

Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today has two pages of news, plus a full page from **Pharmacy 4 Less**.

Mineral Therapy app

BLACKMORES professional has launched a new Mineral Therapy app for patients.

The free app which can be downloaded at the Apple store and Google Play has five key components.

It includes a practitioner locator, monthly assessment reminders, a body map assessment, a retail store finder and medication reminders.

Novartis Sandoz petitions ruling

NOVARTIS Sandoz wants the US Supreme Court to reconsider the ruling that biosimilar makers have to wait an extra six months after Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval before the product can be launched on the market.

Sandoz's Zarxio drug which came to the market as a biosimilar version of Amgen's Neupogen (flgrastim) is at the centre of the appeal.

The FDA approved Zarxio in Mar 2015 but it didn't come to the market until Sep because of the ruling on a provision in the Biologics Price Competition and Innovation Act.

Sandoz claims in its petition it provided Amgen with more than 180 days' notice (minimum period of notification) of its intent to put the drug on the market.

\$1 discount budget saver

THINLY disguised as a cost saving to consumers, the \$1 discount plan by the government is in reality a straightforward budget cut funded out of the pharmacist's pocket, according to the Pharmacy Guild of Australia.

Criticism in News Ltd Sunday papers accused the Guild of misleading patients into thinking they will be worse off by taking the discount and that this is the cause of the low 30% take up of the discount in the first month since its introduction.

A Guild spokesperson said, "The \$1 discount is paid for by pharmacies (not by the Federal Government) and is actually a budget cut with the Government saving money from patients who take the discount having to fill more scripts before they reach their Safety Nets."

Many patients upon discussing the discount with their pharmacist and realising they will take longer to reach their safety net and be given free medicines, have opted not to take the discount, the Guild has revealed.

This has been happening even in

Arthritis NZ meeting

ARTHRITIS New Zealand is celebrating "50 years of joint action" at its annual conference to be held at Te Papa in Wellington on the 05 Mar.

Key speakers include Arthritis Australia ceo Ainslie Cahill and Curtin University Associate Professor Andrew Biggs.



pharmacy groups with a blanket policy such as Chemist Warehouse.

Pointing out the facts around the "discount", far from being misleading, is actually the responsible thing to do, the Guild has said.

"On the contrary, it would be misleading not to tell patients about the impact of the discount on their access to the Safety Net."

The Guild has recommended its members continue informing their patients of the facts in relation to the optional \$1 discount.

e-health incentives

FORMER Victorian health minister Bronwyn Pike, has called for a "carrot and stick" approach to drive healthcare providers to use electronic health records and online consultations to reach more patients at lower cost, reports the AFR.

Latest data released from the Federal Department of Health show only 2.59m Australians, just over 10% of the population, and 7,836 healthcare providers have signed up to the government's My Health Record e-health system.

These data are well below the critical mass that is urgently needed to reduce waste and duplication in healthcare, Pike said.

Pharmacist counsel

CHRISTCHURCH pharmacists are being supported with the offer of up to three free counselling sessions following the region's 14 Feb 5.7 magnitude earthquake, according to a report from *PharmacyToday.co.nz*.

While many pharmacies reported having to clean up stock which had fallen off shelves, pharmacists said the greater impact has been on the staff's emotional wellbeing.

The counselling sessions are being offered through an arrangement established by the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP).

The EAP program has also offered additional resources for pharmacists and their teams.

CLICK HERE for access.

McGorry at PSA conf

LEADING mental health advocate and former Australian of the Year Professor Patrick McGorry will be the keynote speaker at the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) NSW Branch's Annual Therapeutic Update (ATU) Conference in Mar.

The annual conference has a theme of 'Advancing therapeutic knowledge and medication management' and will be held in Terrigal, NSW from 04 to 06 Mar.

Registrations close 02 Mar.

Visit www.psa.org.au/atu16.

Cancer-blockers

MONASH researchers are trialling beta-blockers as a potential way to slow the spread of breast cancer.

Anaesthetist Dr Jonathan Hiller is leading the clinical trials at the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre.

It builds on earlier findings from the Monash Institute of Pharmaceutical Science which found chronic stress acts as a fertiliser for tumour cells.

Hiller's hypothesis is that beta-blockers, which reduce blood pressure by blocking the effect of stress hormones, could potentially help prevent the effects of acute stress encountered in cancer diagnosis and treatment.

Statins and flu vaccine

STATIN users are being encouraged to still get the flu shot, even if cholesterol drugs can potentially make it less effective.

Professor of Global Health, Epidemiology and Pediatrics at Emory University Saad B Omer found even with less-than-excellent effectiveness (35% less effective), it is still the best tool available for preventing influenza.

The vaccine is 50-60% effective for preventing flu-related hospitalisations and 80% effective for preventing flu-related deaths.

