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Chemo change deferred

HOSPITAL pharmacy services have been advised to continue supplying and claiming for chemotherapy compounding under the current interim arrangements for the "foreseeable future".

Changes to chemotherapy payments proposed as part of the government's PBS Access and Sustainability Package (*PD* 17 Jun) were to be introduced from today.

Health Minister Sussan Ley announced the new "two-tiered" system as part of a five year funding agreement to "recognise the additional cost and regulatory burden" required to have a larger TGA-approved compounding facility which would attract a \$60 fee, as opposed to the standard \$40.

Ley said the \$372m package would "provide medicine compounders with the certainty needed to viably continue to deliver chemotherapy drugs on demand to patients and doctors nation-wide".

However yesterday the Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia confirmed that it had been advised that "the changes which were to come into effect on 1 September 2015 will NOT be implemented".

The SHPA cited a message from the Health Dept saying "While

payments from DHS-Medicare will continue to feature the \$40 compounding fee, some pharmacy dispensing systems may feature a lower dispensed price for EFC [Efficient Funding of Chemotherapy] items than anticipated.

"All EFC payments from DHS-Medicare will feature the \$40 fee, until such time as Government's decision on the CCPS is known and is able to be implemented via an external payment agency...this may not be until sometime in 2016."

The PBS website was last night updated with advice that EFC prices in the 01 Sep schedule should retain the \$40 fee, and "where applicable an additional \$20 compounding fee will be paid separately in accordance with the 2015 PBS Access & Sustainability measures".

Novartis PBS listing

NOVARTIS' Cosentyx (secukinumab), a first-in-class biologic medicine which acts to interrupt the inflammatory cycle has been PBS listed-today for the treatment of severe psoriasis.

For the full schedule of new PBS listings, formulary allocations and price disclosure see pbs.gov.au.

Arrow resurrected

FOLLOWING Strides' successful acquisition of the Aspen Generics product portfolio and business (*PD* 25 May), trading commences today as Arrow Pharmaceuticals from its headquarters located in Melbourne.

Under the chairmanship of Dennis Bastas, Arrow has said it will continue to deliver its full product range with no change to the portfolio previously available to customers.

Included in the acquisition are the former Aspen Generics product portfolio and the Chemists' Own product range.

The majority of the former Aspen Generics Sales and Marketing Team will continue in their roles and work closely with the Aspen prescription and OTC sales & marketing teams during a transition period, a company statement said.

This is to ensure that the business continues to run as normal with orders, deliveries and invoicing remaining in its current Aspen format, as well as no disruption to the service for its customers said the company.

Arrow's stated mission is to "invigorate the market with new opportunities, in order to create a better future for the industry."



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References: 1. Ortiz R, Toblil JE, Romero JD et al. Efficacy and safety of oral iron(III) polymaltose complex versus ferrous sulphate in pregnant women with iron-deficiency anaemia: a multicentre, randomized, controlled study. *J Matern Fetal Neonatal Med* 2011;24:1-6. 2. Toblil JE, Brignoli R. Iron(III)-hydroxide polymaltose complex in iron deficiency anaemia / review and meta-analysis. *Arzneimittelforschung* 2007;57:431-438.

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Seniors enlightened

AN EXCLUSIVE offer announced by NSW Minister for Ageing, John Ajaka, in association with OPSM allows NSW Seniors Card Holders to take advantage of additional discounts on health services.

Ajaka said that the offer with OPSM of 20% off frames and 20% off lenses is available for six weeks from Friday 28 Aug to 07 Oct.

The announcement is part of the NSW Government's \$2m election commitment to expand the number of businesses offering discounts with the Seniors Card program.

Folic acid reminder

AUSTRALIA'S Chief Medical Officer, Professor Chris Baggoley, has written to networks representing GPs and obstetricians urging them to remind pregnant women and those planning a pregnancy to take folic acid supplements as standard practice, in the light of a global shortage of folic acid for food fortification.

"This global shortage of the production of folic acid means there may not be sufficient supplies to add to wheat flour for making bread for up to 12-18 months," Baggoley said.

"However Australian manufacturers inform us they have several months' supply in stock."

Baggoley said that supplies of folic acid for use in supplements and infant formula will not be affected.

