

Epclusa approval

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration has confirmed the registration of Gilead Sciences Australia's Epclusa (sofosbuvir/velpatasvir) for the treatment of chronic hepatitis C infection in adults.

The Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee has also recommended Epclusa for listing on the PBS, with the medication currently the first and only pangenotypic single tablet regimen for a single treatment time of 12 weeks for the treatment of HCV genotypes 1-6 for patients without cirrhosis, or with cirrhosis and in combination with ribavirin for patients with decompensated cirrhosis.

FIP congress regos

REGISTRATION is now open for the 77th International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) World Congress of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences.

The event will take place in Seoul, Korea from 10-14 Sep in partnership with the Korean Pharmaceutical Association and the Pharmaceutical Society of Korea.

Sessions will focus on five key topics: Nurturing the soul of pharmacy; Precision pharmacotherapy; Pharmacy services: going beyond prescription; Smart pharmacy; and Targeting special interests.

Delegates who are not yet FIP members are also being offered one year's free membership in conjunction with registration.

Prescribing pharmacists?

THE Pharmacy Practitioner Development Committee (PPDC) has confirmed it has received a request from the Pharmacy Board of Australia relating to proposals for prescribing by pharmacists.

The PPDC has agreed to assist the Board "to ensure a profession-wide position can be established," with the plan consistent with the Health Professionals Prescribing Pathway and taking into account NPS MedicineWise's Prescribing Competencies Framework.

A communique from the PPDC issued on Fri said work on the prescribing proposals would commence this year, with the aim of providing a coordinated and considered response.

The committee also announced the completion of a review of the profession's competency standards, with all PPDC member organisations endorsing the revised framework.

That means the framework, which is now being prepared for publication and release early this year, has been approved by the AACPC, Australian College of

Pharmacy, Australian Pharmacy Council, NAPSA, PDL, the PSDA, the Pharmacy Board of Australia, Professional Pharmacists Australia, the Guild and the Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia.

The Pharmacy Board is funding a consultation with member organisations on the "needs and priorities of practice support tools for development and testing".

MEANWHILE the PPDC communique also confirmed "robust discussions" on options for future advanced practice recognition and credentialing," following the cessation of the national credentialing program for advance practice pharmacists last year (*PD* 13 Oct 2016).

The PPDC said it's committed to progressing further work as a priority "to support the continuation of this important professional initiative, and to enable interested pharmacists to apply as soon as possible in 2017".

New virus vaccines

THREE new vaccines are being fast-tracked to help deal with emerging diseases caused by little known but serious viral infections, reports the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (Cepi).

Committing \$460m to speed development of vaccines to combat Mers, Lassa fever and Nipah viruses and seeking a further \$500m from the World Economic Forum Davos, Cepi aims to have two new experimental vaccines ready for each disease within five years.

Folic acid guidance

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration has created a new factsheet for sponsors choosing to list folate products on the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods (ARTG).

Folic acid, folinic acid, levomefolic acid and metabolic pathway relationships are covered in the document - see tga.gov.au.

Guild healthy weight

SUPPORTING Australia's Healthy Weight Week 13-19 Feb 2017, an initiative of the Dietitians Association of Australia (DAA), the Pharmacy Guild of Australia is encouraging pharmacists to become engaged.

"In the spirit of collaboration and a greater community approach to health, DAA would like you to consider having an Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD) in store during the week of the campaign to help you host an event," the Guild said, with the DAA website set to direct consumers to their pharmacy.

Each dietitian will bring their own resources supporting the campaign messages of cooking at home and choosing appropriate portion sizes.

To request an APD, contact marketing@daa.asn.au by 31 Jan.

2017 Goodfellow conf

NEW Zealand's Pharmaceutical Society has announced the 2017 Goodfellow Symposium as a multi-disciplinary program catering for GPs, primary health care nurses, specialists and other primary health care professionals such as pharmacists.

It will take place in Auckland 24-26 Mar with the theme "Skills for Next Monday".

Program organisers say the event is being designed to provide engaging and informative sessions, the latest clinical updates and increased opportunities to participate in practical sessions so delegates return to work armed with new knowledge and skills.

