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NZ allows technicians to check scripts

NEW Zealand pharmacies will now be able to employ Pharmacy Accuracy Checking Technicians (PACTs) to carry out the final check on a dispensed item, part of a process which currently sits with a pharmacist.

New Zealand Minister for Health, Jonathan Coleman, said the new technician role will enhance the standing and job satisfaction of the technicians' already important role.

"Pharmacists play an important part in helping to deliver faster more convenient healthcare," said Coleman.

"Many New Zealanders already benefit from the advice and care of their pharmacist.

"In order to help pharmacists spend more time with patients a new technician role has been developed."

The introduction of the new role follows a successful pilot in 2015 run by the Pharmaceutical Society of NZ on behalf of Health Workforce New Zealand.

PSNZ ceo Richard Townley said PACTs are set to reshape the pharmacy workforce, with the evaluation of last year's trial finding a "fantastic" impact on quality and patient centred services.

The Society is managing the national rollout and training for PACTs via its College Education and Training arm, with training to commence later in 2016.

Election prevention push

THE Consumers Health Forum is one of a number of organisations which have formed a group called Prevention First which is calling on all political parties to act to reduce the rates of chronic disease.

The group cited the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report released this week (see below right) which found that 31% of Australia's disease burden could be eased with a greater investment in health prevention.

Prevention First spokesperson, CHF ceo Leanne Wells, said this could happen if governments targeted five modifiable risk factors: tobacco use (9%), high body mass (5.5%), alcohol use (5.1%), physical inactivity (5%) and high blood pressure (4.9%).

Connect program out

THE organisers of the upcoming Pharmacy Connect conference in Sydney have released a formal registration brochure and the full conference program.

The event takes place at the Four Points by Sheraton from 09-11 Sep, and will feature keynote speaker Mark Dunman, director of UK-based MD Healthcare who will speak on "Patients and medicines taking - pharmacists as partners" and will also lead a Pharmacy Master Class on communication.

For more information see pharmacy-connect.com.au.

"There is a very clear message for all political parties...this report finds Australia has improved overall health outcomes this century, showing we can achieve much improved health outcomes if we put prevention first," she said.

"Governments are constantly talking about the need to reduce our burgeoning health costs, yet the reality is we are under-investing in the area of prevention".

No review report until after federal poll

THERE will be no Discussion Paper released by the Review of Pharmacy Remuneration and Regulation until after the upcoming federal election (PD breaking news), with a statement issued by the Panel yesterday confirming it was obliged to observe the 'Caretaker Conventions' in the lead up to a poll.

The discussion paper, which is believed to have been delivered to the government but not been made publicly available, was originally scheduled for release last month.

The panel said research and modelling would continue during the caretaker period, but all consultation meetings are deferred.

Antibiotic abuse

ALMOST one third of all antibiotic prescriptions written in the United States are given to patients who will not benefit or do not meet the clinical criteria for treatment with antibacterials, according to a study published in *JAMA*, the journal of the American Medical Association.

US Centers for Disease Control and the non-profit, non-governmental organization Pew Charitable Trusts researchers examined data from more than 184 000 visits to doctor's offices, hospital clinics, and emergency departments.

12.6% of all visits resulted in a script being written for an antibiotic, the data revealing the almost one third of these were inappropriate, authors said.

CLICK HERE for the abstract.

Probiotics 'unfair'

A UNIVERSITY of Copenhagen study of the value of various probiotic products said the products were "not fair to consumers", according to a report in *The Australian* yesterday.

Lead author Professor Oluf Pedersen said, "There is an enormous global market for probiotics.

"Last year it was estimated this amounted to \$US33bn (\$A45bn).

"It is projected to be \$US46bn (\$A63bn) in 2020.

"For us as scientists, there is an enormous mismatch between the scientific evidence and the size of the probiotics industry," he added.

Microbiome imbalance has been associated with diabetes, multiple sclerosis and other conditions, the report said.

Although the products are mass-marketed, Pederson claims the evidence around health benefits are really only limited to specific conditions such as travellers' diarrhoea, irritable bowel syndrome or post-antibiotic therapy.

Disease burden falls

THE Australian population has enjoyed a drop in the overall burden of disease and injury with reductions between 2003 and 2011, according to a report released this week by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW).

The report, 'Australian Burden of Disease Study: Impact and causes of illness and death in Australia 2011', analyses the impact of diseases and injuries in terms of the number of years of healthy life lost through living with an illness or injury (the non-fatal burden) and the number of years of life lost through dying prematurely from an illness or injury (the fatal burden).

"We found that there was a 10% fall in total burden, that is, the fatal and non-fatal components combined", said AIHW spokesperson and report co-author Dr Lynelle Moon.

Among all the disease groups, the largest fall in the fatal burden was seen in cardiovascular diseases, where rates fell by nearly one-third.

CLICK HERE to access the report.

Win with CleanEars

This week *Pharmacy Daily* and CleanEars are giving away a prize pack of two bottles of CleanEars each day.

CleanEars is a clinically proven ear wax removal spray that is suitable for infants, children and adults. Its dual action dissolves ear wax and irrigates the ear canal. CleanEars is easy to use. You do not have to tilt your head or lie down for application, simply spray and go! To find out more visit the website **HERE**.

To win, be the first from SA or NT to send the correct answer to the question to comp@pharmacydaily.com.au

Do you need to tilt your head when using CleanEars?

