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Turnbull pledges support

PRIME Minister Malcolm Turnbull has written a letter of support for community pharmacy, in response to a request from the Pharmacy Guild which has invited all political parties contesting the federal election to state where they stand on a range of pharmacy issues.

The PM has confirmed his govt is "committed to supporting hardworking pharmacies through much needed measures to support small business," adding that the Coalition "continues to support the model of pharmacies being owned by pharmacists to ensure community pharmacy remains focused on the needs of patients."

"The established community pharmacy model continues to serve Australians well," he said.

Interestingly, Turnbull also noted the current independent review of Pharmacy Remuneration and Regulation, saying it will make its recommendations but "any policy changes are always a matter for Government".

He encouraged pharmacies to engage closely as the reforms progress, to ensure they continue to be a key player in delivering new and improved health outcomes.

The Prime Minister also said if re-

elected the government will ensure the \$50 million in the Pharmacy Trial Program and the \$600 million in the Sixth Community Pharmacy Agreement for new and expanded professional services "deliver the very best evidence-based health outcomes for patients through the community pharmacy network".

He said a re-elected Coalition would also continue to work with the Pharmacy Guild to identify a solution to improve the Quality Use of Medicines under the Remote Area Aboriginal Health Services (RAAHS) program, and ensure appropriate remuneration for the scheme under the 6CPA.

Turnbull noted the many health challenges facing Australia with an ageing population, increasing rates of chronic disease and the cost of life changing medications and new technology, saying he looks forward to continuing to build on the government's successful partnership with the Guild.

Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today has three pages of news, plus a full page from **Complementary Medicines Australia**.

Vaccination Recording

Professional Services > Immunisation

CM conference

COMPLEMENTARY Medicines Australia and the Australasian Integrative Medicine Association are offering earlybird registration deals for their upcoming inaugural joint symposium in Sydney, which takes place 03-04 Sep.

Themed *Nature Science Practice - how science-based natural approaches are changing medicine*, the conference will also look at CM-drug interactions.

Two-day attendance costs \$650 for registrations before 14 Jun - for details see **page four**.

Repeated RTMS call

DESPITE more Australians dying from prescription drug overdoses than on our roads, governments continue "to dither and pass the buck" on implementation of a national drug real time monitoring system (RTMS), according to David Quilty, executive director of the Pharmacy Guild of Australia.

Quilty's comments are part of a letter of congratulations written to journalist Stephanie Wood who wrote "a powerfully human portrayal of the opioid addiction crisis in Australia (The Pain Killers, 4 June)" in Fairfax Media's *The Good Weekend* last Sat.



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SHPA research think tank



THE Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia yesterday hosted its inaugural Research Think Tank, gathering some of pharmacy's top Australian researchers for the event in Melbourne.

SHPA ceo Kristin Michaels said the move was a 'world's best practice' initiative which is part of the Society's National Translational Research Collaborative (NTRC) project.

Michaels said the participants helped advise on the support they need to meet their research goals and embed research into their daily practice, regardless of the setting in which they work.

"This pioneering translational initiative, based on collaboration across the profession, confirms SHPA's vanguard role, paving the way for a robust future for the profession and laying the foundations for a more effective health system," Michaels said.

The event also included presentations from non-pharmacy researchers, in order to help "ensure pharmacy breaks away from its more insular approach to practice and research".

The NTRC Project Steering Committee is chaired by Dr Lisa Pont, who said the committee

also includes non-pharmacist researchers with expertise in areas such as nursing, mental health and consumer issues.

Key outcomes from the event included agreement that research should be embedded in pharmacy practice, with SHPA supporting a culture change across all levels of pharmacy departments.

Delegates "want SHPA to instil enthusiasm for research in young researchers and also to ensure senior management support for research within their departments and organisations," Michaels said. "We must continue to provide support and mentoring across the profession to increase the number of people actively involved in research.

"It is also important that...we facilitate consumer and community engagement and partnerships, then ensure that these partnerships become a source of advice for initiating and implementing research projects," she added.

