

## NPS translation

**THE** National Prescribing Service has launched a new bilingual brochure explaining generic medicines in Italian, Vietnamese, Greek and simplified and traditional Chinese.

The brochure is aimed at seniors and is part of the third phase of the *Generic Medicines are an Equal Choice* campaign.

See [www.nps.org.au/generics](http://www.nps.org.au/generics).

## PSA asthma event

**THE** Pharmaceutical Society of Australia will tomorrow night hold a seminar on emergency management of asthma at 7.30pm at the Victorian University of Technology in Sunshine, Vic.

It will also help pharmacists to detect and rectify common errors with asthma device use.

Free for members/\$75 for non-members; more info 03 9389 4013.

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## New scheduling proposal

**THE** Therapeutic Goods Administration has released a draft proposal for the scheduling of medicines which will see the National Drugs and Poisons Schedule Committee disbanded.

Two separate committees would replace the NDPSC - one in charge of medicines (the Medicines Scheduling Expert Advisory Committee) and the other in charge of agricultural, domestic and other chemicals (the Chemicals Scheduling Expert Advisory Committee).

The proposed new arrangements would also see the implementation of a new *Standard for the Uniform Scheduling of Medicines and Poisons* (SUSMP), putting in place a number of recommendations of the Galbally Review as well as decisions of the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council.

The Galbally Review was a report which looked at medicines laws in Australian states and territories in the light of National Competition Policy principles.

It's been a very long process, with the final report of the Review presented in Jan 2001.

A number of recommendations were implemented in 2006-07 but the remainder were derailed by the collapse of negotiations relating to the proposed unified trans-Tasman Australia-NZ Therapeutic Products Agency in Jul 2007.

## Cancer screen merger

**TWO** Australian companies working in the area of women's health diagnostics have agreed to merge, with Polartechnics making an off-market takeover offer for all the issued shares in Fermiscan.

The companies said their two businesses are "highly complementary" with Polartechnics having international distribution agreements for the delivery of real time screening technology to detect cervical cancer, while Fermiscan is currently commercialising an "innovative non-invasive diagnostic test for the detection of breast cancer."

If shareholders approve the deal both operations will co-locate at Polartechnics' existing offices in Erskineville, Sydney and the merged group will be renamed Novus Diagnostics Limited.



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## DISPENSARY CORNER

**A MEXICAN** artist has shocked attendees at an exhibition in London by serving them cheese made with human breast milk.

Raul Ortega Ayala said the cheese, served with a traditional accompaniment of crackers, is "designed to explore our first encounter with food, emphasising its territoriality and boundaries."

The cheese is made in "the normal way" according to a spokeswoman, who said the women "donate the milk to him voluntarily."

The artist's next work is titled 'Obituary Menus' and will see him recreate the food which public figures including presidents and mass murderers ate just before they died.

**SCIENTISTS** in Canada have come up with an iPod attachment which allows unborn babies to listen to music.

The contoured belt wraps around a mother's waist and has three in-built 'vibration speakers' which direct the music to play "through the womb".

The developers said they created the device because of a theory that babies are born smarter if they're exposed to classical music during pregnancy.

However they admitted that there was nothing to stop expectant mothers from playing less edifying tunes to their babies.

**THE** global financial crisis has reportedly produced a major surge in vasectomy operations in the USA, as families become increasingly concerned about the costs of raising extra children.

A number of reports have cited statistics showing that since Nov vasectomy numbers are up about 50% on figures from a year before.

The trend is exacerbated in the USA by the system of insurance coverage, which sees many people lose their medical insurance when they lose their jobs.

"When things started to go south in the stock market, then the vasectomy consults went north," said one New York urologist.

The proposed SUSMP is based on the current schedule but with a number of changes including a new appendix L which will list S2 substances that licensed poison sellers are not allowed to sell in remote areas where there is no pharmacy within 25 km.

There's also a proposed appendix M listing the requirements for labels which were previously included in the SUSDP, with other changes in the document replacing the words "a medical practitioner or dentist" with "an authorised prescriber".

The proposals do not include a new S3 sub-schedule for 'Pharmacist Only Medicines Notifiable', as has been suggested recently by the Guild (PD 03 Apr).

The TGA is inviting comments on the changes by close of business on Fri 29 May 2009 via email to [schedulingconsultation@tga.gov.au](mailto:schedulingconsultation@tga.gov.au).

## GSK Pfizer pact

**GLAXOSMITHKLINE** and Pfizer have announced a new agreement under which they will create a "new world-leading HIV company" which will solely focus on R&D and commercialisation of HIV drugs.

85% of the new entity will be owned by GSK and 15% by Pfizer, and it will initially hold a 19% share of the growing market and have an "industry leading pipeline".

It will market existing products including Combivir, Kivexa, Trizivir, Retrovir/AZT, Lexiva/Telzir and Selzentry/Celsentry as well as continue work on six new medicines of which four are currently in phase II development.

The companies said that not-for-profit pricing for HIV medicines would also continue for those countries most in need.

See [www.hivfutures.com](http://www.hivfutures.com).

## Consumer recall

**THE** Therapeutic Goods Administration in conjunction with Shen Neng Herbal Medicines Group Pty Ltd has initiated a consumer level recall of two batches of Chuan Xiong Chao Tiao Wan pills, after low levels of aristolochic acids were found in the product.

Aristolochic acids have been associated with severe adverse reactions including kidney damage and urinary tract cancer in humans.