

Overdose concerns

MORE Australians are dying from pharmaceutical prescription opioids than from heroin overdoses, according to data revealed in *Fairfax* reports yesterday.

The Pharmacy Guild has reacted to the new information, saying it reinforces the urgent need for a "nationally consistent mandated system for real-time reporting of controlled drugs".

Despite a succession of coroners across the country sounding the alarm on these overdose deaths, no national system has been implemented, with Guild Vic branch president Anthony Tassone saying, "doctors and pharmacists should not be expected to continue working at the front line tackling the prescription drug dependence issue without the full knowledge that real-time recording would provide".

Tassone noted that Federal Health Minister Greg Hunt "recently committed to progressing this issue," with the Guild in full support of any measures introduced.

PPA slams Guild attitude

UNION group Professional Pharmacists Australia (PPA) says it's "disappointed by the attitude and obstruction of the Pharmacy Guild of Australia," as part of the PPA response to the Interim Report of the Review of Pharmacy Remuneration and Regulation.

In a submission to the Panel, PPA also questioned the clarity of the Interim Report, suggesting it should be restructured "to make it easier for stakeholders to understand concepts around medication risk," as well as providing a simpler explanation of the uniform remuneration method proposed by the Panel.

"Only following the discussion with the Panel, after the report was released, we better understood how the standardised remuneration could drive quality," PPA said.

PPA is proposing a new 'service model' which acknowledges the unacceptable level of medication misadventure associated with legal use of medicines in the community,

introducing the concept of "audited minimum service standards" as well as a single standard patient contribution fee for each molecule, and a single dispensing fee based on the cost of the service.

The wide-ranging response also urges that wholesaler CSO funding be removed from future Community Pharmacy Agreements, and that PPA be included in future negotiations as the representative of employee pharmacists.

The organisation said it believed the report must not be seen as a "tweak of the status quo and just a way to help the Government negotiate prescription fees.

"We believe that there needs to be a stronger link between the quality use of medicines and the access to affordable medicine arms of the National Medicines Policy, to underpin the reasoning for reform to the way pharmacists supply prescription medicines," PPA said.

View the full PPA submission at professionalpharmacists.com.au.

Self care focus

CONSUMER trends and choices are driving a "new approach to health", according to the Australian Self Medication Industry (ASMI) as it marks International Self Care Day, celebrating the 24/7 benefits people enjoy from taking control of their own health through self care.

Meeting this demand for greater consumer empowerment will require a better use of digital technology for health, easier access to more medicines, and changes in the way medicines are advertised, according to international experts who will speak at the World Self Medication Industry (WSMI) conference in Sydney on Oct 18-19.

"In the new approach to health, consumers drive health – not health drives consumers," says Monica Feldman, consumer health strategist and group director of client services for the Nicholas Hall Group of Companies.

Both longer living and the shift to prevention are driving the consumer self-medication industry. Visit wsmiga2017.com for more.



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ASMI TGAC training

IN RESPONSE to industry demand, ASMI has developed face-to-face training seminars on the Therapeutic Goods Advertising Code (TGAC), and surrounding regulatory framework.

These have replaced the TGACC seminar series, which was discontinued in 2013.

The seminar explains the regulatory framework that governs consumer advertising of therapeutic goods in Australia.

It provides detailed information on the three levels of advertising control: regulation, co-regulation and self-regulation, ASMI said.

Presenters explain each aspect of the current system, including the application of the Therapeutic Goods Advertising Code, the approvals process and complaints mechanisms.

Course material is to be presented by Emi Gosling ASMI Advertising Services manager, Sarah-Jane Leon ASMI Advertising Services manager, Leanne McCauley TGA director of the Advertising Compliance Unit and Jason Korke former chairman of the Complaints Resolution Panel. Visit asmi.com.au for details.