Pharmacy dementia support

PHARMACISTS have a significant role in helping support patients with dementia and their carers according to Dementia Caring ceo Jon Kontopos (pictured).

Speaking to *Pharmacy Daily* at the commencement of Dementia Awareness Month, Kontopos said "as the most accessible healthcare professional, pharmacists are in a unique position to help patients remain in a stable and familiar environment such as in their own home, a critically important element of supporting these patients and their carers".

With the theme of 'Creating a Dementia-Friendly Nation' Dementia Awareness Month in September aims to highlight how "medication and care go hand in hand".

Pharmacists can offer information about home care services, leaflets, My Aged Care website and homecare brochures, he told *PD*.

Particularly important is a level of awareness of the prevalence of the disease, to enable sensitivity to behavioural or psychological signs of dementia.

Triggers for referral for further investigation with the general

practitioner include too little or too much medication use, perhaps the presence of a customer in the pharmacy without a specific reason, the classic dementia-induced "wandering aimlessly in familiar places" syndrome, or a noticeable change of weight.

Kontopos added that signs of dementia can often be misdiagnosed as depression and may need further analysis by a geriatrician, psychiatrist or neurologist.

An important support for keeping dementia patients in a familiar environment is the use of Home Care providers such as Catholic Care, King Care and Dementia Caring.

CLICK HERE for more on Dementia Awareness Month.



China & Oz hit diabetes

THE Australian Diabetes Society (ADS) and The Australian Diabetes Educators Association (ADEA) Annual Scientific Meeting in Adelaide last week played host to 200 Chinese delegates from the Chinese Diabetes Organisation, as part of a growing cross-country collaboration effort in the fight against diabetes.

An estimated over 100 million Chinese citizens now live with diabetes, said the conference report.

ADS president Associate Professor Sof Andrikopoulos, said he was particularly pleased to be contacted by the Chinese organisation to form an international partnership.

With a strong Chinese-Australian community association, it was important to understand the different insulin resistance issues for Asians and consequent treatment variations, he said.

NSQHS draft consult

THE second draft of the National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Standards consultation is available for review.

The consultation period closes on 30 Oct - for details **CLICK HERE**.

'Hub & spoke' Rx

A CONCEPT being piloted across England and Scotland is the use of hub-and-spoke dispensing, which provides robotic dispensing of repeat prescriptions at dispensing hubs for delivery to patients' homes and pharmacies.

The approach is designed to save space and time for pharmacies, improving efficiency and the potential for greater profitability.

The hub and spoke model sends electronic prescriptions from pharmacies to remote distribution centres and delivers medication straight to the patient's home freeing dispensaries managed by trained, accredited checking technicians to dispense only acute prescriptions manually.

Boots recently announced the trial of an automated dispensing hub in the Alliance Healthcare facility in Preston, initially serving 50 pharmacies.

Win with DESIGNER BRANDS

This week Pharmacy Daily and Designer Brands are giving away a prize pack each day containing products from the Designer Brands Special FX Collection including a DB Contour Kit (RRP \$9.99), Instant Face Bronzer (RRP \$12.99) and Invisible Lip Liner (\$8.99).

The Designer Brands Contour Kit comes with step-by-step instructions on the back of the palette to help you contour like a pro! Featuring a highly blendable and buildable formula, it's perfect for contouring and highlighting the face. Sculpt, shape and define your features with this trio of contouring and highlighting shades.

To win, be the first person from **QLD** to answer the following question and send it to **comp@pharmacydaily.com.au**

How many shades are there in the Contour Kit?

Need a hint? **CLICK HERE**

Congratulations to yesterday's winner, Danni Tukuniu from Night & Day Pharmacy Warrawong.



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Guild Update

Medication Management Workshop

COMMUNITY pharmacies' role in helping patients avoid unnecessary trips to the emergency room is the basis for a recent workshop to address the problem of hospital readmission rates.

The collaborative workshop held in Canberra was facilitated by the Australian Centre for Health Research and supported by the Guild and addressed medication management in transition care.

The workshop is the start of a process which aims to address hospital readmission rates within 28 days of discharge through a community pharmacy service model for medication management in transition care, with a particular emphasis for people with cardiovascular disease.

An Internal Medicine Journal study found that within 30 days of hospital discharge, 71 per cent of patients visit their General Practitioner within a median time of 12 days, whilst 86 per cent of patients visit their pharmacy within a median time of six days to have a prescription filled.

