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Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today has four pages of news plus full pages from:

- Sigma
- Pharmacy 4 Less

Sigma conference

SIGMA Pharmaceuticals is hosting its annual retail conference on the Gold Coast this week, with the event dovetailing with the Pharmacy Guild's Australian Pharmacy Professional conference taking place later in the week.

Amcal and Guardian members are gathering at Jupiter's Hotel, adjacent to the Gold Coast Convention and Exhibition Centre, for three days of networking and insights, as well as engagement with suppliers and industry experts.

Sigma foreshadowed a number of announcements during the conference which will "continue to position our members and Sigma ahead of the competition" while the event wraps up with a gala dinner on Wed night - see **page five**.

Review draft report delay

THE Health Department has confirmed that the promised Interim Report for the Review of Pharmacy Remuneration and Regulation would not be delivered as originally scheduled.

Just before Christmas, the review panel said: "the Interim Report will be released in February 2017 to allow everyone equal time and opportunity to consider and provide new feedback and comments" (**PD** 19 Dec 2016).

"We will be allowing time over that period into late Mar for more discussions and consultation with you all, for our consideration of our draft findings, and the opportunity to respond to the Panel again," the Dec update stated.

However on Fri, a department spokeswoman told **PD** "there have been delays in the finalisation of the Interim Report due to the serious illness of one of the Panel members."

"The Review Panel is continuing to consider carefully all the information before it, and will

provide further information about how it will progress the next phase of the review," she said.

The Review will be a hot topic of discussion at APP later this week, with a panel session planned for Fri morning - however a previously scheduled Sat presentation by review chairman Stephen King will not go ahead (**PD** Thu).

\$75m drug funding

DRUG and alcohol treatment services across Australia will receive funding of more than \$75m a year, the Australian Government has announced, guaranteeing the 150 groups involved continued support for two years until 30 Jun 2019.

This is in addition to the National Ice Action Strategy Funding of \$241.5m for drug and alcohol treatment (**PD** 04 Jan 17).

Samples, training and deals

TODAY sees the launch of a comprehensive



MySamples is its biggest strength."

new service for pharmacy and other healthcare professionals providing offers of free product samples, representative visits and training for staff as well as deals for pharmacy.

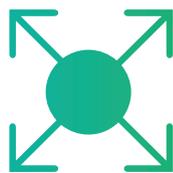
MySamples makes a direct online seamless link between the healthcare professional and pharmaceutical companies, said MySamples director Danielle Byers, adding, "The simplicity of

Launching with products across allergy, bone health, children's health, cold & flu, constipation, ENT, eye care, men's health, pregnancy, sport and women's health, MySamples also promises additional products in analgesics/pain, dermatology and smoking cessation will be listed "shortly".

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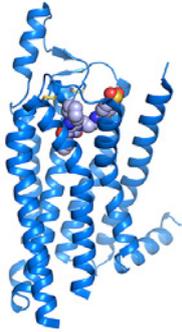
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New cardiac Rx hope

MONASH researchers have announced that they have solved the first crystal structure of the A1 adenosine G protein-coupled receptor, an important therapeutic target for treating cardiac injury after a heart attack, memory disorders and chronic pain.

The study, published in the journal *Cell*, details atomic-level information of the A1 adenosine receptor protein and reveals that the physical shape of its hormone binding pocket (**pictured**) is very different from that of a related adenosine receptor, providing new clues about how drugs can be used to more selectively target these proteins.



Lead researcher Professor Arthur Christopoulos says that this new discovery can improve our understanding of how allosteric modulators and receptors interact, and can lead to the design of more selective drugs with fewer side effects for a range of neurological, cardiovascular, pain and other diseases.

Visit cell.com for the abstract.

FDA Noctiva approval

THE US Food and Drug Administration has approved Noctiva (desmopressin acetate) nasal spray for adults who awaken at least twice per night to urinate.

The medication treats a condition known as nocturnal polyuria (overproduction of urine during the night), and Noctiva is the first FDA-approved treatment for the condition.

Guild, PSA slam Grattan Report

A NEW report from the Grattan Institute released yesterday claims Australians pay more than \$500 million a year for prescription drugs, and urges changes to the way prices are set under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.

Titled *Cutting a better drug deal*, the report finds drug prices in Australia are twice as high as in the UK, and more than three times those in New Zealand.

"Australians on average pay five times the best international price for a group of seven commonly prescribed drugs," the report says, claiming the government is overpaying for generic drugs while other parts of PBS reform policy are "riddled with loopholes".

Grattan Institute spokesman Stephen Duckett called on the government to benchmark the prices of generic drugs in Australia against prices paid overseas - saving an estimated \$93 million annually.

A further \$445 million a year could be saved if the "therapeutic group premium policy" was strengthened and broadened to cover 18 therapeutic groups, similar to policy in Germany, he suggested.

"Australia is buying and pricing its drugs the wrong way...fixing this policy mess would give patients a better deal and improve the budget bottom line," he said.

HOWEVER the **Pharmacy Guild** said it "completely rejects" claims made in the report, describing it as "unbalanced and misleading".

