

Last issue's winner

THE winner of the Milky Foot competition from *PD* 19 Dec was **Gary Walsh** from CAEM Shelving Engineering - congratulations!

Co-payment and safety net revisions

EFFECTIVE as of 01 Jan, Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) co-payments and safety net amounts have been revised in line with changes in the consumer price index.

The co-payment has increased from \$36.90 to \$37.70, and the general safety net has risen from \$1,421.20 to \$1,453.90.

Concessional counterparts have increased from \$6 to \$6.10 and from \$360 to \$366 respectively.

[CLICK HERE](#) for more.

MEANWHILE the PBS website has published errata to the PBS schedule for 01 Jan, including corrections for the olanzapine entry.

[CLICK HERE](#) to view.

Worldwide recall

HOSPIRA has announced a voluntary worldwide recall of 10 lots of mitoxantrone in conjunction with the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) due to sub-potency and elevated impurity levels having been confirmed.

[CLICK HERE](#) to read more.

Contraception advice from pharmacists

EMERGENCY contraceptive counselling provided by student pharmacists in either an academic healthcare clinic or a retail pharmacy were evaluated by participants in recent research published in the *International Journal of Pharmacy Practice*.

The counselling was provided by trained student pharmacists utilising a standardised education toolkit with overall positive results, the majority of participants recording 'strongly agree' on the attitude and satisfaction statements.

[CLICK HERE](#) for the abstract.

PBAC nods cancer drugs

THE Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC) has made a number of positive recommendations for cancer drugs, including that four treatments be made available as unrestricted pharmaceutical benefits.

The Medical Oncology Group of Australia sought to have capecitabine, megestrol, toremifene and vinorelbine made available as unrestricted benefits on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and at its November meeting, the PBAC said it had no objections to this.

It also recommended listing axitinib as an authority required benefit for the treatment of stage IV clear cell variant renal cell carcinoma in patients meeting certain criteria

It noted that some consumer comments "appeared to convey an unrealistic expectation" that the treatment would offer a curative treatment option, and was concerned that this was not in accord with the clinical evidence.

Expired stock duties

THE Pharmacy Board of Australia (PBA) has offered practice advice relating to management of expired stock in its December newsletter.

As well as having in place a system of routine expiry date checks, each product's expiry needed to be checked when dispensed to be sure the product was in date for the expected duration of the therapy and the expiry date should be left visible when applying a label, the Board said.

In addition, the PBA clarified proprietor pharmacist responsibilities with relation to maintaining awareness of how the pharmacy business was being conducted and the need to intervene where necessary to ensure standards and guidelines were followed.

These obligations applied even when the pharmacy was not located in the jurisdiction of its principal place of practice, the PBA said.

[CLICK HERE](#) for more details.

The PBAC recommended an authority required listing of trametinib in combination with dabrafenib for the treatment of advanced malignant melanoma with acceptable cost-effectiveness over dabrafenib alone, in a managed entry framework.

Other positive recommendations included an 18 month booster dose of the vaccine for the prevention of pertussis, with the PBAC saying about 262 less people would have a non-notified case of pertussis per year with the booster.

The PBAC also recommended that the zoster virus vaccine live be listed on the National Immunisation Program for immunocompetent people aged 70, and a catch up cohort aged 71 to 79 years, at a lower price than proposed in the submission.

MEANWHILE more than 40 new listings are scheduled for consideration for the PBAC's March meeting.

[CLICK HERE](#) to read more about the recommendations.

20% hospitalisations CVD, CKD, diabetes

ABOUT 20% of all hospitalisations in Australia in 2012-13 were associated with cardiovascular disease (CVD), chronic kidney disease (CKD) and diabetes, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) has said.

The report showed the largest number of hospitalisations was associated with CKD at 1.5m, with about 1.3m due to dialysis.

More than 1.2m hospitalisations were associated with CVD, with 28% of these due to coronary heart disease, 11% due to heart failure and 7% due to stroke, AIHW spokesperson Sushma Mathur said.

Diabetes contributed to about 840,000 hospitalisations, with 88% associated with type 2 diabetes, the report found.

It follows another AIHW report which found in 2011-12, more than one in four Australians suffered from CVD, CKD or diabetes (*PD* 20 Nov).

[CLICK HERE](#) to read more.

Transparency map

MEDICINES Australia and the Department of Health have agreed to develop a "road map of transparency activities and projects", the Department has said.

This comes as a result of the October meeting of the Access to Medicines Working Group, with the Department saying the first topic would include improvement to information available to consumers.

A progress update occurred last month to the Minister of Health, the Department said.

The group's work on a revised post market review framework was "nearing completion", it said.

Homeopathy vaccine claims 'misleading'

THE Federal Court found Homeopathy Plus! Pty Ltd and its director Frances Sheffield engaged in misleading conduct and made misleading representations about the effectiveness of the whooping cough vaccine and homeopathic remedies as an alternative, in breach of Australian Consumer Law, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) said.

The company's website published articles that made representations to the effect that the vaccine was short-lived, unreliable and was "largely ineffective" in protecting against whooping cough, court documents said.

