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Cardiac rehab call

HIGHER uptake of cardiac rehabilitation programs for heart attack survivors could reduce national health system costs by \$35.5m and prevent 2,100 heart attacks across Australia per year, according to new Heart Foundation research.

Released in the lead up to Heart Week 01 to 07 May, the Heart Foundation is highlighting the need for people with a history of heart attack to “get back on their feet and return to living an active and satisfying life after their heart event – both physically and emotionally”.

With less than one in three heart attack survivors attending cardiac rehabilitation programs, the Foundation is calling for increased participation rates with the potential for huge healthcare cost savings as well as \$58m in social and economic benefits.

OTC codeine ineffective?

THEO Theodorou, pharmacist-in-charge at a large pharmacy in Western Sydney, has proffered a well-documented summary of issues around over the counter products for dental pain relief.

With ongoing discussions surrounding the use of OTC codeine-containing products and their potential upscheduling (**PD 29 Mar**), Theodorou has put forward a cogent argument against the use of codeine in the doses currently available for OTC dispensing.

Theodorou says that he has seen “confusion among my colleagues and customers about what pain killers to recommend for both effectiveness and safety”, prompting him to write a review of evidence as it applies to dental pain, but explains that it is “probably just as relevant for other types of pain such as arthritis”.

The review looks at the data relating to the options of combination non steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) with paracetamol, combination NSAIDs or paracetamol with codeine or single ingredient medication for patients complaining of dental pain.

With dental pain in the musculoskeletal pain category

Canagliflozin review

THE European Medicines Agency has initiated a new safety review of the diabetes medicine canagliflozin, after an increase in amputations, mostly affecting toes, was observed in an ongoing clinical trial.

Canagliflozin is an active component in Invokana and Vokanamet, which also contains metformin.

Hearts ♥ red wine

RESVERATROL (RSV), found in red wine, has again been subjected to rigorous research revealing that it acts via its effect on the gut.

RSV was shown in a University of Washington study to attenuate the effect of trimethylamine-N-oxide, an element of gut microbiota known to be associated with atherosclerosis.

CLICK HERE for the abstract.

NSAIDs and paracetamol in combination are “generally are equivalent or superior to opioids”, Theodorou writes, adding that the combination provides greater efficacy than either agent alone, obviating the need for codeine.

Studies have shown that at least 30mg of codeine is needed for moderate dental pain, but frequently 60mg would be needed.

Given the risks of codeine misuse, Theodorou summarises that NSAID/paracetamol combinations should be first choice for dental pain.

CLICK HERE for the review.

Bisolvon launches

BOEHRINGER Ingelheim (BI) has announced the launch of two new cough products this autumn, Bisolvon Chesty Natural which is already on shelves and Bisolvon Pholcodine Dry Forte which becomes available from early May.

Bisolvon Chesty Natural Liquid contains the active ingredient hederera helix with lactoferrin which the company says helps clear mucous from the chest, calms coughs and may help boost the immune system against winter bugs.

This product comes in a honey and lemon flavour and will be nationally advertised on television.

Bisolvon Pholcodine Dry Forte Liquid contains 4mg pholcodine, per 1mL, which is a higher strength liquid than the “leading dry forte brand,” Boehringer Ingelheim says.

FDA pulls combos

THE US Food and Drug Administration has withdrawn its approval for indications of co-administration of statins with niacin and fenofibric acid, which will see the removal from the US market of Abbvie’s Advicor and Simcor, along with Niaspan and Trilipix and their generic equivalents.

The FDA said “the totality of the evidence no longer supports the conclusion that a drug-induced reduction in triglyceride levels and/or increase in HDL cholesterol levels in statin-treated patients results in a reduction in the risk of cardiovascular events”.

Compounding consult

SEEKING to clarify issues around compounding of drugs without a prescription, the US Food and Drug Administration has issued draft guidance proposing new rules.

Stakeholders are being invited to comment on the drafts within 90 days, with key issues at stake including quantity supplied, to whom and in what locations.

The US has two standards - one (503A) for specific patients, and a more stringent 503B level for non patient-specific orders.

Under the draft guidance the FDA says it believes all activities taking place at a registered outsourcing facility at a single geographic location should be subject to 503B and the FDA’s current good manufacturing practices, to ensure drugs made under different standards are not accidentally commingled.

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NZ whooping cough

THE incidence of whooping cough in New Zealand has doubled in one year according to a report in *Fairfax* media late last week.

The alarming figures highlight the critical need for higher awareness and facility to enable more complete population vaccination, authorities said.