Some of the steering committee members are **pictured above**, from left: Professor Jeff Hughes; Andrew Matthews, General Manager of Workforce Transformation, SHPA; Dr Manya Angley; Professor Andrew McLachlan; Karalyn Huxhagen; Brock Delfante; Dr Luke Grzeskowiak; Greg Roberts; SHPA president Professor Michael Dooley; Dr Lisa Pont; Associate Professor Michael Barras; Dr Chris Alderman; and SHPA ceo Kristin Michaels.

Absent from the photo are Professor Jennifer Martin, Associate Professor Karen-Leigh Edward and Anne McKenzie.

New AusPARs

THE TGA has published new Australian Public Assessment Reports for prescription medicines (AusPARs) for Imlygic (talimogene laherparepvec) and Movantik (naoxegol oxalate) - for details see www.tga.gov.au.

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Pfizer appoints new country manager

PFIZER this morning announced the appointment of Melissa McGregor as its new country manager for Australia.

McGregor will be based in Sydney, relocating from her current role heading up Pfizer operations in New Zealand where she has been for the last two years, during which the business has delivered "strong growth," through innovative market access approaches for Pfizer medicines, active involvement with Medicines New Zealand and initiatives to profile the company's wider contribution to the country.

She takes over from David Gallagher effective 01 July, who is returning to his native Ireland and will lead the business in countries across Eastern Europe.

Methotrexate dosing

PATIENTS taking methotrexate to treat their rheumatoid arthritis, psoriasis and inflammatory bowel disease have been accidentally overdosing by taking it daily rather than weekly, according to research published in the *Medical Journal of Australia* this week.

Author Dr Rose Cairns of the NSW Poisons Information Centre urged changes to avert such accidents which have resulted in "numerous deaths" since 2000.

Possible preventative measures suggested include reducing pack sizes, distinctive tablet colouring, clear labelling, co-packaging with folate and prescribing software alerts.

CLICK HERE for the article.

NOACs - alopecia link?

RIVAROXABAN, dabigatran and apixaban are possibly associated with a risk of hair loss (alopecia), according to NZ's Medsafe, which has added these NOACs to its medicines monitoring scheme for the remainder of this year.

Hair loss is not a known side effect of the NOACs but does occur with heparin and warfarin, with Medsafe saying the overall benefit-risk balance of rivaroxaban, dabigatran and apixaban remains positive.

ASMI urges CM study

THE Australian Self Medication Industry says complementary medicine research is vital to build the evidence base about the safety, efficacy and public health benefits of the products.

A submission by ASMI to the government in relation to funding priorities for the \$20 billion Medical Research Future Fund has been made public, advocating funding for CM research to "facilitate informed policy decisions on the use of complementary medicines in preventive health, and in promoting general health and wellbeing".

Brenda Davy, ASMI Strategy Manager for Complementary Medicines, said CMs were currently the largest and fastest growing segment in health care, with 70% of consumers taking vitamins, minerals and supplements.

"We know that consumers take complementary medicines to prevent some chronic conditions and contribute to their general health...we also know that if taken on a population-wide basis these medicines can have positive health outcomes and reduce the financial burden on government," she said.

The ASMI document says more research would help consumers make informed decisions about their health, as well as increasing knowledge about how CMs are used in settings such as GPs, hospitals and allied health practices.

Zovirax now available

GLAXOSMITHKLINE has resolved the manufacturing issue that resulted in the recall and subsequent medicine shortage of Zovirax Ophthalmic ointment (3% aciclovir), according to an update posted by the TGA yesterday.

The registered product is now available through the normal supply chains, while the unapproved products which were made available as alternatives (AciVision and Virgan) due to the shortage are no longer available under section 19A of the Therapeutic Goods Act 1989.

The initial recall was related to metal particles found in 11 batches of Zovirax (**PD** 28 Oct 2014).

Smokes pack rethink

NEW research conducted over the last decade has demonstrated some perverse unintended reactions about cigarette packets. Young pregnant women “absolutely terrified” of having a big baby have been known to “seek out packets that had the message smoking could make a baby smaller, and deliberately smoke in order to accomplish that aim,” said ANU’s Associate Professor Simone Dennis.



Guild Update

Guild Member turnover monitor can help business strategy

GUILD Members have access to useful industry-backed data that is aimed at helping them inform their pharmacy business strategies.