"The report seems to be based on the assumption that the pharmaceutical supply chain in Australia is one that can be squeezed and squeezed, and will still keep on giving. This is not sustainable," the Guild said.

Price disclosure policy has resulted in significant savings to the government, said Guild executive

director David Quilty.

"The report fails to recognise the deep impact that price disclosure has already had on community pharmacy in Australia," he said.

Assertions made in the report that pharmacy Location Rules are against the public interest were also rejected by the Guild, with Quilty saying they ensured Australians had a very high level of access to community pharmacies.

The **Pharmaceutical Society of Australia** said recommendations for further PBS cuts in the report were "cause for significant concern".

PSA national president Joe Demarte said accelerating price disclosure would impact the viability and future sustainability of the community pharmacy network.

It would also create downward pressure on wages, he said, which is the "number one issue for pharmacists right now".

Demarte said it was vital to diversify funding for pharmacy beyond the PBS, suggesting paying pharmacists through Medicare "would provide consumers with greater access to pharmacist services in a range of settings".

View the Grattan Institute Report at www.grattan.edu.au.

UK stem cell lines

THE UK Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has announced the release of the first stem cell lines suitable for development into novel cell-based medicines.

Made available through the UK Stem Cell Bank at the National Institute of Biological Standards and Control, the stem cells are produced and quality controlled under European regulation.

They are "suitable for use as starting materials in manufacturing therapies for clinical trials, saving researchers precious time and effort," the MHRA said.

Diabetes grants

GRANTS worth NZ\$210,000 have been offered to researchers in New Zealand by the Health Research Council of New Zealand and the PHARMAC drug funding agency.

Professor Keith Petrie from the University of Auckland will look at how people's views of generic medicines can affect their acceptance of the medications, while Dr Lianne Parkin from the University of Otago will explore how to improve the way New Zealanders with type 2 diabetes use metformin.

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TGA CM reforms

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) presented a Review of Medicines and Medical Devices Regulation (MMDR) to the ARCS (formerly the Association of Regulatory and Clinical Scientists) Webinar on 17 Feb.

Michael Shum, Complementary Medicines Reforms Section, Complementary and OTC Medicines Branch, used a set of 28 slides to present the MMDR identifying five streams of work agreed and costed.

Complementary medicine assessment pathways were explained with a commitment to maintain the principle that the level of regulation would be commensurate with the risk.

Specific wording issues around indications were addressed for claims that products "may reduce ...", "help support ...", "may prevent ..." and so forth.

High quality efficacy packages will be required for TGA pre-market assessment and were defined in the presentation.

Visit tga.gov.au for the slide set.

Guild, Diabetes Australia sign MoU

THE Pharmacy Guild of Australia has signed a new Memorandum of Understanding with Diabetes Australia, to build a closer working relationship, share knowledge and expertise, and develop and deliver better information and services for people with diabetes.

"The scale and impact of the diabetes epidemic continues to grow, with over 100,000 new people with diabetes in just the past year," said Diabetes Australia ceo Greg Johnson.

Areas of cooperation identified include the new Health Care Homes Initiative, the Pharmacy Trials Program, early detection/prevention programs and jointly advocating for more affordable access to medicines and technology for people with diabetes.

Guild executive director David Quilty said the groups would also cooperate in any future government negotiations about the National Diabetes Services Scheme.

Canadian cannabis import

NORTH American pharmaceutical-grade medicinal cannabis producer Tilray, the first to be certified in accordance with the European Medicines Agency's (EMA) Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP), announced that it had successfully exported medical cannabis products to Victoria, Australia.

According to the Victorian Government, 29 critically ill children will become the first patients in the state to legally access medical cannabis when the Tilray products are distributed.

"This is too important to wait. That's why we're doing everything we can to make sure those families in the greatest need can access this life-changing treatment for their kids as soon as possible," said Premier Daniel Andrews.

"This is the first time in Victoria kids with severe epilepsy will be



able to legally access medicinal cannabis," he said.

Tilray products are currently available to certain patients in other Australian states and in New Zealand under

special access pathways for unapproved medicines.

Tilray has exploded to become a leading global supplier of pharmaceutical-grade medical cannabis products including whole flower, oils and capsules for commercial, compassionate access and research purposes, through Canada, European Union, New Zealand and Latin America.

ACCC warns hearing aid sector

THE Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) has released a report titled *Issues around the sale of hearing aids* to encourage industry to reconsider commissions, disclosure and sales practices in the context of the Australian Consumer Law.

With hearing aid prices ranging from \$1,500 to \$15,000, the ACCC alerts consumers to shop around for the best deal to suit their hearing needs, saying it was "concerned about a range of business practices" in the sector.

New orphan drugs

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration has updated its list of designated orphan drugs, with the addition of Phenasen (arsenic trioxide) for the treatment of Acute Promyelocytic Leukaemia; and Raxone (idebenone) for Duchenne muscular dystrophy.



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Dispensary Corner

THE Australian health system is making headlines worldwide after doctors in Queensland saved the life of a poisoned Italian tourist by giving him large amounts of vodka.

