**Raptiva cancelled**

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has recommended the registration of Raptiva be cancelled due to safety concerns over Progressive Multifocal Leukoencephalopathy (PJL) in patients with chronic plaque psoriasis, from the Australian marketplace.

Immediate cessation is not recommended, and those currently on the medication should be referred to a doctor to discuss alternative treatment options.

Physicians shouldn’t issue any new Raptiva prescriptions, and those already using the product should be monitored for neurological & infection symptoms.

The TGA withdrawal follows a similar move by European authorities.

**MULTIFOCAL LEUKOENCEPHALOPATHY**

The TGA withdrawal follows a similar move by European authorities. The TGA has recommended the registration of Raptiva be cancelled due to safety concerns over Progressive Multifocal Leukoencephalopathy (PJL) in patients with chronic plaque psoriasis, from the Australian marketplace.

Immediate cessation is not recommended, and those currently on the medication should be referred to a doctor to discuss alternative treatment options. Physicians shouldn’t issue any new Raptiva prescriptions, and those already using the product should be referred to a doctor to discuss alternative treatment options.

**Seaweed booster**

A SOUTHERN Cross University study into a Tasmanian seaweed extract has found that it has a positive effect on the immune system and reduces inflammation markers in the body.

The formulation, containing a blend of extracts from three different species of seaweed plus nutrients, primed the immune system in a beneficial way, said Professor Stephen Myers, director of the University’s NatMed research centre.

The preliminary findings will be presented at the International Evidence-based Complementary Medicine Conference in Armidale, which starts today.

**Focus for women**

THE Rudd Government yesterday saw the beginnings of a new National Women’s Health Policy, as a roundtable of women’s health experts discussed its development in Canberra and released the **New National Women’s Health Policy: Consultation Discussion Paper**.

The current out-dated, 20-year-old women’s health policy will updated to be more responsive to women’s needs, promote health equity and will get women involved in health decision-making & management.

View the paper online at health.gov.au/womenshealthpolicy.

**Vitamin over-dose threatens unborn**

A FOETAL, medical expert from Adelaide University’s school of pediatrics and reproductive health, Professor Julie Owens, has uncovered that some to-be mothers are taking up to 10 times the recommended amount of vitamins and putting their unborn babies at risk of birth defects.

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**NPS worthwhile**

THE National Prescribing Service Limited released its annual evaluation report yesterday, highlighting the body’s achievements last year.

NPS ceo, Dr Lyn Weekees said this year’s evaluation report “provides measurable evidence that NPS activities continue to result in better prescribing practices, use of medicines and economic outcomes in terms of savings to the PBS.”

Last financial year NPS saved the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme over $58 million, and other achievements in the report include positive changes in the prescribing of antithrombotics to prevent cardiovascular events.

During the year 11,908 GPs and 3,318 pharmacists participated in NPS core activities, with 90% and 95% respectively finding NPS valuable and over 2,000 medical students utilising NPS modules as part of their professional training.

Copies of the report are available at www.nps.org.au.

**TGA label update**

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration has issued Therapeutic Goods Order No. 69C which amends the ‘general requirements for labels for medicines’.

The order adopts changes outlined in the *Required Advisory Statements for Medicine Labels* (September 2008) published last year, and also orders that for preparations containing Vitamin A that the quantity be expressed in terms of retinol equivalents.

**New Vic policy**

**VICTORIAN** health authorities have circulated a new “Policy regarding professional misconduct” applying to health professionals working in public and private hospitals in the state.

The policy orders that health services must verify the status of any health worker with the relevant registration board, including any conditions or restrictions placed on the practitioner’s registration as well as any matters referred to state tribunals.

Any professional misconduct while in the employ of the health services must also be reported to the relevant registration board.
E-script pharmacy rollout

Some pharmacies in Victoria and New South Wales yesterday became the first in Australia ready to access the first national electronic prescription platform.

The rollout started in pharmacies using Fred Dispense, with expansion expected to shortly include other pharmacy and prescribing vendors, starting with medical software provider Best Practice (PD 06 Mar).

GPs and medical specialists will start to have their systems connected to the eRx Script Exchange platform from Apr, from which point electronically dispensed prescriptions will be able to be retrieved from patients' pharmacy of choice anywhere in Australia.

GUILD president Kos Sclavos said "It is very exciting to see this vital project progressing so well.

"Achieving an Australia-wide electronic prescription platform will be a real milestone for the Australian health system and for patient care," he said.

Sclavos said eRx Script Exchange was an example of how innovations in technology can lead to better coordination of care between GPs and pharmacists, "generating the best health outcomes for all Australians."

Advantages of the system cited for pharmacists include reducing the likelihood of keying errors, more dispensing accuracy, faster retrieval of external repeats and efficient and safe coordination of new script requests - not to mention no longer having to decipher doctors’ handwriting!

There’s more information about the system online at erx.com.au.

UK pharmacy tech regulation call

THE Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain is calling for the "statutory regulation of pharmacy technicians", saying dispensary techs play a "growing role in patient care and delivering health services.

The move follows the introduction of new legislation regulating technicians which is only valid in parts of the country.

The RPSGB said the changes would be beneficial for pharmacy technicians, giving them “the status of belonging to a health profession recognised in statute and the ability to practise as a pharmacy technician, and to use that title, anywhere ie in Great Britain.”

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