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APP cannabis update

QUEENSLAND pharmacies will be able to apply for a dispensing license for medicinal cannabis from Mar 2017 following the recent passage of enabling legislation through state parliament.

An update on the medicinal marijuana landscape will be provided during APP2017 on the Gold Coast, with Greg Perry, director of the Qld government's Medicinal Cannabis Unit, discussing the state's approach on Sun 12 Mar - see appconference.com.

Unregulated CMs pose risk

SIGNIFICANT risks are associated with some traditional herbal products in widespread use in Australia, according to the authors of an article in the latest edition of the *Medical Journal of Australia*.

The mistaken belief that "natural" means "safe", the lack of regulation and the inclusion of unidentified ingredients, represent just some of the risks, the authors asserted.

The proportion of the Australian population using herbal products was estimated to be 69% in 2005, with research finding over half of those using complementary medicine (CMs) did not inform their doctors, thereby risking interactions with prescribed medications.

"That side effects of herbal medicines used in traditional societies have not been reported is often cited in favour of their safety, but the lack of systematic observation has meant that even serious adverse reactions, such as the kidney failure and liver damage caused by *Aristolochia* species, were unrecognised until recently," wrote the authors, led by Professor Roger Byard, chair of Pathology at the University of Adelaide.

Among the potential dangers highlighted was the risk of adulteration with unidentified pharmaceutical agents which could create dangerous drug-drug interactions or adverse reactions.

The authors also warned of

the substitution of original plant ingredients with less expensive or more accessible ones, and even the presence of toxic substances, as well as inadequate manufacturing or processing practices.

"It may be appropriate for the Therapeutic Goods Administration to require manufacturers to have samples independently tested before placing them on the market.

"Legal action should be considered in cases of non-compliance with applicable regulations, and preparations containing illegal substances should be banned," the authors conclude.

HOWEVER Carl Gibson from Complementary Medicines Australia said the main concern lies in products purchased online from overseas, which are not subject to the same regulations as those enforced in Australia.

He said strict requirements for the manufacture of herbal products, including licensing and inspecting of manufacturers, ensure that products meet the high standard of Good Manufacturing Practice.

From May 2017 the TGA will begin publishing information on the outcomes of laboratory testing on its website, Gibson added.

NSAIDs back pain fail

NEW research has concluded that anti-inflammatories, such as NSAIDs ibuprofen and aspirin, are little better than placebo at relieving back and neck pain, according to an article published in the *Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases*.

The systematic review and meta-analysis examined 35 randomised trials involving more than 6,000 people, and was led by researchers from The George Institute for Global Health who found only one in six patients experienced significant relief from the drugs.

Gustavo Machado, first author of the new study, said he knew of no promising back pain drugs under development, and recommended regular activity to keep it at bay.

CLICK HERE to access the abstract.

MEANWHILE the Australian Self-Medication Industry has responded to reporting of the study, saying it has no impact on whether people should take OTC NSAIDs for short-term acute pain.

"The millions of Australians who have experienced relief from acute pain through the short term use of NSAIDs as directed on the label can continue to have confidence in their choice of product," said ASMI director of regulatory and scientific affairs, Steve Scarff.



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FDA antiseptic alert

THE US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has issued a warning about rare but serious allergic reactions reported with widely used skin antiseptic products containing chlorhexidine gluconate, with manufacturers requested to add a label warning about the risks.



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Dispensary Corner

NOW look 'ear Mr Snake!
A woman from the US state of Oregon presented herself at hospital with her pet python stuck in her earlobe (pictured below), according to the *BBC*.

The Ball Python, named Bart, was in her hands and slithering over her shoulders when he slipped into a hole in her ear.

"It all happened so fast that before I even knew what was going on it was already too late," she protested.

Ashley Glawe, Bart's carer, posted pictures on Facebook.

Clinicians anaesthetised Glawe's ear and were able to remove the python without harm to either party.



PRESIDENT Donald Trump's physician credits the drug Propecia for the impressive maintenance of his scalp hair.

