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TOEFL scores OK

THE Australian Health Practitioners Regulation Agency is now accepting TOEFL iBT English Language scores for registration. TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) is a widely respected English-language assessment, and was late last year ratified by the Australian government for a range of skilled migration and visa applications.

It measures the ability of non-native English speakers to use and understand English as it is read, written, heard and spoken. Effective from tomorrow, 01 Jul 2015, health professionals regulated by AHPRA - including pharmacists - will be able to use their TOEFL test score for registration.

AHPRA has set the required scores at 24 for listening, 24 for reading, 27 for writing and 23 for speaking. The TOEFL test can also be used to demonstrate eligibility for skilled and post-graduate visas. Authorised test centres are currently situated in Brisbane, the Gold Coast, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth.

It costs about US\$300 to take the test in Australia - more information at www.ets.org/toefl/register.

Philly vaccinations

PHARMACISTS in the US state of Pennsylvania will be able to vaccinate children as young as 9 for influenza under new legislation which became effective last Fri. Previously pharmacists there were restricted to only administer flu shots to adults, with the move aiming to expand availability of flu immunisations for busy families.

Novartis buying Spinifex

ONE of the biggest biotech deals in Australian history will see Queensland-based Spinifex Pharmaceuticals acquired by Novartis for about US\$200 million in cash plus undisclosed clinical development and regulatory milestone payments.

Spinifex is a biopharmaceutical company which was founded by Uniquet, the commercialisation arm of the University of Qld (UQ). The research firm is developing the drug candidate EMA401, which is an oral treatment for chronic pain - particularly neuropathic pain, without CNS side effects.

EMA401 is based on research by Professor Maree Smith and Dr Bruce Wyse from UQ, and is a novel angiotensin II type 2 (AT₂) receptor antagonist.

When the commercial potential of EMA401 was recognised, in 2005 the technology was spun into Spinifex with subsequent rounds of financing seeing venture capital firms back the business.

Novartis said it would continue the development of the company's programs, with plans for Phase 2b clinical trials in patients with Post Herpetic Neuralgia and Painful Diabetic Neuropathy.

The company "intends to build on these two key indications to pursue a broad peripheral neuropathic pain," with ceo David Epstein saying EMA401 "could provide a novel, differentiated treatment approach to provide relief for patients and healthcare providers worldwide".

APC drops English

EFFECTIVE 01 Jul the Australian Pharmacy Council (APC) will no longer require candidates to provide evidence of English proficiency to sit the Knowledge Assessment of Pharmaceutical Sciences (KAPS) examination.

The APC has reminded candidates wanting to register as a pharmacist that the AHPRA will still require them to provide evidence of English proficiency.

Med pot premature

PROVISION of medicinal cannabis is not yet at the point where one can expect doctors to write prescriptions in Australia, Professor David Penington, former head of the University of Melbourne's medical school and university vice-chancellor, told *MJA InSight*.

"It has not been sufficiently tested in terms of dose-response relationship and relationship of dose to side effects, or interaction with other medications for it to be formally regarded as a therapeutic substance," he said.

He added however that there is a lot of evidence, some of which is not at a good level, while some is of a quality that does provide "a basis for proceeding".

Penington also said that with medicinal cannabis available in 20 US states, they may have jumped the gun in terms of waiting for high quality evidence for use, advocating for an evidence-based approach.

NSW's state budget last week committed \$9 million over four years for further studies into the medicinal use of cannabis.

Eutick heads AHMADA

DR Mal Eutick has been re-elected as president of the Australian Health Manufacturers and Developers Association at the AHMADA agm which was held in Melbourne last week.

Mike Ribot was elected as vice president replacing Harley Atkinson. AHMADA was formed just over a year ago to represent the interests of local manufacturers and help them compete against "larger multinationals which dominate the market".

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Guild Update

POTY winners to host sessions at PBN2015

CATEGORY winners for this year's Pharmacy of the Year will be hosting practical sessions on how to improve and succeed in the pharmacy industry at PBN2015 in Melbourne in September.

Always one of the most highly rated PBN sessions, 2015 Pharmacy of the Year Winners will share their experiences and insights for a 90 minute discussion.

This is an opportunity to learn from the 2015 awardees and explore with them their business success and hard work to achieve outstanding results.

Winners will also host their own individual one hour sessions.

Registrations are now open for PBN2015 at Melbourne's Etihad Stadium.

