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INNER HEALTH PLUS

BMS Opdivo success

BRISTOL-MYERS Squibb (BMS) has announced that it has stopped a Phase Three study of the new advanced squamous cell non-small cell lung cancer treatment Opdivo (nivolumab) because the independent Data Monitoring Committee concluded that it demonstrated superior overall survival compared to the control arm receiving docetaxel.

[CLICK HERE](#) to read more.

Ramsay: remove phmcy regulation

RAMSAY Health Care has submitted to the Competition Policy Review in favour of its draft report recommendations to remove pharmacy ownership and location rules.

The hospital group, with 39 in-house pharmacy operations, said pharmacist-only ownership was no longer beneficial to the public interest and should be abolished, as should pharmacy location rules.

From July, pharmacies should be set up wherever an operator deemed it could run a viable business, the submission said.

Ramsay recommended a new review of regulation and competitiveness should be undertaken in the pharmacy and pharmaceutical sectors, "ideally under the auspices of a respected neutral umpire like the Productivity Commission", to complement the work of the Harper Review.

[CLICK HERE](#) to read more.

UK diclofenac off OTC

PATIENTS will no longer be able to purchase diclofenac tablets as an OTC product in the UK due to the small risk of heart problems, the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has said.

Topical products such as gels will remain available as OTC products.

The MHRA said diclofenac was associated with a small but increased risk of serious cardiac side effects in some patients, particularly if used at high doses and for long-term treatment.

[CLICK HERE](#) for more.

Vic 'taking advice' on monitoring

THE Victorian Minister for Health is "receiving advice" on the issue of introducing a real time prescription monitoring (RTPM) system.

A spokeswoman for the new Minister told **PD** the government was committed to ensuring all Victorians received the best health care possible, including ensuring effective communication channels between health professionals.

This follows a further call for the implementation of a RTPM system for Schedule Four and Eight drugs by Coroner Jacinta Heffey, in the inquest into the death of Paul Kanis, a 38 year old who died of pneumonia in the setting of drug use including methadone and benzodiazepines.

The coroner said it was a "matter of urgency" that the Victorian Department of Health implement a RTPM system.

Doctors having access to real time prescription monitoring electronically had been raised many times in the court, citing five cases delivered last year, she said.

"The overdose deaths data shows clearly that Schedule Four drugs are tremendous contributors to overdose deaths in Victoria."

Victorian overdose deaths involving clonazepam had climbed from nine to 19 from 2010 to 2013, with 16 deaths involving the drug in the first half of 2014 alone and full year projections to be about 30.

Information for such a system should be captured at the point of dispensing, she said.

Previously, the Coalition government committed to such

a system, should it be re-elected, with \$6.98m to be invested over five years (**PD** 17 Nov 14).

The spokeswoman for the Minister for Health said the introduction of real time monitoring would require "extensive consideration and planning", with aspects that could require national co-ordination.

Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) Victoria branch president Michelle Lynch said over the past 18 months, the organisation had had multiple communications with the Department of Health, major political parties and other health professional groups in support of a RTPM system, and would continue to work with the new government to expedite implementation.

The PSA believed information needed to be captured at both the point of dispensing and prescribing, allowing all health professionals involved to be sharing one source of information, she said.

[CLICK HERE](#) to read more.

PBS high cost listings "grown significantly"

THE number of higher cost listings on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) has grown significantly, including nearly 600 items costing more than \$1,000 each time they are dispensed.

In response to a question from senator Linda Reynolds, and as first reported by the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the Department of Health said since 1991, the number of item listings priced between \$1,001 and \$5,000 had increased from zero to 536 items and those priced over \$5,000 had increased from zero to 61 items.

Items priced between \$501 and \$1,000 had increased by 2,310%, the Department said.

Medicines Australia ceo Tim James said that with the stringent assessment of cost effectiveness under the PBS, Australians could be assured that PBS medicines represented excellent value for money.

[CLICK HERE](#) for more.

Synthetic cannabis claims lives

ONE man has died and another is critically ill after suspected poisoning from synthetic cannabis.

The men fell ill in Mackay, where the Australian Science Media Centre said there had been a wave of hospitalisations due to the drug.

University of Sydney PhD student Richard Kevin said the new synthetics were being developed at a rate outstripping the speed at which researchers could respond.

Student oversupply symposium planned

THE National Australian Pharmacy Students' Association (NAPSA) has said a symposium to discuss an industry stance on the oversupply of pharmacy graduate students is likely to occur mid-year.

NAPSA president Sam Turner said an industry opinion based on supply and demand data, which was currently nonexistent, was "imperative" when it came to the issue of graduate oversupply.

NAPSA was eager to see this discussion take place once data was available, with other organisations' leaders indicating this was currently being gathered.

This comes after NAPSA's National Pharmacy Students Survey (**PD** 14 Jan), conducted online last year with 833 responses, which found oversupply of pharmacists was the biggest issue respondents perceived to be facing them as a future pharmacist at 36%.

Poor salary was second at 27% and discount pharmacies third at 17%.

Professional Pharmacists Australia ceo Chris Walton said employee pharmacists shared these concerns.

"Stagnant wages and poor conditions make it very difficult to attract and retain students and community pharmacists, which presents real problems for patient healthcare."

