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Fish oil a NOAC no-no

FISH oil supplements and agents such as warfarin and non-vitamin K oral anticoagulants (NOACs) are being taken concomitantly by up to 15% of older adults, placing them at risk of dangerous drug-drug interactions leading to potential internal bleeding, according to new work out of the US.

The study involved descriptive analyses of a longitudinal, nationally representative sample of community-dwelling older adults 62 to 85 years old.

Health practitioners are reminded to interrogate patients about their supplement use when prescribing these agents, and pharmacists should likewise scan patient records for them when recommending or selling fish oil supplements.

See the study at jamanetwork.com.

On board with ASMI

THE Australian Self Medication Industry last month appointed Jonathan Biddle, VP Asia/Pacific of Prestige Consumer Healthcare and GM of Care Pharmaceuticals as a new member of its board.

Sanofi also joined ASMI as a new Ordinary Member, with Chair Lindsay Forrest welcoming both additions to the ASMI ranks.

Pay rates “embarrassing”

PHARMACISTS' salaries are embarrassingly low, according to one pharmacy owner who responded to the recent *Pharmacy Daily* Salary Survey (PD 05 Apr).

The survey found the average community pharmacist earns \$80,550 for their work in the retail pharmacy setting, with just under half of respondents reporting they worked over 40 hours a week.

Pharmacy owners reported the highest average incomes (\$168,000), followed by managers (\$95,500) and non-management level pharmacists (\$75,300).

Commenting on the survey, one owner described pharmacists as “the hardest working, but lowest paid health workers in Australia”.

“I am embarrassed, how little financial recognition I can afford to pay my wonderful staff, but as an industry competing with big-box discounters, who have trained Australians to expect a discounted price, and a Federal Government always reducing our remuneration, we are in a position of compromise,” the owner said.

“I am disappointed with the manner remuneration has evolved and unless someone is passionate about pharmacy, [I] would not

recommend it as a career, as I fear new pharmacists will feel unappreciated and undervalued.”

Survey data showed 46% of pharmacists earn between \$50,000 and \$90,000 a year, with 5% taking home more than \$130,000.

The survey found no statistically significant difference in pharmacist pay between banner groups, while the pharmacy school a pharmacist graduated from did not appear to influence their earning potential.

A number of respondents said wage stagnation in the sector had been driven by the rise of discount pharmacy groups and called for greater regulation.

“I feel Chemist Warehouse are bastardising the industry and the Pharmacy Guild of Australia and Government should at least make them charge a professional service fee for prescriptions,” one pharmacist commented.

Analysis of the survey compared to data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics put average employee pharmacist earnings above nurses (\$71,900), and almost on par with optometrists.

However, pharmacists' income trailed the earnings of dentists, GPs, anaesthetists and psychiatrists.

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TWCM Pharmacist of the Year



TERRYWHITE Chemmart has named Renee Wynne as the group's Pharmacist of the Year for 2019.

Wynne has been a partner at TerryWhite Chemmart Wynn Vale in South Australia since 2011, and as well as being on the SA Guild Branch Committee is a qualified diabetes educator and is accredited in mental health first aid.

More than 50 nominations were made for the award, with TerryWhite Chemmart Chief Operating Officer, Duncan Phillips,

saying it had been difficult to select a winner.

He said Wynne was "tireless in her dedication to learning and reinvests the benefits of her constant upskilling and knowledge back into her community.

"I'm sure we're only seeing the beginning of what she's capable of."

Pictured at the award ceremony in Melbourne during TWCM's fifth annual Masterclass (PD 02 May) are Phillips, Wynne and last year's winner Karen Brown.



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Medicine shortages

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has been advised by Arrow Pharmaceuticals that shortages of Anginine and Lycinat tablets are expected to continue until Sep 2019.

Consequently, the TGA has granted approval to Pfizer Australia to supply Nitrostat 600 mcg (0.6 mg) and 300 mcg (0.3 mg) tablets in the interim under the section 19A provisions of the relevant Act.

The TGA also announced that the short supply of metronidazole intravenous infusion 500 mg/100 mL bag has now been resolved, with the unapproved item supplied under S19A no longer available.

Jul PBAC agenda up

THE Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC) has posted the agenda for its Jul meeting, notifying stakeholders of new drug submissions (item 5), changes to listings (item 6) and resubmissions (item 7).

Visit pbs.gov.au for the agenda.

OC interaction

A HERB called *vitex agnus-castus*, also known as Chaste Tree, Chasteberry and Monk's Pepper, has been shown to interfere with some oral contraceptives (OCs).

In a Safety Advisory, the Therapeutic Goods Administration alerts it has received one report of an unintended pregnancy following concurrent use of *vitex agnus-castus* and norethisterone, a progesterone-only oral contraceptive pill.

One other similar case has also been reported internationally.

Studies have shown the herb may bind to oestrogen and dopamine receptors, indicating the potential for interaction with oestrogenic or dopaminergic medications.