CLICK HERE for details.

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PPA calls on Hunt to back the review

UNION group Professional Pharmacists Australia (PPA) is urging the new Federal Health Minister Greg Hunt to support the independent review of pharmacy, which "has given a platform to employees, consumers and other stakeholders to put forward positive plans for the future," according to PPA president, Dr Geoff March.

He said the review was an opportunity to chart a new road map for the sector.

"The community is currently not getting best value for money, consumers are not getting the best healthcare and employee pharmacists are too entangled in retail sales, rather than having time to use their professional knowledge and skills," he said.

Advocacy transparency?

RESEARCHERS from the University of Sydney and Bond University are calling for more transparency around industry-sponsored patient advocacy groups.

In recent commentary they note that as patient advocacy groups become bigger players in healthcare, little is known about their potential commercial interests - especially as there's no national requirement for them to disclose their funding sources.

"As more research is conducted into patient groups and their influence in medicine, the question remains - are they engaging in potentially deceptive practices by suggesting solutions which better serve the interests of their corporate sponsors, rather than what's best for patients," Professor

Lisa Bero from the University of Sydney Pharmacy Faculty said.

She says the very way we think about disease is being "subtly distorted" with some patient advocacy groups "singing tunes acceptable to companies seeking to maximise markets for drugs and devices".

Some studies have been conducted in the area including new research by Dr Susannah Rose from the US Cleveland Clinic.

When looking at 439 patient organisations the study found that two-thirds of them received some form of industry funding.

It found the median amount of funding sat at \$50,000, while 10% of groups received \$1 million annually.

"Thousands of patient advocacy groups in the US are reliant on support from pharmaceutical or device industries, and at the system level the aggregation of this influence raises substantial concerns," Dr Ray Moynihan of Bond University's Centre for Research in Evidence-Based Practice said.

He suggested groups that wanted to be seen as independent should decrease their industry sponsorship and "gain in authority what they lose in resources".

Currently in Australia some pharmaceutical companies voluntarily disclose payments to patient advocacy groups through Medicines Australia.

Health star ratings to curb obesity

THE Australian Government has announced a new national public awareness campaign to promote the Health Star Rating (HSR) System on packaged foods in a bid to tackle Australia's obesity epidemic.

The HSR system uses stars, from a half to five to give an overall rating of packaged and processed food, with more than 115 food companies now displaying it.

Federal Assistant Minister for Health Dr David Gillespie said considering Australia has one of the highest rates of obesity in the world, people must be encouraged to eat a more balanced diet and the government's Health Star Rating System on packaged foods offered a quick and easy guide to help them make informed choices.

Rural pharmacy takes the cake



ABOVE: Fiona Cochrane from Priceline Pharmacy in Ararat, Vic, has been showcased by the Pharmacy Guild as part of its current #iloveruralpharmacy campaign leading up to the Rural Pharmacy Forum taking place at APP2017 (*PD* 18 Jan).

Cochrane, pictured with her team, previously worked for 14 years at a pharmacy in Melbourne, where her employer (who owned several pharmacies) was very supportive.

"He guided me through the pros and cons of buying a pharmacy business," Cochrane said.

"Rural is a bit of a lifestyle choice, more than anything else...you have a steady customer base that you see very often and get to know them a bit better than you would in a metro," she added.

Other benefits include a very short commute and cheaper rent.

"I've always thought that for pharmacists it's more rewarding and easy working in regional pharmacy. I understand moving away from the social aspects of city life can be difficult for some but regional pharmacy has its benefits and provides a lot of flexibility".

FDA gives Trulance the tick of approval

AMERICA'S Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved Trulance (plecanatide) for the treatment of Chronic Idiopathic Constipation (CIC) in adults.

Taken orally once daily, it works in the upper GI tract to stimulate secretion of intestinal fluid and support regular bowel function.

Trulance is a guanylate cyclase-C (GC-C) agonist, with the drug's maker, Synergy Pharmaceuticals, also planning to seek approval for its use in treatment for irritable bowel syndrome with constipation.

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Dispensary Corner

KYLIE Jenner Lip Kits took the beauty world by storm when they were launched in 2016.

