

Hep B vax shortage

HEPATITIS Australia says it is working to gain information from governments over the potential impact of the global hepatitis B vaccine shortage (**PD** 6 Apr). Supplier GSK said it was a "precautionary halt" but it was rebuilding manufacturing capacity. Meanwhile the EngerixB paediatric dose and Twinrix combined hepatitis A and B vaccine are still available, GSK said.

Social media flu fight

THE NZ Ministry of Health is teaming up with Massey University to investigate social media as a means of anticipating flu and other infectious disease epidemics and outbreaks. It is expected that trends visible on platforms like Twitter and Facebook could yield valuable early alerts to forthcoming health issues.

Former WA pharmacist fined

AN UNREGISTERED former West Australian pharmacist has been fined \$10,000 plus costs for holding himself out as a registered pharmacist while not being registered under the National Law. Brian Geoffrey Donegan pleaded guilty to seven charges in the Geraldton Magistrates Court in a case brought by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA).

He admitted to working as the sole pharmacist on duty at Northampton Pharmacy between Oct 2015 and Jun 2016, a period when he dispensed S4 and S8 medicines while not actually holding pharmacist registration. Donegan also illegally used the protected title 'pharmacist' by allowing his name to be displayed on a 'pharmacist on duty' sign. He admitted to providing the

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pharmacy owner with a fraudulent certificate of registration stating that he held unrestricted registration at the relevant time.

As well as the fine and \$1,085 in costs, the court refused an application by the former pharmacist for "spent conviction orders" which would have meant the matter was treated as though a formal conviction was not recorded.

Band-Aid backdown

AFTER years promoting its Band-Aid adhesive bandages as "healing heals cuts twice as fast" and "fast healing", US health care giant Johnson and Johnson has decided to remove the claims from advertising programs.

The move follows a request by Australian health activist Ken Harvey who wrote to J&J for copies of research held by the company to support the faster healing claims.

The company told *Fairfax Media* it does have the data, but it is not published and the claims would be removed from all of its advertising.

"There is an abundance of independent literature in the public domain to support faster healing of covered wounds," according to a J&J Pacific spokesperson.

Anspeg takes tender

AUSTRALIAN and international supplier of pharmaceutical, medical, dental and consumable products Anspeg Pty Ltd, has won the AusTender for supply of drugs and pharmaceutical products to the Department of Defence.

The contract is described as a limited tender, is effective for the period 30 Mar 2017 to 31 May 2017 and is estimated to be worth almost \$150,000.

Visit tenders.gov.au for details.

NAPSA charity cup

THE National Australian Pharmacy Students' Association has kicked off its 2017 Charity Cup, with proceeds this year supporting LIVIN, a not-for-profit mental health charity founded with a mission to eradicate the stigma associated with mental illness in society today.

NAPSA branches have already hosted a range of events to raise funds including barbecues, chocolate drives, quiz nights and cocktail events.

A national target of \$30,000 has been set for the drive which runs through until 26 May.

LIVIN representatives are also presenting educational events to students in each state.

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Dispensary Corner

WHAT do you do when you crave a nice hot juicy burger?

Just drive to a fast food outlet of course - but what if you are only eight years old?

Well one Ohio child had the answer - obvious, in fact. Yes, that's it, simply drive Dad's van to McDonald's and take your four year old sister along for the ride, just for good measure.



Local police officer Jacob Koehler said witnesses saw the boy driving and called police in the city of East Palestine, about 145km southeast of Cleveland.

Koehler says the youngster told him he learned to drive by watching YouTube videos, adding the boy appeared to obey traffic laws and no charges were filed.

AND while we are on the "would you like chips with that?" theme, it appears that demand for potato crisps has surged in Japan this week, with products on offer for six times their retail price online after Japanese snack company Calbee halted the sale of some of its most popular chip brands.

Calbee's pizza-flavoured chips, normally priced around AU\$2.20, were going for more than AU\$12.00 on Yahoo Japan's auction website on the weekend.

Photos of near-empty shelves at local supermarkets were trending on Twitter, with the shortage blamed on failed yields in some of the key potato-producing regions of the island of Hokkaido.

The *Nikkei* newspaper warns that the "Potato Crisis" could also spread to fast food outlets soon.

Flu vaccine now available

QUADRIVALENT vaccines designed to protect Australians against four strains of this year's influenza virus are now available both in the private market and under the National Immunisation Program (NIP), according to a Health Department update.

Health Minister Greg Hunt urged all Australians to consider getting a flu shot this year, highlighting the vaccine's wide availability including "at many pharmacies".

The flu shot this year covers two A strains of influenza (Michigan and Hong Kong) and two B strains of influenza (Brisbane and Phuket) with no live virus involved.

MEANWHILE pharmacists can advise customers that vaccinating against influenza does more than just protect the individual, according to Monash University Professor in Infectious Diseases Epidemiology Allen Cheng.

Writing in *The Conversation*, Cheng along with the University of Sydney's Kristine Macartney, have highlighted that benefits of immunisation extend well beyond individual protection, incomplete though that may be.

"For vulnerable people, the flu

can be the difference between being at home with a chronic disease, and being in hospital with complications such as bacterial pneumonia," they write.

For those who come into contact with vulnerable people such as the elderly, young or sick, vaccination reduces the risk of passing the disease on to those most at risk of serious complications.

Another concern is that the risk of contracting influenza is reduced by only 40-50% in those vaccinated, but the authors point out that "reducing the risk of infection by half is worth the effort."

Under the NIP more than 4.5 million doses of vaccine will be provided free of charge to the vulnerable, namely the very young and the elderly as well as pregnant women and most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

TGA fake drug alert

THE TGA has alerted consumers that Nangen Zengzhangsu capsules pose a serious risk to their health and should not be taken, after testing found the item contained the undisclosed drug sildenafil.

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This week, Pharmacy Daily and Lifestream are giving away each day 1.25L Lifestream Aloe Vera Juice, valued at \$32.95 RRP.

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