Over three big days (17-19 September 2015) participants will be treated to talks, sessions and workshops focussing on meeting the challenges of your business through innovation.

PBN2015 is a great opportunity to meet, learn and network with some great business minds.

To register to attend PBN2015 visit the conference website at pharmacybusinessnetwork.com.

RGH E-Bulletin

THE Repatriation and General Hospital Pharmacy E-Bulletin this week discusses the issues surrounding home blood pressure (BP) self-monitoring and self-titration of antihypertensives.

A study cited demonstrated the improved results in terms of BP management using a home-based monitoring system.

CLICK HERE to access the bulletin.

Pharma tax hearings

NINE pharmaceutical companies operating in Australia will face a Senate committee tomorrow as part of a public hearing on tax avoidance.

Pfizer, GSK, AstraZeneca, Sanofi, Novartis, J&J and MSD are among the participants in the probe which is examining "transfer pricing" activity by multinational companies.

According to a report in today's *Financial Review* the companies say they pay the correct amount of tax.

Scottish pharmacist prescribers funded

THE government of Scotland has allocated £16.2 million in funding for "pharmacist independent prescribers" over three years, with the money to be used to recruit up to 140 pharmacists with advanced clinical skills training to work with GP practices.

The initiative aims to support the care of patients with long-term conditions, freeing up GPs to spend time with other patients.

10 new meds for EMA

TEN new medicines, including two enzyme replacement therapies for rare diseases, have been recommended for approval by the European Medicines Agency (EMA) Committee for Medicinal Products (CHMP) at their latest meeting.

The additions include Kanuma (sebelipase alfa) for the treatment of lysosomal acid lipase deficiency, and Strensiq (asfotase alfa) for the bone disease hypophosphatasia.

Other approvals were for Odomzo (sonidegib) for basal cell carcinoma, Respreeza (human alpha1-proteinase inhibitor) for alpha1-proteinase inhibitor deficiency, Aripiprazole Sandoz (aripiprazole) for certain psychiatric disorders and Raxone (idebenone) for an optic neuropathy disorder.

CLICK HERE for details.



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Afghan acquisition

FANCY owning a pharmacy in Afghanistan?

A British private equity firm has taken a 40% stake in Kabul-based 786 Pharmacy, which has plans to expand from its current eight outlets to 50 in the next five years.

London-based InFrontier, which was established to look for investment opportunities in emerging markets, says there's a "fertile" market for foreign investment in the war-torn country, with a huge base of young entrepreneurs wanting to build businesses.

786 Pharmacy aims to become Afghanistan's first "western-style" pharmacy chain, with the outlets also providing in-house doctors as well as female pharmacists to attract more women customers.

Prison for abortion pill supplier in UK

SOUTHWARK Crown Court found 51-year-old woman Gurpreet Kaur guilty of supplying abortion pills with intent to unlawfully procure miscarriages, following a joint operation involving the UK Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency and the Metropolitan Police.

Kaur, neither qualified nor registered as a pharmacist, was sentenced to 27 months in prison for supplying mifepristone.



DISPENSARY CORNER

HYGIENE at the Glastonbury Music Festival in the UK will also benefit the local flora, with organisers of the massive event set to recycle human waste.

Dubbed "humanure," the product will be recovered from some 250-odd composting toilets, and after about 18 months will have broken down enough for use on the land around Glastonbury.

The poo products will likely be deployed on hanging baskets, said the festival's sanitation manager, Jane Healy.

"It's like fans are leaving a deposit for future years," she said.

STRICT anti-abortion rules in Poland have led a Netherland women's rights group to fly the 'morning after' pill across the border in a drone.

Women on Waves flew the remotely piloted aircraft into the Polish town of Slubice across the Oder River from Frankfurt an der Oder in Germany in order to highlight the restrictions, with the tablets delivered to two women who used them to terminate their pregnancies.

Although abortion was legal in Poland while it was part of the USSR, it was outlawed in most cases in 1993.

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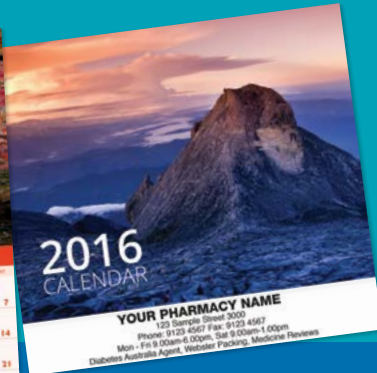
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