The Court found the company engaged in misleading conduct by publishing statements to the effect that the vaccine was short lived, unreliable and might not be the best solution for protecting against whooping cough, the ACCC said.

In a comment on the company's website, Sheffield said it had not said the vaccine was ineffective but that "recent studies show the vaccine has limited effect", with "short-lived and unreliable" protection.

ACCC commissioner Sarah Court said there was real risk that consumers might be influenced not to use the vaccine and rely instead solely on homeopathic products, which was against the advice of the Department of Health.

[CLICK HERE](#) and [HERE](#) for more.

Weekly Comment

Welcome to PD's weekly comment feature.

This week's contributor is **Stacy Jukes, Midwife, Mater Mothers' Hospital.**



Overcoming obstacles during breastfeeding

FOR women who do choose to breastfeed their babies, the skills required for breastfeeding are often overlooked or underestimated. It's important for a new mum to be shown a number of positions to attach her baby correctly to ensure both mum and baby are comfortable and baby is adequately transferring milk. Positions such as side lying and laying back and allowing baby to search and find the nipple are often very successful.

A bit of soreness can be normal because of increased sensitivity and frequent feeding but if there is evidence of bruising, bleeding, or cracks, the new mum should seek help from a midwife, lactation consultant or GP. These symptoms could be a result of issues relating to birth trauma or tongue tie among others. Some well-meaning friends may suggest a nipple shield they had used or had heard of and found helpful.

Nipple shields can be extremely helpful when latching is difficult due to flat or inverted nipples, but should be fitted by a professional. Extra expressing is also advised when using a shield, which also needs to be discussed due to decreased sensitivity. Seek help early and hopefully problems may be minimised or avoided.

Industry welcomes new Minister

THE Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA), the Pharmacy Guild of Australia, Consumers Health Forum and Medicines Australia (MA) have all welcomed the appointment of Sussan Ley as the new Minister for Health.

PSA national president Grant Kardachi said the appointment came at an important time for the pharmacy profession while Guild national president George Tambassis said that he looked forward to working closely and constructively with Ley at a critical time for community pharmacies.

MA ceo Tim James said there was a need to make sure Ley was fully briefed on MA's priority issues.

E-cigs tender update

THE Department of Health has released an addendum to its tender for a discussion paper on options to minimise risks associated with the marketing of electronic nicotine systems (PD 08 Dec).

The additional information includes that it would be at the Department's discretion as to whether it would grant a license for publication of intellectual property in the contract material, in response to a question about publishing a peer review journal article from information gathered.

CLICK HERE for more.

FDA approves Zerbaxa

THE US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved Zerbaxa (ceftolozane/tazobactam), a new antibacterial drug product, to treat adults with complicated intra-abdominal and urinary tract infections.

CLICK HERE for more.

Novartis animal health divestment

NOVARTIS has confirmed it has completed the divestment of its animal health division to Eli Lilly and Company (PD 26 Sep 14).

Effective as of 01 Jan, Novartis said the deal was worth about US\$5.4b.

Drug induced anaemia

A PHARMACOVIGILANCE database scan out of Italy has identified a range of products potentially implicated in drug induced anaemia, according to a study published in the *International Journal of Clinical Pharmacy*.

Possible signals associated with peginterferon alfa-2a, ribavirin and flu vaccine in the occurrence of autoimmune haemolytic anaemia were noted with significant involvement of clopidogrel, enoxaparin, warfarin, ticlopidine and acetylsalicylic acid in preventable DDI-induced anaemia.

CLICK HERE for the abstract.



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Jobs of the Week

- **Pharmacist** - Burnett region, QLD (Job# 2011031)
This is a great opportunity for a newly registered pharmacist.
- **Pharmacist Manager** - Goulburn Valley, VIC (Job# 2010860)
Career opportunity within 100 kms of Melbourne - friendly community.
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DISPENSARY CORNER

EXPENSIVE decorations.

You are probably in the process of taking down your Christmas decorations at the pharmacy, but hold on a second there - it might pay to double check the tinsel first, following the news that a Wisconsin police department found a diamond ring on its Christmas tree.

The diamonds are reportedly real, and police think someone intentionally placed the ring on a branch of the tree, located in the department's lobby, *Associated Press* has reported.

Apparently, for the past five weeks, the department invited people to bring their kids to decorate the tree and receive a stuffed animal in return, during which time someone left the ring on the tree, the publication reported.

Merry Christmas, indeed!

WHAT colour statin would you like, madam?

With so many brands now available for so many pharmaceutical products, perhaps this invention could help you sort them for picky patients - a creative sweet tooth has invented a machine that can sort M&M sweets by colour.

Why? Because he could.

The unnamed inventor told *Orange News* he had been thinking about making an M&M sorter for a while as a fun project inspired by a video of a high speed coin counting machine.

His invention made use of an iPhone to identify colours and direct separate colours into separate tubes, the publication reported.

He said he had originally tried to 'shoot' M&Ms down the tubes but this resulted in mostly sending them flying - **CLICK HERE** to view.