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Rx drugs abuse up

THE number of Australians who misuse pharmaceuticals is rising, with the number of deaths caused by these medications now exceeding those caused by illegal drugs, according to a report released by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW).

Two main types of prescription drugs: opioid analgesics (including morphine, codeine and tramadol), and benzodiazepines are the focus of attention in the report.

“Over the past decade, there has been a substantial rise in the number of deaths involving a prescription drug, with drug-induced deaths more likely to be due to prescription drugs than illegal drugs,” said AIHW spokesperson Matthew James.

“In 2016, 1,808 drug-induced deaths were due to prescription drugs, with benzodiazepines the most common drug type, identified in 663 drug-induced deaths.

“This is followed by 550 deaths from opioids (including prescription painkillers such as oxycodone, morphine, and codeine).”

The number of drug-induced deaths involving benzodiazepines rose by 168% between 2006 and 2016, an average annual rise of 11.8%, or 42 deaths, each year.

Earlier this year, the AIHW’s 2016 National Drug Strategy Household Survey showed that Indigenous Australians and people living in remote and very remote areas were almost twice as likely as those living in major cities to have recently used a pharmaceutical for non-medical purposes.

Visit aihw.gov.au for the report.

EBOS rebrands logistics

EBOS Group has announced the rebranding of its existing Symbion Contract Logistics Distribution

business to Healthcare Logistics, with the move to be phased in with the debut of a new \$15 million distribution centre in May 2018.

The company will roll out new branding from this month, with the project expected to be complete when the new facility opens in Pemulwuy, NSW, next year.

EBOS already distributes product in New Zealand under the Healthcare Logistics (HCL) brand, with the move to unify the brand across Australia and New Zealand.

“The rebranding will establish HCL as its own brand while allowing the business to continue the long-standing relationship with Symbion,” said EBOS Group gm contract logistics, Michael Broome.

The new 25,000m² HCL distribution centre will become the largest facility across the entire group, with capacity for approximately 30,000 pallets.

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It has a specially designed 13.5m flat ceiling, along with provision for future expansion in the cold chain and controlled

drugs areas.

HCL will move from its current headquarters in Rydalmere, NSW to the new facility in Mar next year.

The business is also expanding across the Tasman, with the opening of a new 7,500m² warehouse in Auckland to cater for ongoing growth.

Broome said the new facilities in both countries would help future-proof the business as well as underline EBOS Group’s “commitment to investing in the region”.

Creso cracks Colombia

AUSTRALIAN-LISTED medicinal cannabis company Creso Pharma has announced its acquisition of Kunna Canada and its wholly-owned Colombian subsidiary, Kunna S.A.S.

The announcement places Creso as the only Australian-listed medicinal cannabis company with direct exposure to the Colombian market, which is expected to be exporting more than 40.5 tonnes of medicinal cannabis oil by 2019.

The Latin American market, which includes Argentina, Colombia, Chile, Mexico and Uruguay, is growing strongly, with the Colombian Government enacting the legalisation of medical cannabis in Jun last year.

Med reviews assist

PHARMACIST-LED medication reviews confer many benefits such as attainment of biomarker targets for improved clinical outcomes and other clinical parameters, as well as depict concrete financial advantages in terms of lowering total medication costs and associated savings, according to new work out of the UK and Malaysia.

An expert commentary on the study said, “The cost-effectiveness of medication reviews are more consequential than ever before.

“A critical evaluation of pharmacist-led medication reviews in residential aged care facilities from an economical aspect is crucial in determining if the time, effort, and direct and indirect costs involved in the review rationalise the significance of conducting medication reviews for older people in aged care facilities.”

The research was published in the *Journal Expert Review of Pharmacoeconomics & Outcomes Research*.

Visit tandfonline.com for access.

MYEFO supports PBS

PHARMACEUTICAL industry peak body Medicines Australia (MA) has said it welcomes the ongoing commitment of the Turnbull Government in its Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook (MYEFO) in terms of the PBS, but criticised the lack of transparency in the Budget papers around the reporting of PBS expenditure.

“Expenditure on the PBS has been flat, or even declining in real terms, since 2011,” MA said.

FDA homeopathic hit

THE US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has announced a crackdown on homeopathic products, saying it will prioritise enforcement actions against homeopathic products with reported safety concerns, intended for preventing or treating serious or life-threatening diseases or aimed at vulnerable populations.

