

Sigma in talks over Symbion Pharmacy

PRIMARY Health Care chief Ed Bateman yesterday confirmed that if his company's bid for Symbion Health succeeds it would divest itself of the Symbion Pharmacy and Consumer divisions.

Bateman said that he had already had some talks with Sigma Pharmaceuticals about the sale, as well as the Ironbridge and Archer Capital private equity consortium and an unnamed US company "in the same sector".

Sigma made an unsuccessful \$1.085 billion offer for Symbion's pharmacy and consumer businesses during the drawn-out Healthscope saga, with its bid ultimately trumped by \$1.

Last night Symbion directors issued a statement rejecting the Primary bid as "inadequate and highly conditional" and inferior to the Healthscope plan B proposal.

Myeloma drug onto PBS

THE Myeloma Foundation of Australia has welcomed this month's addition of Janssen-Cilag's Velcade (bortezomib) to the PBS, saying it gives patients affordable access to a new treatment which can extend and improve their lives.

At a function in Sydney yesterday, Professor Doug Joshua explained that the drug works by targeting the way cancer cells grow and is a key clinical option in treatment of the rare blood cancer.

The Myeloma foundation's Bob Moran said the disease is one of the most rapidly increasing forms of cancer in the western world, adding that the

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PBS listing would give people with the condition and their families "added hope and a chance to look into the future and have longer time together".

Velcade costs about \$60,000 for a six month treatment cycle.



ABOVE: At the launch yesterday, Professor Doug Joshua, head of Haematology at Sydney's RPA hospital, with Bob Moran of the Myeloma foundation and pharmacist Brian Rosengarten, whose wife suffers from myeloma.

Wine time with Pharmacy Daily

WELCOME to our regular *Pharmacy Daily* wine feature. We know that many pharmacists enjoy a nice bottle of wine, so have decided to provide a regular column on some of the new wines available.

ONE grape variety can have several names...

Pinot Gris...Pinot Grigio...Tokay Pinot Gris? Don't get confused, they are all the same grape variety! In Alsace, it is known as Tokay Pinot Gris. In Italy, it is commonly referred to as Pinot Grigio and in Germany, it's known as Ruländer or Grauburgunder.

Gris, meaning grey in French, refers to the colour of the Pinot Gris grapes - as a result, wines made from Pinot Gris often have a slight coppery hue.

Pinot Gris is similar to Chardonnay in that it has good palate weight and flavour.

Being a variant of Pinot Noir, Pinot Gris originated in the Burgundian vineyards of France, however it wasn't until the vine migrated to the northern region of Alsace that it made a name for itself.

From here, it travelled across Europe to many different countries including Italy and Germany, and today it also has a significant presence in both America and New Zealand.

In Australia, there are two distinctively different styles of

Pinot Gris.

Firstly, there is a zippy, vibrant style with lemon freshness and crisp acidity - a very good example of this is the 2007 Beelgara Winemakers Selection Pinot Grigio (rrp \$15 - www.beelgaraestate.com.au), which is a delicate, highly aromatic wine, crisp and dry, with tropical fruit and nashi pear characters.

This contrasts with a richer type that has greater body and texture - such as the Climbing Wines Pinot Gris 2007 (rrp \$20 - www.climbingwines.com.au).

It's a stunning new wine that showcases the benefits of high altitude, cool-climate viticulture.

Longer, even ripening allows the variety's acidity to be balanced with the delightful honey and pear notes on the palate.

Pinot Gris is an excellent partner to food due to its good palate weight yet subtle varietal character.

The fresh styles go well with oysters, shellfish, white fish and garden salads whereas the richer wines suit salmon, yabby pate and white meats.

Aerodiol withdrawn

SERVIER has announced that it's discontinuing the manufacture of its Aerodiol nasal spray worldwide, including Australia, with the firm saying the move isn't a result of regulatory or product safety issues but due to reduced global demand for the product.

The company said it expects there to be sufficient stock of the product until 31 Jan 08, and Aerodiol will remain on the PBS until 01 Apr 08.

Herbal equivalence

THE TGA has published a draft version of a document giving guidance on equivalence of herbal extracts.

The document describes the circumstances under which a herbal extract may be considered to be 'equivalent' to an ingredient used in a therapeutic good, and the Office of Complementary Medicine is seeking submissions by 21 Nov before finalising the publication.

Flu virus for 2008

THE Australian Influenza Vaccine Committee has agreed to adopt World Health Organisation recommendations for the components of next year's influenza vaccine, comprising the H1N1, H3N2 and B strains.



DISPENSARY CORNER

THE US Food and Drug Administration has come up with a novel plan for unwanted medications - hide them in poo.

A pilot scheme at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration is examining how people can dispose of unused prescription drugs which could be abused.

"Mixing prescription drugs with an undesirable substance, such as used coffee grounds or kitty litter...will ensure the drugs are not diverted," the SAMHSA recommended.

A spokesman added the further helpful tip that "ferret waste, like nearly any other form of pet waste, can be effectively used to help prevent the abuse of unused prescription drugs".

The American Ferret Association is said to be delighted at the news, issuing a statement headlined "The US government declares ferret poop to be an effective weapon against drug abuse".

SOCIALISTS in the European Parliament are pushing for a tax cut on condoms as a way of cutting the cost of safe sex.

Currently the 27 member states of the EU are able to fix their own Value Added Tax rates on the prophylactics, with some including Sweden and Denmark charging as much as 25%.

"Cutting VAT on condoms to [5%] would be both a practical step in tackling AIDS and a powerful symbolic gesture on World AIDS Day (01 Dec)," said European MP Jan Marinus Wiersma.

He launched an online petition at www.socialistgroup.eu.

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