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Rx to OTC consultation

RESEARCHERS at Griffith University School of Pharmacy are conducting a research project "Demand and Readiness for Increased Non-Prescription Availability of Australian Medicines: Pharmacy Perspectives and Associated Factors".

They are seeking the opinions of pharmacists and pharmacy staff about the current state of medicine classification in Australia.

If you have an opinion you would like to express on transition of prescription products to OTC status, you can have your say by **CLICKING HERE** and enter a draw to win a \$100 Coles Myer Gift Card.

Biosimilars push quarrel

THE Federal Government is stirring a hornet's nest as it pushes forward the bill to promote biosimilar products to the public, with promises of big dollar savings for the individual and the community, while peak clinical bodies counter with a string of associated risks.

A statement by the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC) is intended to allay fears by consumers around the value of biosimilar products approved by the PBAC.

The Australian Government and the PBAC said they are concerned that the introduction of biosimilars may lead to the spread of 'misinformation', as has happened in other countries.

Clinicians and pharmacists will be able to offer the original drug or the substitute biosimilar, said Health Minister Sussan Ley, saving patients up to \$500 annually and potentially saving taxpayers of around \$2b over five years.

The peak body for rheumatologists

in Australia, the Australian Rheumatology Association (ARA) has set out the range of risks to patient safety it says could result from biosimilars being "rushed through" the Senate today.

ARA president Dr Mona Marabani highlighted that potential issues arising could include negative effects of a drug being ascribed to the wrong product, a patient's immune system not recognising the drug and mounting another immune response, unknown effects of switching between molecules and particularly those stabilised on a molecule becoming destabilised, undoing years of clinical work and causing great patient discomfort.

The Pharmacy Guild of Australia has reiterated its stance in the Guild Update (see **page two**).

The Consumers Health Forum has championed the Grattan Institute's report into pharmaceutical premium pricing policy highlighting the "unnecessarily high costs imposed upon patients and taxpayers on some drug brands".

Sigma Pharmacists' Support donation

SIGMA has given a boost to the Pharmacists' Support Service (PSS) with a \$2,500 donation, for further training for the volunteer pharmacists who man the phones, as well as for raising awareness of the service.

The service is available to all Australian pharmacists, pharmacy interns and students by ringing 1300 244 910.

Val Constable, vice president of PSS, welcomed the donation and the generosity of Sigma in a statement.

"Over the last 20 years the PSS volunteers have given over 120,000 hours of their time to support their colleagues," Constable said, adding that for volunteers to provide this service an infrastructure is needed.

The main costs incurred by PSS include telephone expenses, training of the volunteer team, insurance, part-time staff and administration.

To donate, **CLICK HERE**.



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Guild Update

PBS Bill vital

The passage of the National Health Amendment Bill by 30 June is vital to achieve certainty for Australia's local community pharmacies, their patients, and their 60,000 staff.

The National Health Amendment Bill needs to be passed within this final sitting week before the winter recess.

The Guild reaffirms its support for the Bill on the basis that it is required to deliver certainty and stability to the community pharmacy sector.

The Bill gives effect to the PBS Access and Sustainability Package.

The Package establishes pharmacy funding, medicines pricing arrangements and a range of sector measures to ensure ongoing access to innovative and generic medicines through a sustainable PBS. It contains measures negotiated following consultations with a wide range of stakeholders from pharmacy, the pharmaceutical industry and consumer groups. It also extends the Location Rules from 1 July to mid-2020, which underpin the equitable distribution of pharmacies across the continent, and which enjoy bi-partisan support.

The Government has mandated that implementation of the Sixth Community Pharmacy Agreement (6CPA) from 1 July 2015 is contingent upon the passage of the National Health Amendment. The 6CPA underpins the remuneration pharmacies receive for dispensing PBS medicines, as well as the delivery of professional pharmacy programs with significant patient benefit.

Bowel cancer screening

PARTICIPATION in the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program is at a higher rate than in previous years according to a report released yesterday by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW).

