



## Strep vaccine

**HUMAN** trials are expected to commence next year for a new vaccine which has proven effective against group A streptococcus infections, the most common cause of bacterial throat infections in children and adults.

Researcher Michael Batzloff from the Bacterial Vaccines Laboratory at the Qld Institute of Medical Research spoke about the product this morning at the Heart Foundation Conference in Brisbane.

He said that infections of this type, if left untreated, can lead to the serious conditions of Rheumatic Heart Disease and Acute Rheumatic Fever, meaning the vaccine had the potential to "make a huge difference to the lives of the most disadvantaged people around the world".

Rheumatic Heart Disease is the most frequent form of heart disease in children across the globe.

## Pharmacist on NSW panel

**HUNTER** New England Health Area Director of Pharmacy, Helen Dowling, has been appointed as one of the six members of the Independent Panel to monitor reform of the NSW public hospital system.

The panel has been established following the damning Garling Report into the NSW health system, which made a range of suggestions including a bigger clinical role for hospital pharmacists.

Dowling is a former Federal President of the Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia, and joined other experts at a forum hosted by NSW Health Minister John Della Bosca to ensure the govt plan "achieves real and on-going improvements to the public hospital

system."

Initiatives include 500 clinical support officers to "give senior nurses the opportunity to devote maximum attention to patients, not paperwork," the introduction of Clinical Initiative Nurses for emergency departments, as well as more clinical pharmacists.

SHPA NSW Branch Chair David Maxwell affirmed SHPA's support for the NSW Health efforts to improve patient care, saying "pharmacists will be there as key members of the clinical team."

Dowling has also welcomed the enhanced role for clinical pharmacy services, saying "we know that we can improve patient care if we focus on ensuring that the medicines ordered for each patient are right, as soon as possible during their time in our care."

## Regulation chief

**THE** government has today advertised for a chief executive officer for the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency.

The agency will be responsible for supporting the ten new National Boards responsible for the regulation of health professionals.

According to the ad the agency will have a national office as well as offices in each State and Territory, which will be responsible for the majority of operational matters.

Pharmacists will be covered by the scheme from 01 Jul 2010, with the new scheme enabling health professionals to work throughout Australia as well as "reduce red tape, improve safeguards for the public and promote a flexible, responsive and sustainable health workforce."

## NPS DUE tools

**NATIONAL** Prescribing Service this morning announced two new Drug Use Evaluation (DUE) tools to help health professionals working in aged care facilities with "optimal drug therapy relating to laxative use, and hypnotics."

The toolkits provide localised activities to compare current drug use against best practice, as well as guide health professionals in their decision making to achieve the best outcomes for patients, NPS said.

The *Hypnotics for Insomnia* DUE is the first NPS data collection and analysis tool to be available as a downloadable application - more info at [www.nps.org.au](http://www.nps.org.au).

## New contraceptive

**BAYER** Schering has announced the European roll-out of its new oral contraceptive Qlaira (estradiol valerate/dienogest).

Qlaira is the first in a new class of oral contraceptives which delivers estradiol, the oestrogen identical to the one produced by the female body - in contrast to progestins developed over the last 50 years which have all contained the same ethinylestradiol oestrogen.

"The introduction of Qlaira thus offers women a new choice in oral contraception," Bayer said.

Qlaira also delivers a 'dynamic dosing' regimen aimed at delivering hormones at the right levels at the right time during the cycle to provide good cycle control and reliable contraception.

## TGA charges warning

**THE** Therapeutic Goods Administration has advised product sponsors that if they wish to cancel the registration for any items on the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods they must do so before 01 Jul or they'll be charged the annual fee for 2009/10.

Sponsors are able to cancel an entry on the ARTG at any time, "however the sponsor remains liable for the payment of the annual charge for the financial year in which a request for cancellation has been made," the TGA said.



## DISPENSARY CORNER

**SCIENTISTS** in Spain have used sophisticated "drug-sniffing" technology to prove that there's lots of cocaine snorting going on in Madrid and Barcelona.

The system samples the atmosphere and measures for 17 components found in five different types of illicit drugs - LSD, opiates, amphetamines, cannabinoids and cocaine.

Cocaine was the predominant drug in both cities, with 29 to 850 picograms per cubic metre of air - higher on the weekend, suggesting "higher consumption at this time".

There's no danger of the public getting high, however, with one of the scientists saying "even if we lived 1,000 years we would not consume the equivalent of a dose of cocaine through the air."

**A WOMAN** in the USA has been charged for collecting more than US\$200,000 in social security benefits for her dead mother.

She managed to perpetrate the fraud by not declaring the death, instead keeping the decaying body in her spare bedroom for six years.

Penelope Jordan told officers her mother had died in 2003 but she'd kept the remains because she couldn't afford a funeral.

**THIS** is probably a lot simpler than using human growth hormone.

A designer in Seattle has come up with a way for short people to make themselves taller - by using special "horse leg extensions".

Kim Graham says her devices add 14" (36cm) of height to the wearer, and claims that a number of famously diminutive celebrities have already put their names on the two-month waiting list.

As well as gaining height, "they give a person the uncanny and graceful appearance of an animal," she said.



A silly filly?

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