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Health Update Cough & Cold

Today's Health update focuses on Treating Nasal Congestion

A blocked nose is a common symptom of cold and flu.

Decongestant medications are the best treatment for this condition: they work by constricting the blood vessels in the nasal mucosa reducing nasal blood flow and congestion.

Decongestants are available as oral or nasal preparations. **Oral Preparations** - usually contain pseudoephedrine or phenylephrine and have a duration of action of 3 to 6 hours. They're often used in combination with other ingredients in Cold & Flu tablets. Oral products are less effective than nasal preparations for treating nasal congestion.

Nasal Preparations - Decongestant nasal sprays act quickly to relieve congestion. Their duration of action is 6 to 8 hours. They are not recommended for use for more than 5 days due to the risk of rebound congestion. Saline nasal sprays are also indicated in the treatment of nasal congestion, particularly in infants.

Antihistamines are often present in cold preparations, and are effective in helping dry up secretions.



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2462 swine flu cases

THE Health Department this morning issued its latest figures for Influenza A (H1N1) in Australia, confirming a total of 2462 cases across the country.

Just under half of those are in Victoria (1230) while there are now 422 cases in NSW, 303 in Qld, 140 in WA, 139 in SA, 104 in the ACT, 64 in Tas and 60 in the NT.

On Fri the department confirmed the first suspected death, a 26-year-old man from WA with a number of pre-existing chronic conditions.

Alan Jones backs pharmacy

INFLUENTIAL radio presenter Alan Jones has responded to the *Daily Telegraph* anti-pharmacist campaign (PD 11, 12 Jun), with an editorial piece suggesting that the News Limited articles were "virtually paid advertisements on behalf of Woolworths and Coles."

Jones blasted government policy which has seen the supermarket giants now control more than 80% of Australian grocery shelves.

"Anyone who imagines that allowing Woolworths and Coles to take over the pharmacies will miraculously lower prices of the pharmaceuticals is not only a naive fool, but a dangerous naive fool," he fumed, saying that the large market share has seen prices of most items higher, not lower.

He suggested that the *Telegraph* articles had been prompted by the upcoming community pharmacy agreement negotiations - as well as alleging that significant amounts spent on newspaper advertising by both Woolworths and Coles means that "the anti pharmacist articles get printed."

Jones warned that if supermarkets are able to "wrap their tentacles around the pharmacies" there will be three major impacts - the

MS injection system

A **NEW** injection system has been launched in Australia for multiple sclerosis patients using Betaferon.

A number of changes have been made including the addition of the thinnest needle (30G) currently used by any MS therapy.

There's a new multipack containing 15 single-use packs each with a Betaferon vial, a new syringe with solvent, a new Mixject adapter with a pre-attached 30G needle and two alcohol swabs.

The new Betaferon syringe has larger markings and a new 3-way MixJect adapter requiring fewer steps to dissolve the powder, shortening the preparation process.

And there's also a new Betaject Comfort autoinjector which can be adapted to individual patient needs by altering both injection depth and dose delivery.

Bayer Schering Pharma said there are also dedicated nurses available to train and assist patients in switching from the old to the new application system.

closure of thousands of independent pharmacies and associated job losses; higher prices for pharmaceuticals; and "the levels of health care and service currently provided by pharmacies will deteriorate.

"Let's not repeat the same mistaken policies of the past and subject our pharmacies to the Woolworths effect," Jones said.

"Surely no one is stupid enough to contemplate changing the law and destroying thousands of independent pharmacies across Australia so that the nation's largest distributor of tobacco and alcohol, the largest owner of poker machines, can also control the market for pharmaceuticals."

Schedule submissions

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration has released details of all the public submissions on the proposed new *Scheduling Policy Framework*, with papers provided by 17 individuals and organisations including the PSA, the Guild, ASMI and a number of pharmaceutical manufacturers.

The PSA has urged that the National Coordinating Committee on Therapeutic Goods (NCCTG) should "demonstrate leadership" by ensuring that scheduling decisions are adopted by all states and territories, as well as faster release of decisions following meetings.

Both the Guild and the PSA suggested that the proposed Appendix N, covering items with mandatory reporting requirements, could be linked to a "comprehensive national electronic system" to enable robust data to be collected on the quality use and possible misuse of substances.

Competition winner

CONGRATULATIONS to Chi Tran, a pharmacist in the Prince of Wales Hospital Pharmacy Department in Sydney, who's the lucky winner of a copy of *Eating for Eye Health* from last Friday's **Pharmacy Daily** competition.

This week we have another competition offering the opportunity to win a year's supply of Carmex lip balm - for details see **page 2**.

US drug price cuts

US PRESIDENT Barack Obama has hailed a deal on reducing prices for medications as a "turning point" in his plans to overhaul the US health care system.

