Pharmacy Daily
Tuesday 10th Oct 2023

Today's issue of *PD*

Pharmacy Daily today features two pages of news, plus a full page from **TerryWhite Chemmart**.

Destroying S8s

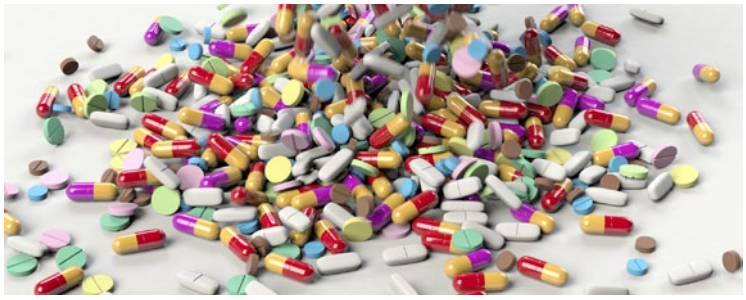
AS OF 29 Sep community pharmacists are able to destroy S8 medicines.

NSW Health announced that the *Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Regulation 2008* will now allow a pharmacist practising at a community pharmacy to destroy a drug of addiction (S8 medicines) in the pharmacy, in the presence of an independent witness.

A pharmacist must record the event in their pharmacy's drug register, as well as the witness's name, registration number, and signature.

All expired S8 medicines should be quarantined from usable stock and transferred to a separate page of the register.

The heavy burden of weight loss med



THE TGA may consider updating the product information to include a health warning about the stomach disorder ileus, after investigating reports of intestinal obstruction in patients using the anti-diabetic and weight loss medicine, semaglutide (Ozempic).

The watchdog organisation said it had received four reports of adverse gastrointestinal events linked with semaglutide to date, *AusDoc* has reported.

These included two cases of intestinal obstruction and one case each of small intestinal obstruction and ileus paralytic.

However, the TGA stated that the notifications did not necessarily mean a causal link with the medicine had been established.

A new study in the US has also suggested that people taking weight loss medicines, including Wegovy, Ozempic, Saxenda and Victoza, may be at higher risk for serious digestive problems such as stomach paralysis, pancreatitis, and bowel obstructions, compared with those taking other types of weight reduction medications, *CNN* has reported recently.

The study published last week in JAMA, **HERE**, found risks of these events happening to individual patients appears to be rare - about 1% of people taking Ozempic were diagnosed with stomach paralysis.

But demand for the drugs has exploded, with tens of millions now taking them worldwide.

Researchers say even rare risks like these may amount to hundreds of thousands of new cases.

"When you have millions of people using these drugs, you know, a 1% risk still translates to many people who may experience these events," said lead study author Dr Mahyar Etminan, an epidemiologist at the University of British Columbia.

In the group of roughly 600 patients who were taking Ozempic, there were four cases of gastroparesis or stomach paralysis, two cases of pancreatitis, no bowel obstructions, and five who developed biliary disease.

In the 4,400 people taking Saxenda, there were 66 cases of stomach paralysis, 73 bowel obstructions, 71 cases of pancreatitis, and 162 cases of biliary disease.

Of about 650 people taking Contrave, by contrast, there were three cases of stomach paralysis, two bowel obstructions, one case of pancreatitis, and 16 cases of biliary disease.

The study has limits as it is observational, so it can only show associations.

It can't prove the drugs caused the conditions people were diagnosed with, said the researchers.

Novo Nordisk, the manufacturer of both Ozempic and Saxenda, said it stands behind the safety and efficacy of all its GLP-1 medications when used consistent with the product labelling and approved indications.

"With respect to the study, as the authors acknowledge, the study has limitations, including potential confounding by indication and by other factors," the company said in a statement to *CNN*.

"We recommend patients take these medications for their approved indications and under the supervision of a healthcare professional." *JG*

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Dispensary Corner

THE doctors in a remote region of Sakhalin, Russia, have all been struck by a shocking discovery inside a woman's brain during a CT scan, *The Guardian* has reported.

It is understood that the 80-year-old woman has been living with a needle, which spans over 3cm long, inside her brain for most of her life.

While fascinating and miraculous, the origin of the needle may be a tragic story.

According to the doctors, the woman could be a victim of attempted infanticide, an act of killing infants within a year of birth.