The bringing together of key stakeholders including general practice, community and hospital pharmacists, consumer groups, private health insurance, academic researchers and State government highlights the need for collaboration across the care continuum to design a model of care where the patient outcome is the central focus.

Real-time drug record push

THE Pharmacy Guild of Australia has again come out in support of electronic real time recording of controlled drugs in order to save lives, supporting the Royal Australasian College of Physicians call for greater awareness of the over-prescribing of opioid prescription medication for pain in recognition of International Overdose Awareness Day.

According to the latest National Drug Strategy Household Survey (NDSHS) report, the misuse of painkillers increased from 4.8% of the Australian population in 2010, to 7.7% in 2013.

RACP president, Laureate

Professor Nick Talley said opioids are now one of the most over-prescribed pain medications in Australia and new evidence suggests their effectiveness in the treatment of long-term pain is limited.

"I think it is now accepted that these drugs have caused significant public health problems, including overdose, and we now need to reign in the problem by cautious prescribing," Talley said.

International Overdose Awareness Day is a global event held on 31 Aug each year and aims to raise awareness of overdose and reduce the stigma of a drug-related death, driven locally by non-profit organisation ScriptWise.

Kim Ledger, father of the late Heath Ledger who died from an accidental overdose of prescription medications in 2008, will deliver the keynote address at a ScriptWise event in Perth tonight, also urging real-time monitoring of prescription medications as well as "grass roots education to curb the rising death toll" from prescription medicines.

Graminex deal

CONNELL Brothers (CB) has been appointed to manage the sale and distribution of Graminex products in Australia and New Zealand.

The range includes both finished goods and ingredients such as flower pollen extract, saw palmetto and cranberry.

US-based Graminex is a major player in the international dietary supplement sector, with products sold in more than 44 countries.

CB will represent Graminex Flower Pollen Extract active ingredients, as well as dietary supplements primarily focusing on areas of prostate, immunological and women's health support.

See www.connellbrothers.com.

CHF backs prevention

PREVENTIVE health should not be a life or debt issue says the Consumer Health Forum (CHF) in welcoming the National Reform Summit's recognition of the potential of preventative health care to contribute to economic and social growth.

CHF ceo Leanne Wells said, "We hope both sides of politics will offer strong preventive health policies for the next federal election."

NZ exceptions setup

NEW Zealand's Pharmaceutical Management Agency (PHARMAC) has announced the 'go live' of its new Exceptional Circumstances Framework, the system designed to provide medication and medical devices outside the normal framework of the Pharmaceutical Schedule funding process.

The system enables prescribers to use a treatment which is not on the official Pharmaceutical Schedule, with unlisted treatments for particular patients able to be applied for using the Named Patient Pharmaceutical Assessment process.

Applications will be assessed against nine formal "decision criteria" which explicitly exclude non-clinical circumstances, patient preference and clinical benefits experienced in a funded trial.

DISPENSARY CORNER

ASTHMA alert?

Environmental regulators in the USA have ordered the owner of a Southern California golf club to pay a US\$100,000 fine, after he spread chicken manure all over it.

The stench at the Escondido Country Club was overpowering, according to the San Diego County Air Pollution Control District.

Officials say owner Michael Schlesinger spread more than 5 tonnes of "raw chicken poo" on the course, which was closed at the time, causing a month-long stink and sparking scores of complaints from neighbours.

Schlesinger has agreed to pay the fine without admitting any wrongdoing, describing the fertiliser as simply "soil enhancer for landscaping".

POLICE in the Illinois, US city of Aurora are aiming to fight alcohol addiction by compiling an official list of "habitual drunks".

According to the *Aurora Beacon-News*, the list will include "certain clientele" seen regularly by the police and fire department.

That would include anyone who gets transported by officers six times or more in a 120-day period.

People on the list will not be allowed to purchase liquor.

THE New Zealand city of Hastings has been voted as having the country's best toilet.

Hastings, in the Hawke's Bay region, entered the public loos at its Clifton Road Reserve in the annual Keep New Zealand Beautiful awards.

The public dunny was built just last year and overlooks a stunning vista of Cape Kidnappers.

In the last year they've been visited 60,000 times, with council environmental officer Wendy Beeke saying "that is a lot for a toilet".