So, naturally there are plenty of fake versions of the liquid lipstick/lip liner kits popping up.

It's no surprise that these knockoff products are appearing in Bali - but there's just one awkward thing - they got the wrong Kylie.

Instead of plastering the kits with pictures of American reality television personality Kylie Jenner, they've used a head shot of Australian singer Kylie Minogue (the error is pictured below).

Talk about awkward!



BEING a drug smuggler sure seems to bring out the creativity in criminals.

In the latest bid to hide illicit substances, a trafficker travelling from Jamaica to New York carried a box of Jamaican beef patties filled with four pounds of cocaine.

The 12 duct-taped packages filled with \$70,000 of the illicit drug were uncovered by border protection officials who pierced one of them during an examination in a private search room - leading to the surprising discovery.

Pharmacists help with asthma surge

THE National Asthma Council Australia is asking pharmacists to make sure young asthma patients are back to school ready.

The council is warning about the 'February Epidemic' - a large asthma spike in kids immediately after school goes back.

"Now is the time to ask your patients whether all their inhalers are in date - especially those in sports bags or at school," National Asthma Council Australia Director and pharmacist, Stephen Hughes said.

"Make sure they have a spacer and know how to use it correctly. A good initiative would be to set up an area in-store for conducting a back to school parents' and children's inhaler technique refresher".

Hughes said that the start of school was also a good opportunity for pharmacists to help their patients set a goal for the year to motivate them to keep their asthma under control.

CLICK HERE for asthma action plan templates.

Generic group missive

THE Generic Medicines Working Group (GMWG) has agreed to continue to work together to further develop strategies and measures supporting the generics and biosimilars sector, according to a communiqué from the 01 Dec 2016 meeting issued last week.

The four policy priorities being pursued by the GMWG relate to the work of the Pricing Policy, Supply and Viability sub-group, and the Uptake Drivers of Generic and Biosimilar Medicines sub-group.

The meeting also discussed the work being undertaken by the European Medicines Agency to promote transparency around clinical trial data.



GBMA
Generic and Biosimilar
Medicines Association

Attendees included co-chairs Allan Tillack,

chair of Generic and Biosimilar Medicines Association (GBMA) and Andrew Stuart, deputy secretary, Department of Health as well as representatives of the GBMA and the Pharmaceutical Benefits Division, Department of Health.

CLICK HERE for the communiqué.



Weekly Comment

Welcome to **PD's** weekly comment feature. This week's contributor is

Natasha McKay, SOUTHERNATURE Naturopath & Herbalist.



Myths about grape seed

FOR thousands of years grapes have been an important part of human culture. The cultivation of grapes for wine making (viniculture) began as early as 6000BC and then at a much later date thanks to the Roman Empire, viniculture travelled throughout the rest of Europe.

Grape seeds contain high amounts of antioxidants called Proanthocyanidins (PC'S) which exhibit powerful antioxidant activity and have biological, pharmacological, and chemoprotective properties. PC's play a role in protecting and stabilising the collagen matrix, therefore PC's are beneficial to the skin, capillary walls and cardiovascular system.

Through clinical trials it has been demonstrated that grape seed extract can help support key areas contributing to the development of cardiovascular diseases including:

- Free radical scavenging properties and reducing oxidative stress
- Helping to support cholesterol (LDL) regulation and a healthy LDL:HDL cholesterol ratio
- Helping to support capillary weakness by strengthening the collagen matrix

Grape seeds are so useful that due to their vascular support properties they can even help the symptoms of cold hands and feet by strengthening the circulation to these areas.

WIN WITH IN ESSENCE

This week, Pharmacy Daily and In Essence are giving readers the chance to win In Essence Skin Therapy Organic Camellia Treatment Oil.

In Essence Skin Therapy Facial Treatment Oils are a luxurious addition to your daily beauty ritual for radiant, healthy skin. The In Essence Organic Camellia Treatment Oil is rich in Oleic Acid, Vitamins A, B and E, and is known to protect from premature ageing and pigmentation. For all skin types, just a few drops of Organic Camellia Treatment Oil will deliver intense hydration to the skin. For more information head to www.inessence.com.au

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