"Such cases during years of famine were not uncommon", Sakhalin's local health department informed in a statement, also describing many of those living in the Soviet Union during World War II had no choice but to execute such acts under dire poverty.

However, the attempt was clearly not successful, as bewilderingly, the woman has lived through her entire life without noticing the sharp object inside her brain, which had reportedly penetrated her left parietal lobe.

The doctors have decided to leave the needle where it is, believing a forceful removal could worsen her condition.

Shingrix vax now on NIP

FROM 01 Nov, the GSK shingles vaccine, Shingrix, will be available on the National Immunisation Program (NIP) for the prevention of conditions such as herpes zoster and post-herpetic neuralgia.

Shingrix (Recombinant Varicella Zoster Virus glycoprotein E antigen (AS01a adjuvanted vaccine)), will be available for the following groups - individuals 65 years of age and older; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals aged 50 years and older; and immunocompromised individuals aged 18 years and older with conditions at 'high risk' of shingles.

These conditions include haematopoietic stem cell transplant, solid organ transplant, haematological malignancy, and advanced or untreated HIV.

University of Sydney Professor and infectious diseases expert, Robert Booy said, "access to Shingrix via the NIP creates further opportunities for healthcare professionals to talk about shingles with their high-risk patients".

"The prevention of shingles for these patients, in particular, is critical, as the impact of the disease can be very serious,

especially if they develop long-term complications like post-herpetic neuralgia or PHN" (***PD*** 03 Oct).

Dr Alan Paul, Country Medical Director at GSK Australia, applauds the Federal Govt's decision to provide funded access to Shingrix.

"Vaccinations help keep people well and can reduce demands on primary care and hospitals, as well as increasing productivity and benefiting the community and economy," said Paul.

"The listing of Shingrix highlights the government's commitment to prioritising adult vaccination.

"This is an important investment in the health of over four million Australians who are at greater risk of shingles." *JG*

Reaching up for 'early access' approval

REACH Pharmaceuticals and its licensor MSN Laboratories have received approval to commercialise Nelarabine-Reach 250mg/50ml solution for infusion through 'early access to a medicine under evaluation' for inclusion on the ARTG.

Nelarabine-Reach nelarabine 250mg/50ml solution for infusion is not approved in Australia and remains under evaluation by the TGA for registration.

Supply is authorised under an approval granted by the TGA under Section 19A of the *Therapeutic Goods Act 1989*.

"This approval of Nelarabine is particularly special for MSN and our partner Reach Pharmaceuticals and is a reflection of our commitment to enhance our offering in this important and niche treatment paradigm that will benefit patients the most, and doctors too in Australia," said MSN's Executive Director Bharat Reddy.

Guild Update

Ending gender bias

THE Guild is encouraging women in community pharmacy to take part in a national survey exploring the barriers that females face in Australia's health system.

The survey, which is being conducted by the National Women's Health Advisory Council, is online and can be completed in 17 different languages, including English.

The National Women's Health Advisory Council says its role is to, "provide strategic advice to government on improving Australia's health system for women and girls".

The Council says, "growing evidence has shown systemic issues in healthcare delivery and medical research mean women often suffer poorer health results".

It has also established subcommittees to investigate gender bias in four focus areas of the health system.

These are access, care and outcomes, empowerment, research and safety.

The results of the survey will help the Council achieve its goal of providing, "a better, more targeted healthcare system for Australian women and girls, and ensure it is culturally safe and appropriate".

To take part in the Council's survey **CLICK HERE**.

But the Guild says you'll need to be quick as the survey closes this Fri, 13 Oct.

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EDITORIAL
Publisher - Bruce Piper
Editorial Director - Damian Francis
Editor - Jayamala Gupte
Associate Publisher - Anna Piper
Contributors - Adam Bishop, Myles Stedman, Janie Medbury, Matthew Wai
info@pharmacydaily.com.au

ADVERTISING AND MARKETING
Sean Harrigan & Nicki Harford
advertising@pharmacydaily.com.au

Suite 1, Level 2, 64 Talavera Rd
Macquarie Park NSW 2113 Australia
PO Box 1010 Epping NSW 1710 Australia
Tel: 1300 799 220 (+61 2 8007 6760)

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