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OTC Update Sun Care

With summer now here, and plenty of people getting into the sun, many customers will be asking for advice on sun care.

This week we will look at:

Treating Sunburn

Sunburn is not felt immediately. Maximum redness does not occur until 15-24 hours after exposure, although erythema can appear 2-8 hours post exposure, and can last for 3 to 4 days. Symptoms of sunburn can include oedema, pain and tenderness. Peeling starts after 72 hours and can continue for up to 5 days. Severe sunburn can cause malaise, fever, chills and headache.

First line treatment for sunburn is cold water. eg. a cold shower over the affected area or cool moist compresses to the burnt area. Patients should drink plenty of water to help prevent dehydration. Fluid replacement is essential. A moisturiser such as Sorbolene and Glycerin cream may be soothing.

Topical medications may also be of some value. Many products contain a local anaesthetic which can offer short term pain relief. Topical steroids can partially suppress redness. Patients with severe sunburn with blistering should seek medical advice.

Prolonged and repeated over exposure to the sun will cause premature aging of the skin and may lead to the development of malignant disease.

UK limits its pain threshold

UK PHARMACISTS are being urged not to sell more than two pack of pain relief medications in any one transaction, according to new guidelines released on Friday by the UK's Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).

Designed as a 'best practice' guide for the sale of pain relief medication, the guidelines also discourage promotional activity for multiple packs of pain killers.

"By clearly stating 'best practice' for sale of these medications, it will ensure that retailers are meeting a customer's immediate need for pain relief while helping to minimise stockpiling and the risk of

overdose," said MHRA Director of Vigilance and Risk Management of Medicines, Dr June Raine.

UK regulations also limit pain relief medicines packet size - a maximum pack size of 32 tablets can be sold under the supervision of a pharmacist, while in a general sale outlet the limit is 16 tablets.

UK medicines legislation makes it illegal to sell more than 100 tablets or capsules of either paracetamol or aspirin in a single transaction.

TGA adds orphan

THE TGA has added Abraxis Australia's Abraxane, for the treatment of pancreatic cancer, to its designated list of orphan drugs.

Drug treatment 07-08

ALCOHOL is still the number one drug of concern in Australia, according to a series of reports released by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare today.

In NSW in 07-08 49% of drug 'episodes' were caused by alcohol (up 4% from 06-07), with cannabis accounting for 17% and heroin 12%.

Conversely amphetamine-related episodes dropped from 13% in 06-07 to 11% in 07-08.

Counselling was found to be the most common form of treatment (29%), followed by detox (20%) and 'other' services (17%).



Quality Assurance Analyst (Pharmacy Software)

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Kids back to nature

A TEN point plan aimed at tackling childhood obesity has been developed by a team of experts at the University of Essex.

The report, titled Nature, Childhood, Health and Life Pathways, lays out its plan which encourages more outdoor play for young children, additional 'green space' in urban areas and 'a better evaluation and assessment of the benefits of outdoor play to people and the economy'.

According to the researchers there is increasing evidence that 'natural places' can lead to positive physical and mental health outcomes.

"Fewer than half of children now get enough physical activity to produce health benefits," said researcher Professor Jules Pretty.

"We need radical changes in social and physical environments and policies if activity levels are to change permanently," she added.

Medicare prevention focus

LONGER consultations and a focus on preventive care are key features of a revamp of the Medicare Benefits Schedule announced by the govt today.

Health Minister Nicola Roxon said 15 measures to "simplify the schedule, remove red tape and encourage preventive care" would be in place by 01 May 2010.

She said the moves address concerns by doctors that the current scheme is overly complex, encourages so-called 'six-minute medicine' and fails to encourage preventive care, particularly for those with chronic illnesses.

Changes include slashing the number of different Medicare items, making item descriptions

clearer and simplifying after hours items to make them "more attractive for doctors to use."

Fees will also increase for longer consultations, and the current structure for Health Assessments will change to offer a simpler range of four time-based Medicare items.

Roxon said the changes would be cost neutral, with the extra costs associated with higher rebates offset by the savings in the simplification process.

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners welcomed the changes "as the first step in health reform" but encouraged the government to look at other reforms including "higher rebates for high quality general practice care".

Pharmacy E-Bulletin

THIS week's edition of the Repatriation General Hospital Pharmacy E-Bulletin gives an overview of the recently TGA-approved 'warfarin replacement' dabigatran.

The bulletin is available from chris.alderman@rgh.sa.gov.au.

Curb teen drinking

PARENTS are being urged to resist giving their teen alcohol following a report which found that the human brain is six times more likely to develop addictions and more likely to suffer alcohol related damage throughout the teen years.



DISPENSARY CORNER

AN American man's rather unusual hobby has landed him in a precarious position after a thief broke into his home and stole 40 tablets out of his special collection of 2400 ecstasy pills.

According to reports the man reported the theft to police because he was worried that the pills may be lethal if ingested.

He told officers that he did not take ecstasy, but rather the collection was the result of a 20 year passion for the pills' shapes, colours and logos.

And according to a spokesman for law enforcement authorities, the officers investigating the theft believe him.

"Why would you make something like this up?" he said.

The pills were all stored in several stamp collecting folders, and the man is aware that he will not be getting his prized collection back.

Police have not yet laid possession charges at this stage, as the drugs are still missing.

A NEW study into behavioral changes related to the phases of the moon has suggested there could be some truth to traditions which relate lunar phases to unusual activities.

The study took place at Newcastle's Mater Hospital, and found that over a 12-month period 23% of patients who had such violent behavioral issues that they had to be sedated or restrained were admitted on a full moon.

The 'full moon effect' did not however extend to existing hospital patients who suffered less severe behavioral conditions, leading the report's authors to suggest that the moon's influence only exerted itself on those with severe conditions.

Several theories were put forth as to why the moon influenced behavior including a "quasi-tidal" effect on the brain, the fact that its brightness may affect sleeping patterns and that patients may have been more likely to drink or take other intoxicants during a full moon.

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