The US president's long-time physician Dr Harold Bornstein told the *New York Times* Trump takes medication for three conditions - including finasteride (Propecia) to promote hair growth.

That may not convince the people of Norway, who are convinced they have discovered a secret Trump wig farm on an island near Tromsø - **CLICK HERE**.

At the age of 70 it is perhaps not surprising the president also takes lipid-lowering rosuvastatin and a daily low-dose aspirin to reduce the risk of a heart attack.

MDR ramps up services

ASX-LISTED pharmacy software company MedAdvisor (MDR) has announced the completion of the first stage of the integration of MedAdvisor and its recent acquisition Healthnotes, with the new software for broader pharmacy services now ready for introduction (**PD** breaking news Fri).

The enhanced offering promises to provide more innovative and readily accessible services to pharmacies and their patients and, effective 10 Feb, will also bring to an end the company's dependence on Guildlink's Guildcare hosting of the application.

The roll-out was detailed in an ASX announcement on Fri, with the official launch set for Mar at the 2017 Australian Pharmacy Professional conference on the Gold Coast.

Further enhancements, which the company said can be easily deployed to the combined platform, are promised to continue throughout the year.



In addition, MedAdvisor said it expects to settle its acquisition of OzDocsOnline at the end of next week, with the transaction set to further extend the firm's reach into the GP market.

Cancer leads burden

CANCER is the leading cause of disease burden in Australia, increasing from an incidence rate of 383 per 100,000 persons in 1982 to 504 per 100,000 in 2008, before an expected decrease to 470 per 100,000 in 2017, according to a new report from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

During the same period, the mortality rate decreased from 209 per 100,000 in 1982 to 161 per 100,000 in 2017, the report said.

The most commonly diagnosed cancers in Australia in 2017 will be breast cancer in females, followed by colorectal cancer and prostate cancer in men, the report predicts. Visit aihw.gov.au for access.

Weekly Comment

Welcome to *PD's* weekly comment feature. This week's contributor is **Li Yan, Research & Development Scientist, Digestive Health - Procter & Gamble**.



Probiotics for IBS Management

DO YOU know that there are 10 times more bacterial cells in the body than human cells, the majority of which reside in the GI tract. The balance of microbes, or gut microbiota, can change for a variety of reasons, including diet, travel, antibiotic usage, stress or illness. Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) is a disorder of gut-brain interaction and is characterised by abdominal pain and discomfort with changes in bowel frequency and/or consistency. Whilst the exact cause of IBS is unknown, recent research suggests that an alteration in the gut microbiota might be of possible relevance. With this in mind, there has been increasing interest in the use of probiotics and their health benefits.

A probiotic is defined by its genus, species/sub-species and strain. Most probiotic microorganisms belong to a group of lactic acid-producing bacteria, including *Lactobacillus* and *Bifidobacterium*. It is important to remember that the health benefits of probiotics are strain-specific and cannot be generalised. For example, *Lactobacillus reuteri* NCIMB 30242 may help in cholesterol management; *Bifidobacterium infantis* 3562.4 has been well researched and offers significant relief for IBS symptoms.

Hence, it is important to recommend the right probiotics for specific health conditions or symptoms.

WIN WITH DESIGNER BRANDS

This week Pharmacy Daily and Designer Brands are giving away the entire Flawless range each day - a prize valued at \$135.

The Flawless All In 1 Foundation is a concealer, foundation & skin loving ingredients in one product. Shade matched to all other existing DB Liquid Foundations so you can mix and match, it provides great coverage that is easy to apply. The new Bronzer Stick is designed to define and illuminate your features, creating that enviable sun kissed glow has never been easier. The Strobing Stick is a light reflecting complexion booster that instantly highlights and brightens skin for a radiant effect. The Lip & Cheek Cream adds a hint of colour for a naturally flushed glow on the lips & cheeks. **CLICK HERE** to see more.



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

Which vitamins does Designer Brands' Flawless All in 1 Foundation contain?

Check here tomorrow for today's winner.

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