Both Health Canada and the European Medicines Agency advise consumers to consult a health practitioner prior to using *Vitex agnus-castus*-containing products if they are taking hormone-containing medications, such as progesterone preparations, oral contraceptives or hormone replacement therapy.

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Dispensary Corner

THE US horse racing fraternity is running a particularly unusual fundraiser, with an auction under which bidders can vie for rare samples of horse manure from championship thoroughbreds.

The initiative relates to the popular Kentucky Derby race, with sales of the so-called "Derby Turds" going to fund a retirement facility where the ageing animals can live out their golden years.

It's the brainchild of local artist Coleman Larkin, who "tastefully" coats the faeces in resin (to ensure there are no health risks) before putting the poo up for sale.

He said the hardest part of the creative project was "asking the type of people that own million-dollar thoroughbreds if I can please have some horse crap to put in jars," according to the *Lexington Herald-Leader*.

AND on a similar, if slightly grosser subject, the case of a Taiwanese man who swallowed one of Apple's tiny wireless AirPods has intrigued and delighted tech-watchers globally. Why? Because after the gadget made its way right through his digestive tract and came out the other end, it was still working.

It's not clear how he managed to ingest the device, but using the 'Find my AirPods' function to locate it, he said "I could hear the 'beep beep' sound which seemed to follow me around the room".

"I then realised it was coming from my stomach," he said.

A doctor suggested a laxative, and lo and behold the next day it appeared - and after a particularly thorough cleaning he found it still had 41% battery left.

Dengue vaccine OK

THE US Food and Drug Administration has granted approval to Sanofi Pasteur's new Dengvaxia, the first vaccine for the prevention of dengue disease in endemic regions.

"Dengue disease is the most common mosquito-borne viral disease in the world, and global incidence has increased in recent decades," said FDA spokesperson Anna Abram.

The Centers for Disease Control estimates more than a third of the global population lives in areas at risk for infection by the virus which causes incurable dengue disease.

Dengvaxia is only approved for use in individuals who have previously suffered dengue fever, because in uninfected people the vaccine acts like a first dengue infection, such that a subsequent infection can result in a worse case.

Thus health care professionals must evaluate individuals for prior dengue infection through serological testing or confirmed medical records prior to administering the new vaccine.

Guild backs new pharmacist award

THE Australian Patients Association - an independent not-for-profit group dedicated to championing and protecting the rights and interests of all patients, has announced a new award which will go to the Most Outstanding Community Pharmacist.

Sponsored by the Pharmacy Guild of Australia, the award will "recognise the increasingly important contribution of community pharmacists in helping improve patient health outcomes" and will be announced at the APA's third annual National Patients Awards for Excellence in Jul.

APA CEO Stephen Mason said feedback from members and supporters had led to the creation of the award, which highlights the role pharmacists play in educating patients about medication use, providing basic health checks and ensuring patient continuity of care, particularly for the elderly and those with chronic illnesses.

"The role of the community pharmacist has become increasingly important in an age where patients are time poor and health costs are increasing," Mason said.

"Many patients tell us they like the convenience of being able to drop into their local pharmacy and get basic health advice and would like to see a greater role for pharmacists," he added.

Award voting at patients.org.au.



Welcome to Pharmacy Daily's weekly comment feature.

This week's contributor is **Judy Cheung-Wood, skinB5 Founder & CEO.**



SkinB5 conducts the Skin Care and Wellness Survey 2019

JUDY Cheung-Wood, conducted the survey to understand peoples' experiences with acne and to determine what support and education is needed.

"We surveyed our key stakeholders, members of the pharmaceutical and skin care industry, influencers and our customers to really understand some of the pain points that people are experiencing with bad skin and acne conditions."

Acne and breakouts are a common skin condition that over 90% of people experience in their life and 75% of people surveyed said that acne and bad skin had a negative impact on their life. Over half of the respondents said that hormones and stress are the main reasons identified as the cause of acne breakouts.

Behaviour in seeking treatment was varied. The contraceptive pill, isotretinoin, and antibiotics were also commonly used pharmaceutical treatments. 52% of respondents were treating acne and breakouts with products from shopping centre aisles. One-third of respondents (over 30%) however, had not used any other form of treatment to manage their acne and just hoped it would go away.

Next week will cover consumers concerns with skin care products.

Win with PURE Papaya

Everyday this week Pharmacy Daily and PURE Papaya are giving away the NEW PURE Papaya Glow valued at \$24.99.

PURE Papaya Glow is face oil for overnight skin renewal that will revitalise & nourish your skin while you sleep. This light oil is made with Papaya Oil and Jojoba Oil. Papaya Oil is derived from the seeds of the Papaya Fruit. The seeds are rich in enzymes, omega fatty acids and vitamins to help nourish and gently renew your skin. This product contains NO petroleum, preservatives, castor oil or palm oil and is made using a vegan friendly formula. Visit Purepapayacare.com.au to find out more.

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