

Today's issue of PD

PHARMACY Daily today has two pages, including this month's MIMS prescribing update and our weekly column from the Pharmacy Guild on page two.

PBS web upgrade

THE Health Department has this month made a number of changes to the PBS website, including an improvement to the consumer sub-site which more clearly identifies the conditions for prescribing of each medication.

Other enhancements include better search functionality when searching for brand names, more visibility for RPBs items and better functionality for the brand premium page, adding brands which were previously not shown due to the absence of equivalence marking.

Wound care update

PSA Vic will hold a Wound Care & Sports Medicine Sunday Learning session at Monash Uni on Sun 24 Aug and Sun 31 Aug.

Places are limited to 80 per day, and the seminar costs \$290 for 2 days for PSA members, \$360 for SHPA members and \$435 for non-members - 03 9389 4000.

\$250k Qld research grants

THE Pharmacists Board of Qld has announced its first ever research program, providing annual funding of \$250,000 to help Qld pharmacists to "promote and encourage research activity and research-based practice."

It's calling for applications from researchers of all levels of experience, with the move following consultation last year with registrants and key interest groups on the board's Strategic Plan 2008-2012.

To be eligible to apply for funding under the program, the proposed research team must include a Chief Investigator who lives in Qld and is a pharmacist with current unconditional

Rural CPD help

APPLICATIONS are being invited from suitably qualified rural and remote clinical health professionals (excluding nurses or doctors) for this year's Australian Rural and Remote Health Professional Scholarship Scheme.

The ARRHPS provides financial assistance to undertake postgraduate professional education - www.sarrah.org.au.

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registration to practice in Qld.

"We are very proud to be returning support to our registrants by offering such significant annual funding that will benefit both the profession of pharmacy and the members of the Queensland community who use this vital health care service," said Board chair Peter Brand.

There are a range of grants available, with full details at www.pharmacyboard.qld.gov.au and more info on 07 3247 4862.

Cancer switch

AUSTRALIAN researchers have discovered how to prevent the process that triggers breast cancer and some forms of leukemia.

Scientists from Sydney's Garvan Institute of Medical Research say they have found a "shield" molecule which, in healthy people, blocks a "transmitter" molecule that tells cancer cells to multiply and spread.

The significant finding opens the way for new drugs that would mimic the natural shield, so the transmitter molecule could be turned off in cancer patients, said lead researcher Prof Roger Daly.

Uneducated on asthma

A RECENT Newspoll survey has revealed that many Australian asthma sufferers are startlingly uneducated about the condition.

The survey looked at what sufferers who take a preventative medication would most like to know from their doctors.

The results showed that 56% of asthma sufferers said they could better manage the condition if they knew what happens in the lungs to cause asthma, 55% said they want to know the main triggers, 56% wanted to know how to stop an attack, half wanted to know more about day to day management, and 46% wanted to know what happens when they forget to take an inhaler.

Around 64% of patients who don't take their medication all the time also said they didn't see their asthma as serious enough to warrant it, while 76% said they tended not to use their preventer all the time when feeling well.

The figures were the results of a poll conducted in Feb this year of 225 adults in Australia aged 18+ who said they had been diagnosed with asthma.

MIMS August prescribing update

NEW PRODUCTS

• **Zoledronic acid** (Aclasta) is a bisphosphonate used in the treatment of osteoporosis in postmenopausal women to reduce the incidence of hip, vertebral and non-vertebral fractures, and patients older than 50 years with a history of at least one low trauma hip fracture, to reduce the incidence of further fractures.

It is contraindicated in patients with hypersensitivity to any bisphosphonate; hypocalcaemia; renal impairment (creatinine clearance <35 mL/min); current or recent uveitis, or a history of bisphosphonate-associated uveitis. It is also contraindicated in pregnancy and lactation.

The recommended dose is a single intravenous infusion of 5 mg administered once a year. Supplemental calcium and vitamin D intake is recommended.

