pharmacists in the UK who inadvertently make a dispensing error has been referred to the British health ministry for approval.

A statement from the Rebalancing Medicines Legislation and Pharmacy Regulation Programme Board said it had considered a draft report recommending changes to "enable and support increased reporting and learning from dispensing errors, by pharmacy professionals."

"This is part of a wider cultural change that will require ongoing commitment from a range of interests across pharmacy, other healthcare providers and the Devolved Administrations."

The Board said officials are also looking at whether the defence would apply in cases where pharmacists are involved in the emergency supply of medicines, providing a minor ailments service, and in cases that involve a pharmacist prescriber, reports the *Pharmaceutical Journal*.

Diabetes meeting

THE Adelaide Convention Centre is the site for this year's Australian Diabetes Society (ADS) and Australian Diabetes Educators of Association (ADEA) meeting.

Taking place 26-28 Aug the event will present the latest clinical practices and cutting edge research in diabetes, the group said.

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Weekly Comment

Welcome to PD's weekly comment feature. This week's contributor is Catherine Cervasio, Founder of



Aromababy Natural Skincare.

Understanding Natural Skincare Labels

WITH so much choice in the type of natural skincare available in pharmacies, why not equip yourself with some basic understanding of the way an ingredient list works?

All ingredients should appear on the packaging (or marketing materials if packaging does not permit), in correct, descending order by volume or mass, down to 1%. Thereafter ingredients may be listed in any order, so it can often be difficult to know if, for example, an active ingredient or the 'organic' component of a product is sitting at a full 1% or .001%. The ingredients should be "prominently shown and clearly legible".

Any preservative should appear toward the bottom of the list, near any essential oils if included. Essential oils in a baby product should make up no more than approximately .25% of the overall formulation so if parents are seeking out an 'organic' or natural product yet only the essential oils are certified organic, this would mean potentially the remainder of the product is non-organic. With water traditionally being the largest component of body wash and shampoo formulations, the water should therefore always appear as the first ingredient on the list. If the list you're reading doesn't look 'quite right' contact the supplier for more detailed information.

Telstra's \$6m Fred bonus

TELSTRA paid an extra \$6m in "contingent consideration" as part of its 50% acquisition of Fred IT Group (PD 02 Oct 13), with the additional payment revealed in Telstra's full year accounts on Fri.

The purchase of Fred IT was only detailed as part of a \$166m group of controlled entities acquired during the 2014 financial year which also included NSC Group, DCA eHealth Solutions and O2 Networks.

However the Telstra accounts also detail a \$21 million carrying amount of goodwill which has been allocated to Fred IT.

The \$6m extra payment for Fred was "for targets achieved by 30 June 2014".

Telstra's full year accounts confirmed that its half stake in Fred

IT gives it control over the business "through our decision making ability on the board".

The report showed Telstra's total revenue was up 1.2% to \$26.6b, with the fledgling Telstra Health division, of which Fred IT is a component, contributing \$78m.

Telstra Health initiatives launched during the year included the ReadyCare telemedicine service (PD 07 Jul) which allows Australians to access GPs 24/7 via phone or video to receive advice, diagnosis, treatment and prescriptions.

Burglar in the roof

A THIEF attempting to rob a pharmacy in Houston, USA hid in the ceiling of the building for three hours yesterday in an attempt to avoid detection, reports the *Houston Chronicle*.

The pharmacy was not open, but the owner spotted the robber via a remote video monitor at his home and called police, who surrounded the building.

Patrol units evacuated the shopping complex and began a systematic search, discovering a series of holes in the pharmacy walls leading to an adjacent business where the miscreant was found hiding in the roof.

Botox blunder

ICONIC British department store Harvey Nichols has been forced to amend its loyalty program, after the scheme promoted the prescription-only medicine Botox as a reward available for redemption.

The UK Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) ordered Harvey Nichols to remove all references to Botox from the reward scheme information.

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What types of corporate events can you hold at HOYTS?

Check here tomorrow for today's winner.

DISPENSARY CORNER

PEOPLE will do just about anything for Justin Bieber - or so it seems, in a corruption case being brought by prosecutors in the US state of New Jersey.

A doctor on Long Island has been accused of accepting tickets to Justin Bieber concerts in return for directing blood tests to a particular pathology laboratory.

55-year-old Bret Ostrager has admitted receiving thousands of dollars in kickbacks, with Katy Perry tickets also on offer as well as sporting events, concerts and Broadway shows.

It's part of a major investigation in to the blood testing facility, with another 25 doctors also having pleaded guilty to offences in connection with the bribery scheme.

A NEW home pregnancy test under development in the UK claims to eventually be able to predict multiple births.

The product is being created by a firm called MAP Diagnostics, which also suggests the test will look at protein in a woman's urine for issues such as pre-eclampsia, the potential of miscarriage or even Down's Syndrome.

Presenting at the annual meeting of the European Society of Human Reproduction and Embryology, the researchers said they aim to develop an algorithm based on samples from around 10,000 women, following their pregnancies and identifying particular proteins which correlated to complications, according to the UK *Telegraph*.

The company said it wants to "empower parents so that difficult decisions can be made" early in pregnancy.

However experts warn it would have to be extremely accurate in order to avoid creating concern with false positive results.