Manufacturers have agreed to extend discounts of up to 50% on brand name prescription drugs to seniors who participate in the US Medicare Part D program.

Obama said the reform would relieve the "crushing out-of-pocket expenses" currently experienced by many older Americans.

Rural research call

THE Pharmacy Guild is seeking tenders to undertake a project which will examine a rural and remote mentoring system for pharmacy interns and young pharmacists.

The project is part of the Rural Pharmacy Workforce Program which aims to increase access to pharmacy services in rural and remote areas of Australia.

The Rural research scheme is funded under the Fourth Community Pharmacy Agreement, with this project involving a literature review and development of a framework for a proposed mentoring system.

Applications close on 20 Jul - more info www.guild.org.au.

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Flu consumer info

THE Pharmacy Guild of Australia has updated its consumer information sheet about Swine Flu, to reflect the new PROTECT pandemic alert level (PD Thu).

The flyer confirms that the new phase will see a focus on early treatment for infected people identified as "vulnerable" such as those with chronic respiratory conditions, pregnant women, indigenous people and those with morbid obesity.

It also covers recommendations for use of face masks, antiviral medicines, vaccination and symptomatic treatment, and can be downloaded at www.guild.org.au.

Pharma targeted by students

A NEW campaign run by medical students across Australia has been launched, aiming to "raise awareness of the effect that pharmaceutical marketing strategies have on prescribing habits."

Dubbed 'PharmaPhacts', the initiative will be officially announced at the Australian Medical Students Association 2009 Global Health Conference to be held in Brisbane next month.

PharmaPhacts is a branch of lobby group Healthy Skepticism and claims to have advocates at each of the 19 medical schools across the country.

The campaign will comprise a website containing a review of the medical literature and other information, as well as a petition for students to sign up to "pledging not to accept gifts, promotional material and funding from pharmaceutical companies now and into the future."

PharmaPhacts spokesman, James Ricciardone, said the group's current main aims are "to raise awareness and fill the gap of knowledge about the effects of pharmaceutical marketing".

He's soliciting donations from "like-minded individuals" to help fund the resources and other materials for the campaign - info pharmaphacts@healthyskepticism.org.

MA project officer

THE Pharmaceutical Industry Council has received a grant from the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research which will fund a six month part time position for a project officer, with several objectives including a report on the current and planned implementation of electronic medical records in public hospitals.

Medicines Australia said the applicant will need to "use data to articulate the social and economic benefits of conducting clinical research in Australia".

Pharmacy e-Bulletin

THIS week's edition of the Repatriation General Hospital Pharmacy E-Bulletin deals with the use of neuraminidase inhibitors for the treatment and control of the H1N1 Influenza A 09 pandemic.

The virus is susceptible to both oseltamivir (Tamiflu) and zanamivir (Relenza) but it resistant to amantadine, with the bulletin covering recommended treatment and prophylaxis regimes.

It's available at no charge from chris.alderman@rgh.sa.gov.au.



DISPENSARY CORNER

A TEXT message hoax in Uganda caused widespread panic last week after millions of people feared contracting swine flu by eating pork or being in contact with pigs.

The SMS purported to come from the Ugandan Health Department, warning people not to eat any pig products - as well as promising recipients free mobile phone calls if they passed the message onto 25 others.

Officials held a media conference to deny the "baseless rumour" and stress that properly cooked pork is safe to eat.

The fake text message was taken seriously by many people because the Ugandan health ministry recently sent a similar SMS to urge citizens to be vaccinated against an outbreak of polio in the country.

THE bride wore white organza, a flowing veil... and a face mask.

A couple in Chicago, USA have tied the knot less than 48 hours after both learning they had Influenza A (H1N1).

Jeremy Fierstien and his fiance Ilana Jackson decided to go ahead with the ceremony after doctors assured them their guests wouldn't be at serious risk of contracting swine flu.

But just to be sure they both wore surgical masks and kept a 3m distance from friends and family at all times.



I do...ah choo!

WIN A YEAR'S SUPPLY OF CARMEX



Pharmacy Daily brings you another great competition this week!

We've teamed up with Carmex® to give our subscribers the chance to win one year's supply of Carmex® lip balm including 2 Carmex lip balm jars; 2 lip balm squeeze tubes and 3 lip balm Click Sticks in Original, Cherry and Strawberry flavours with SPF 15 - all stored in a cooler bag. Carmex® lip balm was invented in the USA in the 1930s. Today, it has become one of the world's most

loved lip balms with over 130 sold every minute!

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For your chance to win one of five packs valued at \$50 each, simply send your answer to the weekly question below to comp@pharmacydaily.com.au.

In 25 words or less, tell us why you'd like to use Carmex® lip balm on your lips.

Entries must be in by Friday and the winners will be announced in next Monday's Pharmacy Daily issue.

For some inspiration, visit www.carmex.com.au.

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