

Cannabis for epilepsy

MEDICINAL cannabis may be a promising treatment for children and young adults with treatment resistant epilepsy and it is generally well-tolerated in doses up to 25mg/kg/day, according to a preliminary study presented to the annual meeting of the American Epilepsy Society this week.

The authors concluded that these initial results from an uncontrolled study should now be further tested in randomised controlled trials.

CLICK HERE for the abstract.

More scripts, less spending

SPENDING growth on pharmaceuticals in Australia has slowed despite an increasing number of prescriptions dispensed, according to a new Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report released this morning.

The Health Expenditure 2013-14 analysis breaks down spending by sector, and shows \$58.8 billion in recurrent spending on hospitals, \$54.7 billion on primary health care, and \$32 billion on "other

health goods and services".

During 2013-14 the growth in "benefit-paid pharmaceuticals" was just 1% in real terms, compared with a 6.3% increase in the number of prescriptions dispensed - the highest in the previous ten years.

"This suggests that slower growth in both government and non-government spending in this area did not mean fewer services were delivered," said AIHW spokesman Adrian Webster.

Between 2004 and 2014 the number of prescriptions dispensed rose 26.6%, the report says, with other interesting figures including the revelation that spending on "all other medications" which includes OTC pharmaceuticals, private scripts and under-copayment medications was \$9.7 billion, almost all of which was paid for by individuals out-of-pocket.

Benefit-paid pharmaceuticals accounted for \$10.1b in spending, of which \$8.5b was govt-funded.

To view the full report online see www.aihw.gov.au.

Nicholls retires

SIGMA Pharmaceuticals non-executive director Linda Nicholls AO has announced her retirement effective yesterday.

Nicholls was also chair of Sigma's Risk Management and Audit Committee.

Guild Christmas celebrations

THE NSW branch of the Pharmacy Guild of Australia held its annual Christmas celebrations earlier this week, at a stunning venue overlooking the Sydney Opera House and harbour.

Joined by government representatives, service providers, suppliers and community pharmacists, the event celebrated the success of the Guild's many initiatives, including the Know Your Numbers Program, which president Paul Sinclair said



had "exceeded beyond original expectations".

Pictured above from left is Pharmacy Guild president Paul Sinclair with Dr John D'Arcy and friendly pharmacist John Bell.

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ASMI 2016 conference

LE MONTAGE at Lilyfield, Sydney is the venue for the 2016 Australian Self Medication Industry (ASMI) AGM, Annual Conference and Diamond Awards which will be held on 27 Oct 2016.

The Diamond Awards night, designed to honour manufacturers and suppliers who excel in the marketing of their products, will be full of pizzazz next year, ASMI promises - see asmi.com.au.

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TGA OTC delay 'harmful'

THE recent TGA decision to defer its verdict (*PD* 19 Nov) on the up-scheduling of codeine-containing OTC medications conflicts with rising codeine analgesics misuse, its devastating consequences and the recognition that opioid misuse is a public health concern, according to ScriptWise ceo, Bee Mohamed.

While pharmacy lobby groups have applauded the move saying it enables the early implementation of a real-time monitoring solution, Mohamed says, "We already have very real statistics today which require immediate solutions".

"Any ongoing review needs to be conducted sooner rather than later, and agreement between

medical, pharmacy and patient support groups must be achieved," Mohamed said.

"A coordinated approach is not only pivotal to preventing prescription or OTC medication addiction and overdose, but also for ensuring treatment options are made available to patients at-risk of addiction," she added.

Given the TGA's ruling was some weeks ago, ScriptWise may have missed the boat on their lobbying.

ScriptWise says it is a not-for-profit organisation committed to raising public awareness of prescription medication addiction.

Beat bites & stings

HEALTHDIRECT Australia has launched a new App for mobile devices providing a list of the most common types of bites and stings, their related symptoms, and where to go for treatment advice.

The healthdirect app also displays latitude and longitude coordinates which can be relayed to emergency service operators - especially useful in emergency situations when in an unfamiliar place with no obvious landmarks.

Download the free app by searching 'healthdirect' at either the **iPhone** or **Android** app store.

DISPENSARY CORNER

KIMBERLY-CLARK is expecting a major boost from a new strategic alliance with Walt Disney Resorts.

Certain to lift the profile of Huggies, Pull-Ups, Kleenex and Cottonelle products, the range will now be available for purchase by visitors to Disneyland, who will also be able to access special Baby Care Centers hosted by Huggies.

The move also means Kimberly-Clark's "Professional" products will be utilised in rest rooms - particularly appropriate given that one of Disney's best-loved characters is Winnie the Pooh.

AIR pollution can make you fat, according to the findings of a number of studies reported by the *BBC* this week.

It's speculated that microscopic particles from traffic fumes trigger inflammation which can have a much wider impact than just on the respiratory system.

Hong Chen from Canada's Public Health Ontario looked at the medical records of 62,000 people over a 14 year period, and found the risk of diabetes rose 11% for every 10 micrograms of fine particles per cubic metre of air.

Cahill honoured

FORMER Arthritis Australia ceo Anslie Cahill has been nominated for Honorary Life Membership of the Consumers Health Forum of Australia (CHF) for her outstanding contribution to the organisation over many years and to her commitment to achieving improved health outcomes for all.

With a focus on health advocacy Cahill has had a special interest in positive ageing and has always demonstrated a commitment to ethical practice and accountability, striving to ensure consumers play a meaningful role in health policy, the announcement said.

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* Brod M et al. Patient Intelligence Survey Nov 2014, pp 43 - 60.

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Name the coral shade.

Congratulations to yesterday's winner, Donna Delgado from Jardines Chemmart Pharmacy.

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Postal address: PO Box 1010, Epping, NSW 1710 Australia

Street address: 4/41 Rawson St, Epping NSW 2121 Australia

P: 1300 799 220 (+61 2 8007 6760) F: 1300 799 221 (+61 2 8007 6769)

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Publisher: Bruce Piper info@pharmacydaily.com.au

Reporter: Mal Smith

Contributor: Nathalie Craig, Jasmine O'Donoghue, Bonnie Tai

Advertising and Marketing: Magda Herdrik advertising@pharmacydaily.com.au

Business Manager: Jenny Piper accounts@pharmacydaily.com.au

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