"Even if the findings that statins somewhat decrease flu vaccine effectiveness are confirmed by additional studies, the vaccine remains the best available tool for reducing flu-related complications and death," Omer said.



Weekly Comment

Welcome to *PD's* weekly comment feature. This week's contributor is

Sarah Spagnardi, Pharmacist and Media Spokesperson, NPS MedicineWise.



Addressing antidepressant expectations

APPROXIMATELY 50% of people with depression respond to treatment with the first antidepressant trialled. As pharmacists are often the first point of contact by a patient starting medication, they play an important role in providing adequate information about antidepressants and depression, as well as support and monitoring to help treatment adherence and maximise recovery.

Patients receiving a prescription for an antidepressant may express concerns about potential adverse effects. Pharmacists can help by providing advice both on possible adverse effects and on treatment expectations. A good approach is to ask the patient what they understand about their treatment and address any gaps in knowledge. Pharmacists can also monitor for treatment response, remembering that noticeable beneficial effects may take weeks to occur.

When a patient is switching or discontinuing from an antidepressant, highlight the importance of compliance with any recommended switching regime and encourage patients to discuss any discontinuation symptoms. Being partners in mental health care, pharmacists can enhance their level of support to people on antidepressants by taking part in the NPS MedicineWise [Pharmacy Practice Review, Depression: Optimising antidepressant use](#), available in April 2016.

OTC naloxone follow up

THE recent move to make naloxone available over the counter (OTC) needs to be followed up by appropriate regulatory changes, argues a new report in the *Medical Journal of Australia*.

The suggested changes would see take-home programs (THN) able to dispense naloxone directly to their clients without the need for a doctor or pharmacist.

"While OTC access removes the need for a doctor's prescription, the requirement for dispensing by a doctor or pharmacist remains," professor Simon Lenton, deputy director of the National Drug Research Institute in Perth, and his coauthors, explained.

"Access to naloxone will be maximised when those providing instructions for use (including, for example, allied health or peer workers) also provide the medication," they continued.

They argue that without such changes, down-scheduling to Schedule 3 does little to simplify dispensing arrangements for current THN programs.

THN programs are designed to help manage opioid overdose events in the pre-hospital setting.

The extensive programs involve

training potential overdose witnesses in overdose response and then prescribing & distributing naloxone to potential overdose victims for later use.

"We hope that the rescheduling of naloxone to make it available OTC will lead to state and territory health officials exploring ways to similarly allow Australian THN programs to dispense this medication directly and cost-effectively to their clients," they concluded.

Naloxone and kiosks

US GIANT pharmacy chain, Walgreens has announced it would install safe medication disposal kiosks in more than 500 drugstores in 39 states and Washington, D.C. reports *Drug Topics*.

Simultaneously, Walgreens said it would make naloxone available without a prescription at its pharmacies in 35 states and Washington, D.C.

Last week, the pharmacy group made naloxone available throughout New York State without a prescription, announcing plans to follow suit in Ohio and Indiana later this month.

DISPENSARY CORNER

WHEN a thief attempted to hold up a pharmacy in Florida, he wasn't expecting a state boxing champion to launch at him.

Luck would have it that David West had stopped by Walgreens pharmacy to visit his pharmacist girlfriend when the robbery unfolded.

When the robber climbed onto the counter demanding Oxycodone pills and claiming he had a gun, West decided it was time to act.

He wasn't having anyone mess with the love of his life.

With several boxing titles up his sleeve he launched a calm and measured attack (pictured on CCTV footage below) until the suspect was knocked out.

"I really wasn't trying to hurt anybody, I was just trying to do what was right," he told *9 News*.

Lesson learned, don't mess with pharmacists!



THE dog ate my homework. Yes, we've all heard that one. How about 'a mouse ate my traffic reduction plans'.

Extensive delays in fixing traffic problems on the roads of Belgium have been pinned on a mouse, who supposedly ate the plans.

During a special hearing set up to tackle the issue of continuous gridlock traffic, former head of the city's infrastructure agency, Christian Debuyscher, said with a straight face, original plans to fix the problem were "apparently eaten by mice".

That's a new one, the search is still on for the offending rodent.

Win with MILANI

This week *Pharmacy Daily* and Milani are giving away everyday a prize pack including Supreme Kohl Kajal Eyeliner, Eyeshadow Primer and Tastastic Face & Body Baked Bronzer.

Milani Cosmetics is a cruelty-free brand. They do not test products on animals, nor do they allow others to test on their behalf. The brand is certified by both PETA and The Leaping Bunny Program (CCIC) as cruelty-free. Milani also has a ton of Vegan options also. For more info visit www.milanicosmetics.com.au

To win, be the first from **NSW or ACT** to send the right answer to the following question to comp@pharmacydaily.com.au

How many different MKK-01 Supreme Kajal Eyeliners are there?

Check here tomorrow for today's winner.



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