



Generics ALP issue

THE Labor Party's national conference will today hear a motion criticising the decision by Innovation Minister Kim Carr to block Hospira's bid to have patent laws changed to allow export of generic medicines (PD yesterday).

The National Union of Workers is accusing the government of favouring the major multinational drug companies in the decision, instead of "doing what it can to encourage manufacturing in Australia."

Minor Ailments Guild plan

PHARMACY Guild President Kos Sclavos yesterday confirmed that the Guild had proposed the introduction of a Minor Ailments Scheme as a key way of reducing health costs in Australia.

Speaking at the National Press Club in Canberra, Sclavos said the plan would give concession card holders access to a limited list of medicines which are still subsidised through the PBS, meaning they would only pay the copayment.

He said the current arrangements mean they can only buy the medicines - such as paracetamol - at the concessional price when prescribed by a doctor.

"Pharmacists would receive no additional professional fee for this service, making it a clear saving to the national health bill," he said.

A similar Minor Ailments Scheme had operated successfully in the UK for many years, with Sclavos saying the pharmacy plan was superior to walk-in nurse practitioner clinics.

"Let me tell you there are around five thousand walk-in clinics around Australia called community pharmacies - and they don't need to be 'rolled out' at taxpayer's expense," he said.

Sclavos also urged the government to mandate the use of Project STOP in the fight against pseudoephedrine diversion - as well as its expansion to "a variety of products that we know can be misused or abused."

He said the issue comes up every time there is a celebrity death attributable to prescription medicines and every time there is a major report into drug abuse.

"The Guild has the solution and has offered it to Federal, State and Territory governments," he added.

That appeared to be news to health minister Nicola Roxon, who said the govt had received "limited information" from the Guild about the proposal, but said there were "already some Medicare programs in place to monitor prescription shopping behaviour."

Sclavos also reiterated the Guild's collaborative approach when negotiating Community Pharmacy Agreements, which he said were vital to ensure that community pharmacy remains viable.

He said that rather than negotiating via the media "we will use our team of analysts, health economists and skilled staff to develop win, win, win scenarios" for patients, the govt and pharmacies.

New AACP chief

THE Australian Association of Consultant Pharmacy (AACP) has announced the appointment of Grant Martin as its new chief executive officer.

Martin, who's currently the PSA's Director of Professional Services, will replace Bill Kelly who leaves the Association at the end of August after six years in the role.

Acting AACP Chair, Toni Riley, said the Association was "fortunate to have recruited a respected and experienced successor to Bill, whose innovative approach to accreditation has seen significant growth in not only the number of pharmacists becoming accredited or undergoing accreditation, but also in the status and stature of AACP."

She said Kelly's achievements included the implementation of a number of significant initiatives, including competency-based accreditation and reaccreditation, and the implementation of new credentials in the areas of diabetes and asthma management as part of the Fourth Community Pharmacy Agreement.

A graduate of the University of Sydney and a regular locum at a Canberra pharmacy, Martin will take up his new role on 7 Sep.

WIN A REGISTRATION TO PHARMACY WOMEN'S CONGRESS

Robyn Hedges, a pharmacist from Pymble in NSW sent in the following entry in this week's competition offering a place at the upcoming Pharmacy Women's Congress:

"To network with other pharmacists and discuss their goals and the development of their careers and businesses. Also to build new friendships and renew old!"

This week *Pharmacy Daily* and The Pharmacy Guild of Australia are giving subscribers the chance to win a full conference registration at the 2009 Pharmacy Women's Congress, valued at \$495.

The congress will be held from 14-16 August at the Surfers Paradise Marriott Resort & Spa, Gold Coast.

The event will bring together female pharmacists from around Australia to discuss the future of pharmacy, and will focus on personal and professional development based around the Congress' theme, 'Gaining Knowledge, Sharing Experiences, Building Futures'.

For your chance to win the full conference registration which includes entry to all sessions; morning teas, lunches and afternoon teas; a Welcome reception ticket; a Congress dinner ticket; a breakfast session ticket and a Congress satchel and handbook, simply send your answer to the question below to comp@pharmacydaily.com.au.

Please also include details of where you work in pharmacy!

In 25 words or less, tell us why you would like to attend this year's Pharmacy Women's Congress.

Entries must be in by Friday and the lucky winner will be published in next Monday's *Pharmacy Daily* issue.



2009 Pharmacy Women's Congress

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And they're off!

GUILD President Kos Sclavos this morning sent a letter to members confirming that the framework for negotiations for the Fifth Community Pharmacy Agreement has now been established with the Minister for Health, Nicola Roxon and the Secretary of the Health Department, Jane Halton.

He said that following this preliminary meeting to establish the groundwork, "the Guild will now enter confidential negotiations with the Government."

Sclavos said the Guild would now not be in a position to make comments to members about progress made and details being discussed, until such time as the Agreement is finalised.

Berries for brains?

US researchers have reported that "eating strawberries boosts brain power," with the 2009 Berry Health Symposium in California reporting that older adults who eat strawberries at least once per month had significantly less "cognitive decline" than those who had a strawberry-free diet.