Of particular concern was malignant or critical pertussis which created complications that could be fatal, said Dr Anusha Ganeshalingham, a paediatric intensivist at Starship hospital.



Guild Update

Safe use of codeine

THE Pharmacy Guild is currently conducting the national rollout of MedsASSIST - the codeine real-time system that will help pharmacists monitor consumer use of codeine containing products to ensure safe and effective use.

Since the MedsASSIST pilot commenced in February in approximately 140 pharmacies in Newcastle, NSW and North Queensland regions, we have collected data on more than 50,000 transactions. The system is demonstrating its effectiveness in identifying patients who may be at risk of developing codeine dependency. It is also demonstrating that the overwhelming majority of consumers are using these products safely.

The Guild supports maintaining the Schedule 3 (Pharmacist Only) listing for analgesic medicines containing codeine so the majority of consumers who use these products safely and effectively can continue to have timely access to these products.

APC recruits committee

THE Australian Pharmacy Council (APC) is seeking applications from people with suitable qualifications and experiences to join the new Accreditation Committee which takes office from May this year.

The Accreditation Committee is an operational committee responsible for accreditation decisions in accordance with policies set by the Council.

The new eight-member committee is envisaged to draw upon expertise from the pharmacy profession, academia and the community, with Professor Nick

Shaw already appointed to continue as Committee chair.

The seven positions to be filled include two pharmacy academics with experience in tertiary pharmacy education, one of whom has experience in the area of pharmacy competency standards and assessment, and clinical education and training, one practising pharmacist with experience in hospital pharmacy and clinical education, one community pharmacist experienced in training interns, one with expertise in interprofessional learning, assessment or accreditation and one community member.

Appointments will be for a maximum term of three years with a maximum of two terms to serve.

Applicants are invited to submit for one or more positions with their CV, a completed Position Identification Form and a separate statement for each position for which application is being made.

The APC has posted the Position Identification Form and the new Accreditation Committee By-law on its website, stipulating that submissions should be received by midnight AEST Sunday 01 May.

Go to pharmacycouncil.org.au.

Ribomustin funded

NON-HODGKIN'S Lymphoma treatment Ribomustin (bendamustine) from Janssen-Cilag is to be authority listed on the PBS under defined circumstances effective 01 May.

Lymphoma expert, Associate Professor Stephen Opat, Consultant Haematologist from Monash Health said that he had seen first-hand the benefits of the drug which he described as "more effective and less toxic" than the most commonly used chemotherapy.

"The majority of patients can continue with their lives while undergoing treatment," he said.

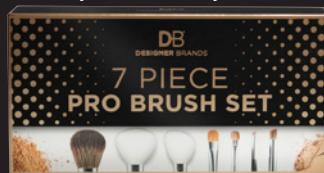
Win with DESIGNER BRANDS

This week *Pharmacy Daily* and Designer Brands are giving away a Make Me up Pro Brush set each day.

Brushes are the key to flawless makeup application, and with the Designer Brands Make Me Up Pro Brush Set you will always look like you've had your makeup done by a professional. With each brush individually labeled, even makeup novices will know which tools to choose to achieve the perfect makeup look.

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What are the brushes made of?

Congratulations to yesterday's winner, Nora Chong from Shire Australia.

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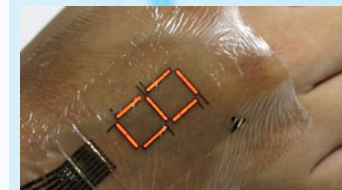


DISPENSARY CORNER

JAPANESE researchers have released details of ultra-thin electronic "skin" (pictured) which is able to measure oxygen levels when attached to the body.

The latest development in "wearable electronics" could eventually be used to monitor oxygen levels during surgery, according to the scientists from the University of Tokyo.

Currently only at a prototype stage, the device contains micro-electronic components which can light up in different colours, with the report on the findings in *Science Advances* saying the next stage will be to display numbers and letters on the skin to monitor different conditions.



HAIRY ants are able to resist heat much more effectively than non-hairy ants.

How would you prove this? By shaving them, of course.

That was the intriguing project undertaken by researchers at the Free University of Brussels, who were aiming to discover the survival techniques of Saharan silver ants which can survive temperatures of more than 50°C.

They compared normal hairy ants with some which had been shaved using a tiny scalpel blade using the assistance of a high powered microscope, measuring the amount of light reflected and how fast they warmed up under a heat lamp.

The unshaven ants were almost ten times more reflective than the bald ones, which kept them as much as two degrees Celsius cooler, the scientists found.