

Pharmacists to sell six months' OCs

THE New Zealand Medicines Classification Committee (MCC) has recommended that the classification of selected oral contraceptives (OCs) be changed to allow supply by pharmacists in certain circumstances, the Ministry of Health has announced.

The reclassification would mean that pharmacists can sell up to six months' supply of selected OCs to a woman who has been prescribed the same type of OC within the last three years from the date of an original medical practitioner's prescription and has not developed risk factors.

The proposal, first submitted in 2014, has been extensively reviewed and discussed by the MCC, but the final decision on the reclassification rests with Medsafe. **CLICK HERE** for the MCC minutes.

Biosimilar consult

THE US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has finally released its long-awaited draft guidance detailing the agency's expectations for demonstrating biosimilar interchangeability.

The guidance recommends that sponsors looking to get a biosimilar approved as interchangeable with its reference product conduct one or more switching studies to show that patients can alternate between the two products safely and without diminished efficacy.

The FDA seeks input from interested persons on this topic. Visit fda.gov for the draft.

Guild member value focus

THE Pharmacy Guild says it's firmly focused on delivering "compelling value to our members" in 2017, with national president George Tambassis set to embark on a national series of briefings taking place from early next month.

Guild executive director David Quilty yesterday said 2017 would see the Guild redoubling efforts to engage with its members, with the aim of ensuring it is "a true, two-way conversation".

Initiatives will see a strong focus on innovative uses of social media, face-to-face meetings and diversifying the opportunities for members to provide input via Guild committees, forums and working

groups, Quilty said.

A major revamp of the Guild website is also in the works, which will have an enhanced ability for users to provide feedback on key issues and to tap into the specialist skills, knowledge and experience of Guild members and staff.

Quilty also confirmed the result of last year's introduction of quarterly Net Promoter Score (NPS) surveys, which in three polls to date have seen NPS outcomes ranging from between +42 and +51.

NPS figures rank the propensity of those surveyed - in this case Guild members - to recommend the organisation to others, with Quilty saying the result is acceptable, given that NPS scores can range from -100 to +100.

"However we clearly can and must do better," he added.

Notifications update

THANKS to the scores of *Pharmacy Daily* readers who noted with alarm that there were 10,082 notifications nationally to the Pharmacy Board of Australia last year (*PD* yesterday).

That figure was in fact the total number of notifications across all 657,000+ health professionals.

For pharmacists the number of notifications was 570, including to the Health Professional Councils Authority in NSW.

This was still an increase of 16.3% year-on-year, with notifications about pharmacists representing just over 5% of all AHPRA matters.

The percentage of registered pharmacists with notifications was 1.9%, 0.4% higher than the national average across all professions.

Auto-dispensing help

PATIENTS whose medications are automatically dispensed on the spot when prescribed by a doctor have shown much higher rates of adherence than those who get their scripts filled at the chemist, according to a new US study.

Doctor-guided automated dispensing saw primary adherence rates of 90%-plus, more than 20 points higher than the US median, based on an analysis of over 1 million prescriptions.

The study was published in the *ClinicoEconomics and OutcomesResearch* journal - for details **CLICK HERE**.

Chinese high CVD risk

CARDIOVASCULAR disease (CVD) has been dubbed Australia's top health issue, but Chinese Australians have been identified as especially vulnerable, according to researchers at the Sax Institute.

More than a quarter of a million people over the age of 45 years were examined for CVD risk factors.

Chinese, mixed Chinese and non-Chinese Australians were part of the Institute's *45 and Up* study.

The results showed diabetes, smoking and lack of movement were three health factors that affected millions, with Chinese community members over-represented - **CLICK HERE** for more.

TGA committees cut

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration has confirmed a restructure of its advisory committees, which have been reduced from 11 to 7 effective 01 Jan 2017, as part of the response to the Expert Review of Medicines and Medical Devices Regulation.