'Recreational' medicine alert

THE National Prescribing Service has warned health professionals to beware that patients who ask specifically for Stilnox may be seeking to use the medication for incorrect purposes.

The NPS has issued a warning to consumers about the recreational use of medicines, following media reports this week of teenagers mixing zolpidem with energy drink Red Bull.

NPS ceo, Dr Lynn Weekes, said that people were "playing Russian roulette with their health" if they take medicines inappropriately.

"All medicines have potential side effects and should only be used for the purpose for which they have been prescribed," she said.

In particular the consumer medicine information for Stilnox (zolpidem) clearly states that it should not be given to people under the age of 18, and also shouldn't be taken if patients have been drinking alcohol.

"I strongly advise anyone who has been, or is thinking about, using any medicine for recreational

purposes, to read the consumer medicine information leaflet and think about the ramifications it may have on their health," Weekes said.

"There are many sources of information about medicines, including your pharmacist or GP, the NPS website and our publications," she added.

UK resists prescription pseudoephedrine sales

HEALTH authorities in Britain have confirmed that cold and flu remedies containing ephedrine and pseudoephedrine will remain as 'pharmacy medicines' rather than moving to prescription only.

The announcement follows a review of the impact of tighter controls on the sale of the products introduced a year ago, which saw reduced pack sizes, limits on sales to one pack per customer and mandatory training for all pharmacy staff.

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency said that since the new arrangements were introduced there had been "no new reports of the misuse of these drugs in the past year."

Pharmacies also reported a 25% drop in sales of tablets or capsules containing pseudoephedrine.

The MHRA said it would continue to closely monitor the situation.

Veterinary TGA move

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration has established a new Memorandum of Understanding with the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority, establishing a framework for cooperation over the licensing and audit of medicinal products made in Australia for veterinary use.

Under the MoU, veterinary medicine manufacturers may elect to use audits completed by the TGA for APVMA's licensing requirements, with the aim of lowering the regulatory burden for these manufacturers.

It will also cover inspections of veterinary manufacturers seeking to obtain Good Manufacturing Practice certificates under Australia's Mutual Recognition Agreements with European Community member countries.

Filling mercury OK

THE US Food and Drug Administration has declared that silver dental fillings don't contain enough mercury to harm people, after a year-long review of 200 studies finding no risk from amalgam to adults or children over 6.



DISPENSARY CORNER

ORGANIC food is no healthier than food grown using conventional methods, according to researchers in the UK.

The British Food Standards Agency commissioned the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine report, saying the findings would help consumers make an "informed choice".

162 studies were included in the analysis, with some finding a small number of nutritional differences between organic and non-organic foods - but not significant enough to be of any public health relevance, the scientists said.

The research looked at a number of nutrients including iron, calcium and vitamin C in fruit, vegetables, meat, dairy and eggs.

THE makers of Pine-O-Clean and Glen 20 yesterday released a report claiming that Australian homes are "the dirtiest in the developed world."

Reckitt Benckiser funded the *Home Truths About Hygiene* study which was undertaken by the 'Hygiene Council', described as "a body of leading global experts in the field of microbiology, virology and infectious diseases."

Researchers swabbed and analysed different items and surfaces in Australian homes to discover which were the most contaminated, with the worst offender being the kitchen cloth.

Surprisingly the cleanest items in Australia were the toilet flush and the toilet door handle.

The report received widespread media coverage, with one Sydney radio station broadcasting a delighted "filthy Pom" British caller skiting that the study once and for all put to rest the Australian myth that people from the United Kingdom don't bathe enough.

Travel Specials

WELCOME to *Pharmacy Daily's* travel feature.

Each week we highlight a couple of great travel deals which we're sure will be of interest to everyone in the pharmacy industry.

- Tennis enthusiasts can start warming up for the 2010 Australian Open (18-31 Jan) well in advance with great package deals from **Tourism Victoria** and **Qantas Holidays** now on offer. There are 3 packages from which to choose: the Qualifying Package, Quarter Finals Package and the Finals Package, each including 2 night's twin share accommodation and tickets to either one day and one night tennis session, or the Twilight session for the finals. Prices start from \$316 per person - for more info contact Tourism Victoria on (02) 9287 6506.

- **Shoal Bay Resort & Spa** on the NSW North Coast is offering a midweek special at its Aqua Day

Spa, with a LI'TYA 'Buduwai' Ritual to the value of \$180 for just \$99. It's part of a 'Girls Getaway Month' at the resort which has a range of other specials on offer - more info 02 4984 8194.

- Adventure seekers will be interested in some bargain new 'Beyond China' airfares from Australia to Nepal and India with **China Southern Airlines**.

Tickets to mystical Kathmandu start from just \$1140 return from both Sydney and Melbourne, and there's also a \$1160 bargain fare to New Delhi.

The flights come with a bonus stopover in Guangzhou, and are on sale until 31 October - more info 03 9876 0088.

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