Aclasta is available on a private prescription as 5 mg/100 mL infusion.

• **Valsartan** (Diovan) is an angiotensin II receptor antagonist indicated for the treatment of hypertension or heart failure (NYHA class II-IV) in patients receiving usual therapy (e.g. diuretics, digitalis) who are intolerant to ACE inhibitors, and to improve survival following myocardial infarction in clinically stable patients with clinical or radiological evidence of left ventricular failure and/or with left ventricular systolic dysfunction.

Valsartan is contraindicated in pregnancy; severe hepatic impairment; biliary cirrhosis and cholestasis.

Recommended starting dose is 80 mg once daily (hypertension) or 40 mg twice daily (heart failure). In postmyocardial infarction, treatment may be initiated as early as 12 hours after a myocardial infarction. After an initial dose of 20 mg twice daily, valsartan therapy should be titrated to 40 mg, 80 mg, and

160 mg twice daily over the next few weeks.

Diovan is available on private prescription as 40, 80, 160 and 320 mg tablets (packs of 28).

• **Co-Diovan (valsartan + hydrochlorothiazide)** is indicated for the treatment of hypertension.

It is contraindicated in patients with hypersensitivity to sulfonamide derivatives; pregnancy; severe renal (creatinine clearance <30 mL/min) and hepatic impairment; biliary cirrhosis and cholestasis; anuria; refractory hypokalaemia, hyponatraemia, hypercalcaemia, and symptomatic hyperuricaemia.

Initial dose is one tablet of 80 mg/12.5 mg daily. It is available on private prescription as 80/12.5 mg, 160/12.5 mg and 160/25 mg tablets in packs of 28.

• **Exforge (valsartan + amlodipine)** is indicated for the treatment of hypertension. Treatment should not be initiated with this fixed dose combination.

It is contraindicated in patients with hypersensitivity to dihydropyridine derivatives; severe hepatic impairment; biliary cirrhosis and cholestasis; severe renal impairment (GFR <30 mL/min/1.73 m²) and patients undergoing dialysis. It is also contraindicated during pregnancy.

A patient whose blood pressure is not adequately controlled on amlodipine or valsartan monotherapy may be switched to combination therapy with Exforge. The recommended dose is one tablet per day.

Exforge is available on a private prescription as 5/80 mg, 5/160 mg or 10/160 mg tablets (packs of 28).

SAFETY-RELATED CHANGES

• In the event of intolerable headaches during initial treatment with Asasantin SR (aspirin + dipyridamole), switch to one capsule at bedtime and low-dose aspirin (for example, 75-150 mg) in the morning.

Because there are no long-term, clinical outcome data with this regimen and headaches become less of a problem as treatment continues, patients should return to the usual regimen (one capsule twice daily) as soon as possible, usually within one week.

• The potential risk of apnoea and the need for respiratory monitoring for 48-72 hours should be considered when administering the primary immunisation series of Infanrix Penta to very premature infants (born ≤ 28 weeks of gestation) and particularly for those with a previous history of respiratory immaturity.

As the benefit of vaccination is high in this group of infants, vaccination should not be withheld or delayed.

This list is a summary of only some of the changes that have occurred over the last month. Before prescribing always refer to the full Product Information.



The Pharmacy
Guild of Australia

This week's update from the Guild

Medicine Management Programs

It's not too late for pharmacies to get involved in the new medicine management programs – the Dose Administration Aids (DAA) Program and the Patient Medication Profile (PMP) Program, and they will still be eligible for some program incentive payments.

The DAA and PMP programs are part of the Better Community Health Initiative under the Fourth Community Pharmacy Agreement, funded by the Department of Health and Ageing and managed by the Pharmacy Guild of Australia with the support of the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia.

Participation in these programs will not only benefit patients through the delivery of the service, but the data provided via both programs will inform the ongoing sustainability of these services and provide a foundation for payment models for future professional pharmacy services. Plus, participating pharmacies will be prepared for requests that may come from their patients once consumer promotion commences.