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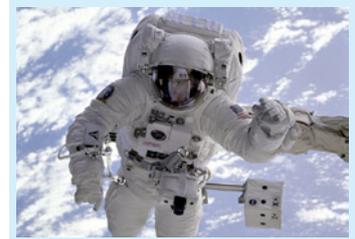
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Dispensary Corner

ARE you or your patients considering a trip to Mars in the near (or distant) future? Osteoporosis may be an issue, with scientists finding exposure to radiation during deep-space missions might enhance the effect of microgravity on astronaut skeletons. Using a simulated space environment, researchers discovered that radiation alone does not have an effect on muscle loss; it does, however, amplify the negative effects on the bones. The results suggest the body is probably not equipped with the mechanisms to specifically cope with the effects of space flight, prompting it to 'turn on all possible defence systems.'



THE California Department of Health has warned that people need to keep their mobile phones a metre away from them to reduce radiation exposure & health risk. The warning comes amid mounting evidence that phone use may be linked to cancer, attention, mental health and reproductive health issues. Children's developing brains may also be particularly vulnerable to radioactive emissions from mobile phones. Exposure risks are highest when phones have poor service or are downloading or streaming media.

SHPA two-pronged push

THE twin goals of improving health outcomes and generating economic savings can be achieved by ensuring more people take prescribed medicines as intended, and pharmacy services are extended to more Australians, the Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) said yesterday. The SHPA was highlighting the main points in its Federal Budget 2018-19 Submission with an emphasis on boosting medicines compliance. It also recommended improving access to cognitive pharmacy services on weekends and in aged care facilities, among its eight key recommendations. SHPA chief executive Kristin Michaels says a targeted medicines support service would combat medicines non-adherence, a well-documented and ongoing burden on Australian patients and the



nation's health sector. "It is estimated two in five Australians have stopped taking prescribed medicine before they were meant to, on at least one occasion, and over one quarter of all hospital readmissions involve medicines non-use, misuse or abuse," Michaels said adding that a more concerted effort should be made to identify, manage and support patients at high risk of poor medicines use including those with opioid dependency. Other elements in the SHPA submission sought a "bridge the gap" plan for high-risk patients leaving hospital, seven-day clinical pharmacy services being established in hospitals, embedding pharmacists into Australian health facilities to address safety and quality concerns in aged care, improving antimicrobial stewardship, funding hospitals to provide Closing the Gap Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme Measure subsidies to Indigenous people, as well as developing a national pharmacy workforce reform strategy.

Philippines suspends dengue drug

THE Philippine Government has suspended use of Sanofi's dengue virus vaccine, amid growing public anger at warnings from the company that some people could face significant adverse events. Dengvaxia has been administered to more than 800,000 school children, but late last month Sanofi released new data showing the drug could lead to "severe infections" for vaccinated people not previously infected. Sanofi has urged the Philippines to lift the suspension of the drug, insisting it is safe and effective for most people.

Nurse supplied S4D

THE NSW Health Care Complaints Commission has ruled against Adam Menz, a former nurse, for misappropriating and inappropriately supplying a schedule 4D drug. Menz is unable to reapply for his registration for 12 months.

Guild Update

THE recent funding changes introduced to programs under the Sixth Community Pharmacy Agreement (6CPA) are now being reflected in the Guild's new Opportunity Analysis (OA) reporting system. The OA tool is a key component of the Guild's Health Advice Plus Program, and is designed to provide a customised report using a pharmacy's data to highlight lost income opportunities linked to key service areas. The tool, which is priced at \$149 (incl. GST) for a 12-month subscription, enables you to run the report five times so you can continue tracking your business's performance, and helps pharmacies understand their potential missed income and how to monitor your business's performance. Once you have completed your OA, a Health Advice Plus coach will contact you to organise a feedback session over the phone that will run for approximately 45 minutes. To register go to: www.healthadviceplus.com.au/register. If you have any questions, please contact Health Advice Plus on 1300 309 190.

Health World becomes Metagenics

HEALTH World Limited, the company behind such brands as Ethical Nutrients and Inner Health, has announced it will change its name to Metagenics (Aust) Pty Ltd. Other than the company name, all other details and the structure of the company remain unchanged. All existing contracts and other agreements will stay in place, and the ABN is still 73 010 636 165.