A broader Advisory Committee on Medicines (ACM) replaces the former Advisory Committee on Prescription Medicines (ACPM), the Advisory Committee on Non-prescription medicines (ACNM) and the Advisory Committee on the Safety of Medicines (ACSOM).

The Therapeutic Goods Committee (TGC) was abolished, while the Advisory Committee on Biologicals (ACB) and the Advisory Committee on Complementary Medicines (ACCM) continue with expanded functions.

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Guild ITP extension

THE earlybird enrolment competition for the Guild's Intern Training Program (PD 10 Jan) has been extended until 24 Jan - more at www.internpharmacist.com.au.



Dispensary Corner

JUST as a replacement for health minister Sussan Ley was announced, Ken Harvey, Monash University School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine Adjunct Associate Professor has marked her abrupt departure with a comment about Ley's 2015 rejection of recommendations from then chief medical officer Chris Baggoley.

A committee chaired by Baggoley produced a draft report saying some 17 natural therapies showed "no clear evidence of health benefits," but the recommendations were not adopted by the health minister.

Harvey writes: *One can speculate that the reason Sussan Ley rejected Professor Chris Baggoley's evidenced-based report was because of her embrace of numerology; she has said she added an extra 's' to her name because numerology theory said the additional 's' would give her an incredibly exciting, interesting life and nothing would ever be boring!*

Presumably her resignation confirms her theory.

One can only hope that Arthur Sinodinos will be more interested in evidence-based policy and will revisit the Baggoley report.

Of course, as it turns out Greg Hunt has ended up as the new Health Minister, but we are sure evidence will play an equally important role in his thinking.

Health Minister hunt ends

LIBERAL member for Flinders in Victoria, Greg Hunt has been announced as the Minister for Health and Sport (PD breaking news yesterday) replacing Sussan Ley who resigned from the portfolio last week over controversies around travel expenses.

Arthur Sinodinos, who has been acting Health Minister since Sussan Ley stepped down, will take over from Hunt as Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science while assistant minister Ken Wyatt is elevated to a full post as Minister for Aged Care and Minister for Indigenous Health.

Based in Victoria's Mornington Peninsula, Hunt was also Environment Minister for several years from 2013 before taking on the Industry, Innovation and Science portfolio after the election last year.

The Pharmacy Guild of Australia, Pharmaceutical Society of Australia, the AMA, ASMI, CMA, PPA, CHF, MA and other groups have universally welcomed Hunt's appointment.

Guild national president George Tambassis, while acknowledging the outgoing Health Minister

Sussan Ley for her commitment to the portfolio, said, "We are confident of a constructive and positive relationship with Mr Hunt who brings to the position a broad wealth of political experience."

"Greg Hunt takes over the portfolio at a time when there are a number of unresolved issues of concern to community pharmacy in Australia," Tambassis said.

PSA president Joe Demarte said the organisation looked forward to working closely with the Minister on key issues and reforms, including to "further optimise the contribution of pharmacists" such as their integration into GP clinics and ensuring pharmacists played a key role in Health Care Homes.

NZ microbead ban

THE New Zealand government has opened consultation on a proposed ban on the use of plastic "microbeads" in personal care products such as cosmetics, body washes and toothpastes.

Submissions are open until the end of next month, with the ban potentially effective from Jul 2018.

Win with Plunketts

This week *Pharmacy Daily* and Plunkett's are giving away an Aloe Vera prize pack every day including Plunkett's Pure Aloe Vera gel, spray, moisturiser and sarong.

Aloe Vera is easily absorbed by your skin, soothing and cooling dry irritated skin. Australian made, Plunkett's Aloe Vera Gel and Spray contain 99% of the highest quality 100% certified organic Aloe. Nothing is closer to Aloe Vera straight from the plant, but Plunkett's is in a convenient tube. Visit www.plunketts.com.au

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

In which country is Plunkett's Aloe Vera made?

Congratulations to yesterday's winner, Michele Herbert from GuildSuper.



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