The Pharmacy Turnover Monitor is a sample data set that plots the average turnover of pharmacies each month.

The Turnover Monitor also offers data on average dispensary sales, retail sales and the value of each prescription.

The data is presented in a helpful graph for Guild Members to analyse trends over a 2-3 year period.

Members can download the latest monthly data by logging into myGuild and visiting the Turnover Monitor area.

Contact the Guild’s Business Intelligence team to join the survey sample. The team is always looking for members to participate in the survey to help build the Turnover Monitor’s value!

You can contact them by calling the National Secretariat office on (02) 6270 1888.

Amcal launches into China

SIGMA Pharmaceuticals has announced the online debut of the Amcal brand into China via a partnership with Azoya, who are a local distributor and Chinese e-commerce specialist which will provide on-the-ground customer support in China.

The Chinese language website is the first time that Amcal, owned by ASX listed Sigma, has ever entered the international retail market from its Australian base.

Sigma said all products promoted on the site will be sourced from Australia and all fulfilment operations will remain in Australia.

“This is a very important milestone in Amcal’s history and we are proud that this great Australian brand will now be launched internationally, starting with China,” said Gary Dunne, Sigma chief operating officer.

“Sigma recognised the rapid growth in e-commerce in China, but also the demand for quality Australian pharmacy branded products including vitamins, beauty accessories and a range of other health and wellbeing products.

“That’s why the company has taken this landmark step to launch this site and offer customer support in China,” Dunne said.

Chinese-based Azoya Group was chosen for the launch because of their local knowledge and expertise in cross-border eCommerce in China, Dunne explained, adding that this could be just the first of a targeted international expansion plan for Amcal and Sigma, leveraging on existing relationships and Australia’s enviable global reputation around health, wellness and beauty products quality.

The Chinese language site can be found at cn.amcal.com.au and offers a wide range of health, beauty and wellbeing products from different suppliers, as well as a selection of Sigma’s own Pharmacy Care branded products.

Biosimilar update

THE Health Department’s Biosimilar Awareness Initiative Reference Group has published communiqués from its meetings in Apr and May this year, which included stakeholders from the pharmaceutical industry, consumers, pharmacists and relevant medical authorities.

The group is part of the PBS Access and Sustainability Package which includes the 6CPA - see pbs.gov.au for the communiqués.



DISPENSARY CORNER

THIS is definitely in the “it’s a tough job but somebody has to do it” category.

Muscly men from Hungary have gathered near the capital Budapest for the nation’s first ever grave-digging competition.

The event was organised to promote the occupation, which is apparently having some difficulty in attracting new staff to replace those who are retiring.

Participants worked in 18 two-person teams to dig different sized graves including the standard 6 feet 6 inches suitable for a normal coffin.

As well as being judged on their excavation speed the criteria also included the style of the mounds surrounding the holes.

The fastest team managed to complete their grave in just over 30 minutes and will now progress to a regional final in Slovakia.

ALTHOUGH it sounds like an unusual cuisine, apparently no heartburn medicine is needed for those who sample a new NZ confectionery product which is basically chocolate-covered meat.

Created by a team at Auckland-based boutique sweetmaker Devonport Chocolates, it’s made using “dairy beef” and has a consistency similar to Turkish Delight, with all meat flavouring and texture removed.

The product has been developed in partnership with the government-backed AgResearch scientific organisation, with spokesman Mustafa Farouk saying people have no idea they are eating meat unless they are told.

“It’s all New Zealand beef, 100 per cent bull beef” Farouk said, with the breakthrough hoped to have massive potential for sportspeople and elderly people who need to boost their protein intake.

Win with MOR

This week Pharmacy Daily and MOR are giving away each day an Essentials Reed Diffuser in Basil Grape worth \$34.95.

The Essentials collection presents five memorable fragrances in an assortment of quality products to embrace everyday self-indulgence. Housed in a tinted glass vessel, this aromatic Reed Diffuser will enliven the senses and add a pop of colour to any room. For more information visit morboutique.com.

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

What fragrance notes can be found in the sweet fresh scent of Basil Grape?

Congratulations to yesterday’s winner, Stephanie Loui from Cincotta Chemists Burwood.



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