Nicotine consultation

NEW Zealand's Pharmaceutical Management Agency (PHARMAC) has opened a consultation relating to increased pricing and subsidisation of GSK's Habitrol brand of nicotine replacement therapy in the form of gum, lozenges and patches.

Consultation closes 5pm 04 Aug - procurement@pharmac.govt.nz.

UK microbead ban

AUTHORITIES in the United Kingdom have announced a ban on microplastics in cosmetic and personal care products, with the move following a public consultation on the issue.

Affected items include so-called "rinse-off" products such as shower gels, toothpaste and exfoliating scrubs - but not "leave-on" items like make-up or sunscreen.

The necessary legislation will be introduced later this year, with an expert committee set to continue examining whether other products should be included in the ban.

Manufacture will be outlawed from 01 Jan 2018 and sales prohibited effective 30 Jun.

The microbeads are a significant contribution to ocean pollution.

NSW rapid flu tests

THE NSW Government yesterday announced the roll-out of advanced diagnostic technology which will see influenza diagnosis in NSW hospitals drop from four days to less than four hours.

State Premier Gladys Berejiklian said it was the largest rapid flu testing program in the southern hemisphere, with the rapid diagnosis allowing hospital clinicians to make faster triage and treatment decisions.

"This is crucial given antivirals are most effective when started less than two days from onset of influenza," she said, with the system also potentially leading to unnecessary treatment for patients with a negative diagnosis, freeing up hospital beds.



Guild lays out codeine position

EXECUTIVE director of the Pharmacy Guild of Australia, David Quilty, has penned an open letter to clarify the Guild's position relating to the up-scheduling of pain relief medicines containing codeine from 01 Feb 2018.

The 14-point document highlights that the Guild has been "at the forefront of advocating for and taking action to introduce tools that enable clinicians to identify and support patients at risk of dependence".

Advocating a national real time recording and monitoring system, namely MedsASSIST, that identifies and supports patients who may be misusing codeine containing over-the-counter analgesics, is a central theme of Quilty's summary.

MedsASSIST has had a 70% uptake by community pharmacists and has recorded more than seven million purchases, with the software identifying reductions in codeine supply of up to 40% in some pharmacies.

With GPs unable to access any such real time recording and monitoring system, doctor shopping becomes a real risk, Quilty said.

Schedule 8 (Controlled Drugs), are the cause of the majority of overdose fatalities in Australia, not OTC codeine products and the Guild has led the push for a national real time monitoring system for S8 products as well, he added.

The Guild is not seeking to to reverse the up-scheduling decision but considers it is a blunt instrument that not only

will not fully address the issues around addiction, but may actually exacerbate them.

"At the same time, 80 per cent of the more than one million patients who use these medicines annually do so on an occasional basis for the temporary treatment of acute pain and may be inconvenienced and face increased out-of-pocket costs."

The Guild and the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia are working together on this "commonsense approach" while working also with community pharmacy owners and other stakeholders - read the full document at guild.org.au.

Pharmacy intervention

PHARMACIST transition of care intervention has proven to be an effective strategy to reduce medication errors after hospital discharge, according to a new meta-analysis published in the *Journal of Patient Safety*.

In addition, a pharmacist intervention also reduces subsequent emergency room visits, the authors said, concluding that hospitals should consider implementing this intervention to improve patient safety and quality during transitions of care.

Thirteen randomized trials examining 3,503 patients were included in the final analysis, drawing on data from the National Library of Medicine's PubMed database, the Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews, and Google Scholar.

CLICK HERE to access the abstract.

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Dispensary Corner

AUTOMOTIVE maker Ford has employed 18 so-called "golden noses" (pictured below) at its factories in China, to ensure its vehicles smell just right for the huge Chinese market.

Apparently consumers in China aren't big fans of the 'new car smell' so popular in Western markets, with the expert sniffers employed to evaluate all the materials that go into the cars.

Chinese drivers would prefer their cars don't smell of anything in particular.

