

## The world's biggest pharmacy

US corporation Medco Health Solutions has announced the development of a massive US\$140m pharmacy.

The project will see the creation of a "next generation mail-order facility" as big as six football fields, employing 1300 staff including hundreds of pharmacists and technicians.

The 318,000 square foot pharmacy is set to open in 2009 and when it reaches peak operation in 2012 will dispense more than one million prescriptions every week.

Medco claimed to be "transforming the practice of pharmacy" by the development of specialist divisions.

"With advancements in science and technology blazing a path of personalised medicine, we can no longer take a shot gun approach to pharmacy," said Medco president Kenneth Klepper.

"To that end, Medco has created condition-specific resource centres staffed with hundreds of pharmacists who receive specialised training in specific chronic conditions, such as cancer, diabetes, heart disease and asthma.

"This focus on one chronic disease state enables these specialist pharmacists to better help patients optimise their health," he claimed.

## No PBS for Champix yet

A DELAY in Cabinet approval is being blamed for the non-PBS subsidy of Pfizer's new anti-smoking medication Champix (varenicline), which is set to launch next month.

Doctors are being told that patients will have to pay \$160 per prescription - or \$480 for a three month course - when the product is released on 01 Dec.

The move comes despite the medication being approved by the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee in Jul.

The PBAC recommended listing of Champix as a "short-term treatment to aid smoking cessation in patients aged 18

years of age or older," with an authority script required.

However it's understood that because the subsidy will cost more than \$10m a year, federal cabinet must approve the PBS listing and this hasn't yet been forthcoming, according to the *Daily Telegraph*.

Champix works by blocking receptors in the brain from nicotine, meaning smokers don't derive their normal pleasure.

The receptor action also relieves craving and withdrawal symptoms associated with quitting smoking, with studies showing a 40% success rate after a 12 week course.

## Male pill closer

ATTENDEES at the American Association of Pharmaceutical Scientists annual convention this week in San Diego, USA, have heard a presentation on the "first reversible, orally administered male contraceptive".

The testosterone-based pill could "potentially be taken by mouth and stop the male spermatogenesis cycle," according to Jim Dalton of Ohio State University.

He said a recent study was "doubly successful because it completely and reversibly inhibited fertility without unwanted side effects".

## Parkinsons link?

A US STUDY published this week suggests a possible correlation between regular use of NSAIDs and a reduction in the likelihood of contracting Parkinson's disease.

## New Pulse gm

PULSE Health has announced the appointment of David Bromfield as General Manager of its Workforce Services Division.

Bromfield, who's a radiographer by profession, was the founder of medical specialist recruitment firm RSG Australia which Pulse purchased earlier this month.

Pulse said it would "continue to identify a number of potential acquisition targets" as it continues its strategy to build a "major integrated health services company".

MEANWHILE, the new Pulse Health director (*PD* yesterday) is former Mayne ceo Stuart James.

## Another cervical cancer vaccine

CSL is trialling a second-generation experimental vaccine targeting viral strains which cause cervical cancer.

The vaccine is based on the same technology as Cervarix and Gardasil, but is claimed to address 90% of viruses compared to the 70% level for the existing vaccines.

The three year trial will compare patients either receiving Gardasil or the new vaccine, with the product not available until at least 2012.

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## DISPENSARY CORNER

A NEW York councilman has declared war on the city's pigeon population, and is urging the distribution of "bird contraceptives" to stop the pigeon proliferation.

Simcha Felder also wants authorities to levy a US\$1000 fine on anybody who dares to feed a pigeon, and suggested the appointment of a "pigeon czar" to manage the battle against what he called a "public health hazard".

He's ruffled the feathers of the city's animal lovers, however, with a spokesman for bird rescue group The Pigeon People saying "people don't appreciate the fact that we have some wildlife".

A previous effort using trained hawks to handle the pigeon problem in New York failed after the birds of prey attacked a precious pet chihuahua.

PROBABLY not a good move given the obesity crisis.

Celebrity French chef Alain Ducasse this week released his latest cookbook detailing more than 500 delicious recipes.

The 1136-page *Grand Livre de Cuisine* (Big Cookbook) certainly lives up to its name - the massive tome weighs a whopping 6kg and also comes with a gigantic \$350 price tag.

A GENETIC abnormality is being attributed as the basis of a new tourist attraction in China.

A restaurateur in the southern city of Guangzhou found an unusual ingredient - a six-legged frog - and rather than cooking it along with all the other frogs, decided to keep it on display, in theory to attract diners.

## RGH Pharmacy

**Due to popular demand the RGH Pharmacy Anticoagulation Handbook is now available to the pharmacy industry across Australia.**

The handbook gives patients important information about warfarin treatment and has a chart to record INR results.

**Repatriation General Hospital is making it available for purchase for \$2.80 per booklet, reduced to \$2.40 for PSA and SHPA members.**

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