Finally, the sooner you register and provide the necessary evaluation data, the greater the incentive payments that are available.

Don't put it off any longer!

For further information about these programs visit the Professional Services of the Pharmacy Guild website at www.guild.org.au.

The Pharmacy Readiness Kit is an excellent source of practical information about both programs.

You can also contact program personnel from the Guild's National Office who can help you develop an action plan to maximise your participation in these programs.

A blooming big donation

BLOOMS The Chemist has donated more than half a million dollars to the University of Sydney's Faculty of Pharmacy.

Blooms chairman and founder John Sidgreaves announced the gift, saying "Blooms is very proud of its links with the Faculty of Pharmacy and wants to support the academic excellence achieved by its graduates by ensuring they are equipped with the business knowledge to enable them to run their own pharmacies successfully."

The money, \$590,000 over five years, will support Faculty projects including an innovative optional business skills program.

The program will now be known as the Blooms Business Skills Program and is said to be the first of its kind in an Australian university.

The course was introduced a year

ago as a pilot scheme by Professor Lesley White, the Johnson and Johnson Chair of Pharmacy Management at the University, who's pictured below with some of the students who recently completed the program.

"We need to teach pharmacy students how to run a business as well as the more clinical and scientific aspects of their careers," said Prof White.

"By having long term financial support for this program we can make sure our graduates have the essential skills required for a successful future in community, hospital or industrial pharmacy."



S2 research project

THE Pharmacy Guild has contracted a project to collect and analyse data relevant to the scheduling of Pharmacy Only and Pharmacist Only medicines.

It will identify numbers of Australians using S2 medicines, the impediments to access of S2s and the perceived and actual customer benefits and need for pharmacist advice with drugs covered by this schedule.

WA PATY finalist

JODIE Riechelt of Dalkeith Village Pharmacy has been named as the WA finalist in the Pharmacy Guild/GSK Pharmacy Assistant of the Year Award.

In Oct she'll be flown to the Gold Coast's Pharmacy Assistant Conference to compete in the national finals for \$5000 in prizes.

PATY finalists in NSW, ACT, SA, Vic and Tas will be selected later this month, and in Sep for the NT.

Win Designer Fragrances!

CONGRATULATIONS to Fiona Evans of Evanz who was the first subscriber yesterday to tell us that there are **four** Designer Brand men's fragrances.

Each day this week **Pharmacy Daily** is giving you the chance to win a beautiful fragrance from Designer Brands, courtesy of **Total Beauty Network**.

The range of budget fragrances available are all based on quality, top selling, non-discontinued fragrances.

For your chance to win this fantastic prize, send your answer to the below question to: comp@pharmacydaily.com.au.

How many Designer Brand women's fragrances are there?

The first person to answer correctly each day will win.

HINT: Go to www.tbn.com.au each day and click on the Designer Brands logo at the top of the page.



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DISPENSARY CORNER

HOSPITAL authorities in Vienna have banned 'Crocs' sandals from wards and operating theatres over fears they could damage life support machines.

The colourful, trendy plastic sandals have been a worldwide phenomenon, but Austrian Health Authority safety officers are now warning that they can generate huge amounts of static electricity.

"Those sandals can cause an electric shock in organs. They can also lead to crashes of data processing devices," said spokesman Peter Woelfl.

"We hold a technical opinion which says that those sandals are made of materials which are not antistatic," he added.

A spokesperson for the footwear manufacturer was quoted as saying the move was "insane" with no evidence of Crocs having caused any critical incidents in hospitals.

GENETIC researchers in Germany claim to have discovered a so-called "scaredy-cat" gene.

Variations in the COMT gene saw patients react differently to unpleasant images, suggesting that inborn differences were more likely to make people prone to extreme anxiety.

The scientists at the University of Bonn said the variations could explain why some viewers are entertained by horror movies, while others are shocked or disturbed by the same images.

They also suggested that the work could lead to new treatments for anxiety tailored to fit the genetic variations.

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