A Guild spokesperson said the organisation continued to work with NAPSA to address the concerns of students, including running workshop at NAPSA's upcoming congress.

Phmcy "community fireplaces"

OPPOSITION leader Bill Shorten has said pharmacies are one of the community's gathering places, or "fireplaces", where people seek support.

Speaking at a conference in Toowoomba yesterday, Shorten said a pharmacist had spoken with him about the need for better funding for mental health, while Shorten spoke of the need to not pay GST on health care.



Competency obstacle

PERCEIVED competency is an obstacle for community pharmacists to undertake a public health role in Malaysia, a study published in the *International Journal of Pharmacy Practice* has said.

With 191 usable responses, the authors found that while design of premises, IT infrastructure and pay were not viewed as barriers to carrying out a public health role, the lack-of-competency perception implied that training programs in pharmaceutical public health were required to address this concern as a priority.

CLICK HERE to access the abstract.

Travel Specials

Royal Caribbean Three Day Sale

Royal Caribbean has unveiled a three day mega sale on a range of selected itineraries to NZ, the South Pacific and Australia, at prices starting from \$81 a day.

Rhapsody of the Seas is on offer with an eight-night South Pacific getaway departing 28 Feb, priced from \$649 per person, or explore Australia on an 11-night Queensland itinerary, departing 17 Feb from \$899 per person.

Soak up the South Pacific sunshine onboard *Radiance of the Seas* for 11 or 12 nights, departing 20 Jan and 31 Jan respectively, with prices starting from \$899 per person.

Three itineraries are available onboard the revitalised *Voyager of the Seas*.

Other options include South Pacific and Fiji over 11 nights from \$899 per person, departing 05 Mar, or 11 nights on a NZ itinerary, priced from \$899 and departing Sydney on 22 Feb.

The sale commences at 10am 13 Jan, running until 9:59am 16 Jan. Visit

www.royalcaribbean.com.au.

Tas in discussions for vax

REPRESENTATIVES of the pharmacy profession have initiated discussions with the Tasmanian Department of Health and Human Services about the prospect of pharmacists being authorised to prescribe and administer the influenza vaccine in the state.

Director of public health Dr Roscoe Taylor said pharmacists were not authorised to administer vaccines in Tasmania currently, but the influenza vaccine was provided in some pharmacies, administered by authorised nurse immunisers.

The Tasmanian government was aware of pharmacist-administered vaccination initiatives and "awaits

the results of these evaluations with interest", Roscoe said.

To implement such an initiative in Tasmania would require amendment of legislation, authorisation of initial and ongoing proficiency and an accredited training course, he said.

An ACT Department of Health spokeswoman said while pharmacists were authorised to administer scheduled medicines, which included vaccines, the Pharmacy Board of Australia had yet to finalise professional scope of practice details for pharmacists administering vaccines, meaning until they were, pharmacists could not administer vaccines in the ACT.

SA is set to allow pharmacist-administered vaccination from late March (**PD** 14 Jan), joining WA and the NT in doing so.

AusPARS added

AUSTRALIAN Public Assessment Reports for prescription medicines (AusPARS) for aripiprazole monohydrate (Abilify maintena), canakinumab (Ilaris), enzalutamide (Xtandi) and fenofibrate (Lipidil) have been added.

CLICK HERE to access.

NAPSA survey looks to academia

THE National Australian Pharmacy Students' Association (NAPSA) is looking into ways it can make its annual student survey more "academically credible", president Sam Turner has said.

NAPSA would like to see the survey's data better utilised within the industry, he said, and making the survey as credible as possible could see it become a valuable tool.

WIN A MOOGOO MUM AND BABY PAIL HAMPER



We're on the search for *Pharmacy Daily* readers' chubby cheeked babies!

We've got five MooGoo mum and baby pail hampers to give away to our five favourite chubby cheeks.

Each prize pack is valued at \$84.60 and contains: Natural SPF 40 Sunscreen, Mini Moo Natural Bubble Wash, Anti-Ageing Face Cream, Lip Balm SPF and a calf soft toy.

If you think you know the chubbiest baby out, email your photo by COB this Friday to:
comp@pharmacydaily.com.au.

DISPENSARY CORNER



CABBAGE for leg cramps.

The *People's Pharmacy* has received another unusual reader recommendation for self-cures - eating kimchi, or Korean fermented cabbage, to help with leg and foot cramps.

The reader said eating kimchi during the day improved their condition by "about 85%".

The reader acknowledged that other fermented foods, such as sauerkraut or pickles, "might work just as well as kimchi", with the pharmacists saying they had heard similar things about pickle juice from other readers.

Whatever the actual medical benefits, the reader definitely got one thing right - kimchi is delicious.

DO I have any annual leave left?

If you've ever struggled with pharmacy employment law, never fear - one official in India has found the mother of all loop holes in the country's labor laws, and not turned up to work for 24 years.

According to *IOL News*, Shri A.K. Verma, who worked for the Central Public Works Department, failed to arrive for work since December 1990.

He had continually sought an extension of leave that was not sanctioned and defied directions to return to work, a government statement said.

An inquiry had found him guilty of "willful absence from duty" back in 1992, the report said, with charges brought against him in 2007.

However it took more than two decades to take definitive action and fire the official, the publication reported.

Talk about an extended holiday!