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UK health checks

PHARMACIES in the UK are set to take an important role in a new national system of free preventative health checks announced by the British Health Department yesterday.

Everybody aged between 40 and 74 in England will be eligible for the NHS Health Checks, as part of a national program to identify their risk of diseases such as coronary heart disease, stroke, diabetes and kidney disease.

The checks will include dietary assessments, height and weight measurements and a simple blood test, with a personal follow-up to recommend ways to reduce risk.

The Primary Care Trusts in each area are responsible for implementing the checks, which are "likely to be available at GP surgeries, health centres, walk-in centres and pharmacies to ensure as many people benefit from them as possible," the govt said.

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NUROFEN JUST GOT FASTER

THAN STANDARD NUROFEN



*ABSORBED UP TO TWICE AS FAST AS STANDARD NUROFEN



Vioxx case in court today

MERCK Sharpe & Dohme is today defending itself in the Australian Federal Court, with more than 1000 people taking part in a class action over side effects relating to Vioxx.

The case is being brought by Victorian law firm Slater & Gordon, which first lodged the claim almost four years ago.

The anti-inflammatory drug was highly popular worldwide after its launch in 1999 but was withdrawn in the US in Sep 2004 after long-term use was linked to cardiovascular incidents.

Pharma events vital

MEDICINES Australia says its member companies sponsored or provided more than 18000 events for healthcare professionals during the last half of 2008.

The association said its members were committed to providing balanced and accurate information, and had an "obligation to patients to ensure doctors have the latest information about prescription medicines," according to MA ceo Ian Chalmers.

"These events ensure healthcare professionals know about new medicines and how they should be used. The information...has to be entirely consistent with product information approved by the TGA."

He said that more than 99.9% of events provided in 2007-08 were compliant with the Medicines Australia Code of Conduct.

Changes last year to the code mean that MA now posts details of educational events provided by its members online at www.medicinesaustralia.com.au.

The withdrawal led to tens of thousands of lawsuits, and Merck settled its US personal injury claims relating to Vioxx for the tidy sum of US\$5.2 billion.

In Australia Vioxx was withdrawn in Oct 2004, but rather than settling the cases here MSD is continuing to fight the class action.

Lead plaintiff Graeme Peterson is claiming that he, along with other members of the class, suffered heart attacks as a result of long term use of Vioxx.

The global pharmaceutical industry will be closely watching developments as the case unfolds, with implications for long term pharmacovigilance of established products which are already in the market.

Coeliac vitamins?

A STUDY in Holland has shown that daily vitamin B supplements may improve the overall health of people suffering coeliac disease.

The World Journal of Gastroenterology published the report which found those who took daily supplements of B6, folate and B12 had significantly lower levels of homocysteine, a hormone linked to heart disease.

Free cancer scripts

UP to 150,000 patients across the UK will benefit from a move to abolish National Health Service prescription charges relating to cancer.

From 01 Apr NHS prescription charges will be removed for everyone in Britain undergoing treatment for cancer, the effects of cancer, or the effects of cancer treatment.

DISPENSARY CORNER

SPECIAL lights have been installed in a British housing estate to discourage the gathering of teenagers.

The lights have unique pink globes designed to highlight skin blemishes such as acne.

"We've had problems with underage drinking, drug dealing, anti-social behaviour and general intimidation," said a local official.

"I was a little dubious about the pink lights at first but it's done the trick," he added.

However a spokeswoman for the UK's National Youth Agency said the lights would just move the problem elsewhere.

"Anything that aims to embarrass people out of an area is not on," she said.

"They have a right to congregate, it's part of being a teenager and most young people are good, law abiding people."

COULD the 'Scent of Fear' be an upcoming fragrance?

The US Department of Homeland Security is advertising for perfume specialists to devise airport scanners which will "sniff out deceptive individuals".

The UK *Sunday Times* says the technology is a result of recent breakthroughs in "human scent-prints" which researchers say could be as unique as voice, iris or fingerprints.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology scientists also claim body odour can change according to mood, with research focusing on a system which can detect stress hormones such as adrenalin in order to detect travellers with a guilty conscience.



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