From the 1.4 million people aged 50, 55, 60 or 65 invited to screen between July 2013 and June 2014, 36% returned a completed bowel cancer screening kit for analysis, up 2.6% from the previous year.

7.5% of participants registered positive results and were recommended to undergo further investigation, AIHW said, with 68% of those having a colonoscopy and one in 25 of those (748 people) having confirmed or suspected bowel cancer.

Minister for Health Sussan Ley said the fact that 70 per cent of Australians who had previously been screened in the programme

returned their kits the second time was particularly encouraging.

However Ley said it remained concerning that only 36 per cent of Australians returned a completed bowel cancer screening kit.

"Bowel cancer is the second most common cause of cancer deaths in Australia with approximately 80 Australians dying each week."

"With participation rates up by around three per cent on the previous year, it's clear the stigma with bowel cancer was beginning to get through but there was still a long way to go," Ley said.

The full report from the IAHW can be accessed by **CLICKING HERE**.

TGA Annual Charge Exemption Scheme

NICOLE McLay, assistant secretary, Regulatory Business Services Branch of the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) gave a 15-slide presentation at the ACE roadshow this month outlining the Annual Charge Exemption scheme.

The presentation has been uploaded to the TGA site and clarifies a host of questions and issues surrounding the scheme.

CLICK HERE to access the slides.

RGH on lorcaserin

RGH Pharmacy E-Bulletin this week looks at the role of a new weight loss drug, lorcaserin.

Obesity in Australia is a 'major problem' said the bulletin and reference is made to treatments that have been used up until now.

Lorcaserin is a serotonin-2C agonist which inhibits appetite.

CLICK HERE to access the bulletin.

FDA ticks Fycompa

US SUBSIDIARY Eisai has received approval from the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for an indication expansion for its Fycompa (perampanel hydrate) as an adjunctive treatment of primary generalized tonic-clonic (PGTC) seizures in patients with epilepsy 12 years of age and older.

Fycompa was first included in the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods 23 May 14, but safety and efficacy for children under 12 years of age has not yet been established.

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DISPENSARY CORNER



PESKY fire alarm chirp.

You know the sound, that annoying chirp from the fire alarm that indicates a low battery which will continue to aggravate until replaced.

Firefighters in Timaru on the East coast of the South Is. of New Zealand, between Christchurch and Dunedin, answered the call to replace the battery and were surprised when called again the next day to replace the same battery, reports *stuff.co.nz*.

When the chirp was detected to come from another location, they discovered the family parrot, a master mimick, in the next room was the source.

There is no news as to the perilous plight of the parroting parrot.

FOR richer or for poorer . . .

A 103 year-old British man 'cradle-snatched' a 91 year-old lady, his close friend for 27 years, in a wedding to break all age records, with a combined age of 194 years, reports *IOL News*.

The previous record was a French couple with a combined age of 191 years.

WIN WITH AROMABABY

This week **Pharmacy Daily** and **Aromababy** are giving away a gift pack each day, including Bath Gel, Pure Hair Cleanse, Nappy Cream and natural healer Barrier Balm, valued at \$50.

Celebrating 20 years, Aromababy is Australia's first natural and organic baby skincare brand to use research as a guide in providing effective and safe formulations. Used in select hospitals and suitable for eczema and sensitive skin, Aromababy is well known as an affordable, pharmacy-focused alternative to mass produced baby care.



To win be the first from **QLD** to send the correct answer to the following question to comp@pharmacydaily.com.au

Is Aromababy still Australian made?

Congratulations to yesterday's winner, Roharni Salleh from Branxton Pharmacy!

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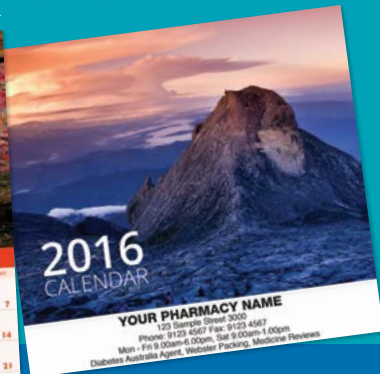
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