Congratulations to yesterday's winner, Cassandra Lim.





Travel Specials

WELCOME to *Pharmacy Daily's* travel feature. Each week we highlight a couple of great travel deals for the pharmacy industry, brought to you by *Cruise Weekly*.

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Greek Island Mega-Yacht Deal

BEYOND Travel are offering a last minute discounts of up to \$500 per cabin on the deluxe eight-day mega-yacht cruise "Jewels of the Cyclades" through the Aegean Sea for departures in June 2016.

Voyage aboard the newly renovated boutique ship *MS Galileo* on a round-trip cruise from Athens, including port visits to some of the lesser known Greek Islands.

Starting at \$2,490 pp twin share, a saving of \$500 per couple, with multiple inclusions.

For details, contact Beyond Travel on 1300-363-554.

Aqua Expeditions Family Specials

AQUA Expeditions, leader of luxury cruises on the world's greatest rivers has introduced family travel deals with exciting active travel experiences for children.

Children between the age of 7 and 12 years will stay on board the *Aqua Mekong* for free when sharing with both parents in a triple cabin or accompanied by a single parent - for more go to www.aquaexpeditions.com.

Pharmacy ethics ratings

THE overwhelming majority of Australians aged 14 and over (92%) rate nurses as the most ethical and honest profession, but pharmacists ranked equal second with doctors both 86% (up 2%), according to the latest Roy Morgan "Image of Professions" survey.

This ranks nurses at the top for the 22nd year in a row since they were first included on the poll, which was conducted by telephone on the nights of 04 and 05 May with 655 Australian men and women responding.

Of all 30 professions surveyed in 2015 a majority (23) increased in regards to consumer perceptions of their ethics and honesty.

Other professions that gained high ratings included engineers 78% (up 4%), school teachers 77% (down 1%), dentists 75% (up 4%) police 72% (up 3% at an all-time high and up from 53% in 1988 & 1989), high court judges 71% (up 3%) and state supreme court judges 70% (up 1%).

Losers in the 2015 poll include ministers of religion 35% (down 4%), bank managers 30% (down 4%, and down 13% since 2014)

Foster fined, banned

SERIAL scammer Peter Foster, who was behind the SensaSlim weight loss operation (*PD* 10 Apr 14), has been fined \$660,000 and permanently banned from holding a company directorship or operating any business in the diet or health industry.

Yesterday in the Federal Court Justice David Yates fined SensaSlim a total of \$3.55m for promoting its fake diet nasal spray to some 80 unsuspecting franchisees and the general public.

The court ruled that the company had engaged in misleading or deceptive conduct by failing to disclose Foster's involvement in the SensaSlim franchise scam, and said he is "beyond redemption".

and union leaders 13% (down 1%) following last year's Royal Commission into union corruption activities.

The lowest ranked profession is as always, car salesmen 4% (unchanged) a position they have held for more than three decades, with the next lowest being advertising people 9% (up 4%, now the same as 2013) and real estate agents 10% (up 1%).

SHPA NSW awards

THE Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia has opened nominations for its 2016 NSW Branch Awards.

There are three awards up for grabs - the Early Career Pharmacist Award, the Technician Award, and the Outstanding Achievement Award, with the winners to be announced during the SHPA NSW Branch Symposium on 16 Jul 2016.

Nominations should be forwarded to NSW Branch Secretary Kristin Xenos via email before 10 Jun - kristin.xenos@health.nsw.gov.au.

Winners receive commemorative certificates along with cash prizes.

Criteria for the nominations, which must be made by two current members of SHPA, are now available at www.shpa.org.au.

Pneumonia ignorance

ONLY 1% of Australians aged 18-74 understand age-relevant vaccination is vital to maintaining good health, and only 20% of those most at risk of infection have been vaccinated against pneumococcal pneumonia, according to new figures from Lung Foundation Australia's 'Breathe well, age well' research set for release this week, marking Pneumonia Awareness Week (May 09-15).

For more on this subject, visit www.lungfoundation.com.au or call the Lung Foundation Australia on 1800 654 301.



DISPENSARY CORNER

COULD the secret to true love be hiding in a sweaty armpit?

The organisers of the world's first armpit sniffing dating event in London seem to think so.

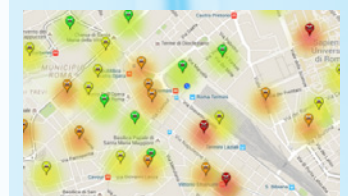
Similar to the principles of the postal Smell Dating service (*PD* 30 Mar), participants pop a paper bag over their heads for anonymity before sniffing the body odour of potential partners.

Score cards are then used to rate your people's smells.

The event is based off the idea that pheromones have a strong impact on who you're sexually attracted to.

Singles were so hyped about the event that the £10 tickets sold out within two hours.

If any love blooms from the pungent event, we'll let you know.



HERE'S an innovative way to help ease the threat of Zika virus - a free app that updates where hordes of mosquitos are hanging out in real time.

ZanzaMapp uses information from the public to highlight mozzie hot spots which are then colour coded by density on a map (example map pictured above).

Concerned users can then choose to avoid areas which show up with heavy concentrations of the blood suckers.

The Italian developer behind the app said managing the risk of Zika was a key reason behind his creation.

"I realised there's little practical information on how to manage the presence of mosquitoes," he told the *BBC*.