The 24-year-old presented at Mackay Base Hospital and was diagnosed as having ingested a large quantity of ethylene glycol - also known as antifreeze.

The treatment was a pure alcohol drip to inhibit the toxic effects of the poison, but the hospital's pharmaceutical-grade alcohol quickly ran out.

"We quickly used all the available vials of 100% alcohol and decided the next best way to get alcohol into the man's system was by feeding him spirits through a nasogastric tube," said the treating physician at the hospital, Dr Pascal Gelperowicz.

The patient was drip-fed about three standard drinks an hour for three days in the intensive care unit, he added.

"The hospital's administrators were also very understanding when we explained our reasons for buying a case of vodka," the doctor said.

The incident took place about two months ago but details have only just come to light.

The patient recovered successfully - although reports don't say whether he's still suffering from a big hangover.



Bio-Oil counterfeiter fined

UNITED Prestige Group has been ordered to pay damages and costs amounting to more than \$1 million by the Federal Court, in a judgement following a ruling which found it had operated a "sophisticated counterfeiting operation" relating to Bio-Oil.

The case was brought by Geneva Laboratories and Union-Swiss, which has an exclusive distribution agreement with Aspen Pharmacare Pty Ltd for the distribution of Bio-Oil in Australia.

The ruling, issued last month, described United Prestige Group, Prestige Premium Deals, United Prestige Clearance and Andrew Christopher, as conducting a "serious, planned and protracted attack" on the intellectual property rights of Geneva and Union-Swiss.

Interestingly the companies also pursued cases against retail pharmacies who dealt with United Prestige, which resulted in recoveries of some \$87,500.

The awarding of damages follows orders made in Sep last year pursuant to a judgement

which found Andrew Christopher and Prestige Premium Deals had infringed Bio-Oil intellectual property by "importing and selling goods bearing trade marks as signs which were identical, substantially identical or deceptively similar to the Bio-Oil Marks".

Andrew Christopher was also found to have engaged in misleading or deceptive conduct.

The damages were calculated at \$425,000 based on sales foregone and profitability impacted by the imported counterfeit product, plus a further \$50,000 in "reputational damages".

There were also "additional and exemplary damages" of \$212,500, with the Court finding the case involved flagrant and highly deceptive behaviour, taking place over a substantial period of time and with a "virtual certainty of the counterfeit Bio-Oil being taken to be genuine Bio-Oil by both consumers and retail pharmacists".

Interest was also levied on the damages, along with lump sum costs of \$540,000 plus GST.



Weekly Comment

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

Teresa Di Franco, Pharmacist and CDE, Perth Diabetes Care.



Pharmacy's role in diabetes care

THE role of pharmacy in supporting people with diabetes is multi-faceted. Pharmacists play a very important role in the direct support of patients with diabetes as well in liaising with other diabetes healthcare professionals in their local community. They also play a role in providing advice on the quality use of medicines, ensuring up to date resources are available in the pharmacy, initiating important conversations supported by these resources, stocking a wide range of NDSS consumables and being aware of their correct use. For example, recent updates in relation to insulin injection technique and needle lengths (FITTER*) should be followed when counselling patients with diabetes. The FITTER recommendations, including the Golden Rules of injection technique, can be accessed **HERE**.

Pharmacists should embrace in-pharmacy programs that provide an opportunity to engage or re-engage people in the community regarding their diabetes management. It is essential that all healthcare professionals who are treating people with diabetes are delivering consistent messages to ensure holistic support and optimised treatment outcomes.

*FITTER stands for the Forum for Injection Technique & Therapy Expert Recommendations and is an international program sponsored by BD.

WIN WITH DESIGNER BRANDS

This week Pharmacy Daily and Designer Brands are giving away the entire Brilliant Skin Duo range every day - a prize valued at \$60.

Instantly add warmth and dewiness to your complexion with the all NEW Brilliant Skin Duos from Designer Brands. There are two types of Duos in the range: Bronzer & Illuminator and Blush & Illuminator - including two stunning limited edition shades. The highly pigmented and blendable formulas are perfect for creating a naturally glowing complexion, and you get double the value with a 2-in-1 product. Enriched with Chamomile, Hyaluronic Acid and Aloe Vera, these buildable powders can be used alone or in tandem to create subtle to intense definition and illumination that lasts. With an included mirror, they are the ultimate handbag hero. **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

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2017 SIGMA RETAIL CONFERENCE

The 2017 Amcal & Guardian
Retail Conference kicks off today at
Jupiters Hotel on the Gold Coast!

The Conference is exclusively for Amcal & Guardian members who over 3 days receive valuable industry insights while engaging with fellow pharmacists, suppliers and industry experts from across Australia all in the one place.

2016 has seen Sigma continue to invest significant resources in striving to help our members, customers and Sigma reach our collective personal best.

This year's Retail Conference will reflect on our current track record, and see the announcement of a number of new initiatives to continue to position our members and Sigma ahead of the competition.

The Conference closes on Wednesday 8 March with a Gala and Awards Dinner celebrating the achievements of store teams nationally.



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