"In North America, people want a new car smell and will even buy a 'new car' spray to make older cars feel new and fresh. In China it's the opposite," said a spokesperson for the carmaker.



THIS is why he's a (not so) big winner. A professional gambler in Las Vegas has netted US\$600,000, after a group of betting mates wagered that he couldn't reduce his body fat to less than 10%.

Walter Fisher, 36, told the *New York Post* he started overeating during a losing streak and gained about 20kg in a month.

That was back in Dec last year, when Fisher weighed 110kg and was \$100,000 in debt.

He made the bet with fellow gamblers, and it certainly gave him motivation, with the six month period since seeing him lose about 30kg, now weighing 80kg with 8.8% body fat.

Deakin to audit hospitals

RESEARCHERS from Deakin University have announced the first infection survey of Australian hospitals in more than 30 years.

The study aims to evaluate the level of infection risk across the sector, as well as helping to stem the rise of so-called superbugs.

The National Healthcare Associated Infection Point Prevalence Survey will be conducted next year, counting how many patients in a sample of Australian hospitals have an infection on a single day.

"This work is critical, as infections can result in ongoing health complications for patients, and in the worst cases death," said project leader Dr Philip Russo from Deakin's School of Nursing and Midwifery.

"Patients in Australian hospitals are now sicker than they've ever been, so they're more vulnerable to infection," Russo said.

The study, which is being funded thanks to a donation from a charitable organisation, will also gather data on the prevalence and types of bugs in hospitals as well as

how many patients have resistant strains of the bugs.

The last time a similar survey was carried out was in 1984.

"There's a lot of media attention on the use of antibiotics and the burden of multi-resistant organisms in Australia, but we don't actually know how prevalent these superbugs are in our hospital system as a whole," Russo said.

The three-year project will begin in Sep with the recruitment of participating hospitals.

For info see ipcca.com.au/pps.

TGA ticks first in class

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration has approved Nocurna (desmopressin), the first and only medication for the treatment of nocturnal polyuria.

Nocurna, from Ferring Pharmaceuticals, is indicated for the treatment of idiopathic nocturnal polyuria in adults who awaken two or more times each night to void, and have not responded to lifestyle measures.

Go to tga.gov.au for details.

V8, Jing Pin alerts

THE TGA has issued safety alerts in relation to V8 tablets and Jing Pin Heijin Gang Tablets which both contain undeclared substances including sildenafil.

The TGA is working with the Australian Border Force to stop future shipments entering Australia.

Guild Update

Step up to stardom

THE search for Australia's best community pharmacy is on again with applications now open for the Pharmacy Guild of Australia Pharmacy of the Year Award 2018.

The Pharmacy of the Year awards are the benchmark for recognising excellence in the community pharmacy industry and seek out highly motivated, innovative and adaptable pharmacy businesses that strive to provide the best health care. The national competition recognises and rewards community pharmacy businesses that achieve excellence in providing consumers the best care, medication, advice and professional services. Pharmacy Guild Members can enter in the three categories: Excellence in Business Management, Excellence in Community Engagement and Excellence in Professional Services.

The entry process is not complex or time-consuming, and entries must be in by 29 September 2017.

Further competition details, including how to enter, are available here: www.guild.org.au.

WIN WITH IN ESSENCE

This week, Pharmacy Daily and In Essence are giving readers each day the chance to win one of the range of In Essence Skin Therapy Facial Treatment Oils.

Boasting the power of pure essential oils, In Essence Skin Therapy Facial Treatment Oils are a luxurious addition to your daily beauty ritual for radiant, healthy skin. This is In Essence's first venture into skincare and with a key ingredient of precious Camellia Oil – the ultimate antioxidant – this nutrient rich oil contains a potent mix of essential fatty acids and vitamins to repair and renew the skin. For more info head to www.inessence.com.au

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

What does In Essence Skin Therapy Facial Treatment Oil do?

Congratulations to yesterday's winner, Emily Keleher from Good Price Pharmacy Warehouse.

