

In-licensing heats up!

ACCORDING to the latest findings by market analyst Datamonitor, competition between pharmaceutical companies for healthcare-focused licensing deals is increasing despite the rise in acquisition costs and the subsequent drop in the potential return on investment, as a more effective way of gaining access to novel products.

Vitamin D for colds

A RECENT randomised, double blind and placebo-controlled trial has revealed that vitamin D3 may help to prevent the onset of seasonal influenza in school-children.

The study of 334 kids, undertaken by researchers at the University School of Medicine in Japan, found that after taking 600IU of vitamin D3 twice daily over two months only 49 children contracted influenza A.

The study also found a significant drop in asthma attack rates in children suffering the condition, who had also taken vitamin D3 for the two month period.



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SHPA calls for new reform

THE Society of Hospital Pharmacists has renewed calls for medicine funding reforms within the current hospital system.

The move comes on the back of a new report from the University of Canberra's NATSEM research centre titled: 'Modelling Options for the Public Funding of Hospital Medicines in Australia – the current system and proposals for reform'.

"The NATSEM paper has put this topic back on the radar in a constructive way," said SHPA ceo, Yvonne Allinson.

Haemophilia podcast

BAXTER Healthcare has partnered with the World Federation of Haemophilia to launch a new online educational podcast designed to raise awareness of the impact of inherited bleeding disorders.

The 'The Many Faces of Bleeding Disorders' podcast launch is designed to coincide with World Haemophilia Day on 17 Apr, and its content is set to cover risk factors, treatment options and recent research developments.

The podcast will also highlight the need for better patient access to treatment, as at present 75% of patients worldwide living with bleeding disorders do not have access to effective treatments.

"A concerted effort is required to ensure access to treatment for all affected by inherited bleeding disorders," said Baxter's medical affairs director, Dr Cheng Ming Gu.

To listen to the podcast go to www.wfh.org/whd.

Anticoagulant info

THE latest edition of the National Prescribing Service's Medicines Update contains the latest info for patients and health care practitioners regarding anticoagulant drugs dabigatran (Pradaxa) and rivaroxaban (Xarelto).

The medication review information is specifically targeted to help patients who have or will soon be recovering from hip or knee surgery, with the aid of dabigatran or rivaroxaban.

It provides guidance as to the risks and benefits associated with both drugs and also urges considerations about possible side effects and medications to avoid.

See www.nps.org.au.

"The issues remain very complex and the 'devil will be in the detail', but commencing the journey to a more integrated system is long overdue," she added.

According to SHPA, new reforms will require input and considerable "buy in" from stakeholders, and also will need to be integrated with, but separate from, the PBS.

As part of its medicine reform vision SHPA has said that reforms should be built on the foundations of the current hospital funding structures, and that reform options need to take into account both the cost of medicines and the services needed to support their safe use.

"A plethora of arrangements now underpins hospital medicines funding, some of which include cost-shifting opportunities between government funders," said SHPA president, Neil Keen.

"Reforms should improve transparency and efficiency of care, as well as providing information about the safe and cost effective use of medicines in all health care settings," Keen added.

Reform also needs to "leverage and improve the local evaluation and monitoring systems, leverage the efficient distribution systems for medicines currently used in Australian hospitals and to continue the ability for hospitals to meet the clinical needs of individual patients (including access to investigational medicines and access to medicines for non-registered indications).

"This will strengthen future local and national evidence based decision making, including the anticipation of changes in the use of medicines and future funding needs," Keen said.

Paramedics can cut prescribing errors

HOSPITAL prescribing can be significantly more accurate if paramedics bring patients' regular medications to the emergency department when they are admitted.

That's the finding of a new study reported today by the Australasian College of Emergency Medicine, which found that an intervention targeting paramedics who bring patients to hospital can increase the frequency with which patients arrive with their medications.

The study looked at patients taking four medications when they were brought in by ambulance in March and December 2006, and who were not referred to a pharmacist prior to the admission chart being written.

Emergency Department pharmacists determined patients' regular medication from all available sources and details of medications brought in by ambulance, with charts assessed for discrepancies related to medications taken prior to presentation.

The intervention saw incorrect prescribing fall from 18.9% to 8.75% in the pre- and post-intervention periods respectively.

Blackmores comp

BLACKMORES is reminding pharmacists and pharmacy assistants who want to win \$25 Myer vouchers (see below) must complete the Nutritional Oils online module as well as answering the special **Pharmacy Daily** question.

A total of 40 vouchers are on offer for those who complete the module which is now online at www.education.blackmores.com.au.

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New Sigma discounts

SIGMA Pharmaceuticals is reportedly relaxing stricter payment deadlines in its negotiations with Pulse Pharmacy and Chemist Warehouse, according to a report in today's *Financial Review*.

The company has been told by bankers to adjust its previous payment policies, which reportedly allowed up to 180 days credit, after breaching covenants due to the massive writedowns in the goodwill associated with its generics business.

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.

HIDEAWAY Resort in Port Vila, Vanuatu is offering a series of great 'Stay/Pay' deals including a 'Stay Three Pay Two' and a 'Stay Six Pay Four' deal.

The deal is available to book until 30 May, for stays between 07 April 2010 to March 2011.

For information see your local travel agent.

THE exclusive Wolgan Valley Resort & Spa in NSW's Blue Mountains region, has released a two-night 'Winter Escape' deal, priced from \$1365 per person, including daily gourmet breakfast, lunch and dinner, all non-alcoholic beverages and a selected range of regional alcoholic beverages.

For more information, see your local travel agent or call Wolgan Valley on 02 9290 9733.

HOTEL Club is offering stays at the Four Seasons Hotel Sydney from \$295 per night.

As an added bonus guests who stay for two or more nights will receive \$100 worth of hotel spending credit.

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Men's health and welfare

THE Australian Institute of Health and Welfare has released a report which provides health practitioners with a snapshot of Australian men's health and welfare.

The report found that men in rural Australia are more likely to suffer chronic conditions and risk factors than their urban dwelling counterparts.

Outside of major cities, the major killer of males was found to be cardiovascular disease, which accounted for a third of all deaths.

Men living outside of cities were also found to be more likely to smoke on a regular basis, drink excessively and are also have experienced a substance use related mental disorder.

Diabetes was also found to be of major concern to men outside of urban areas, with mortality rates 1.3 as high for men in inner regional areas and 3.7 as high in very remote areas.

According to the AIHW, the reason for such large health discrepancies between urban dwellers and rural Australians is the likelihood of remote living coinciding with 'social and economic disadvantage'.

"Compared with urban areas, rural regions of Australia contain a larger proportion of people from lower socioeconomic groups," said Sally Bullock, from the AIHW's Population Health Unit.

"This fact, combined with the generally poorer health status of men compared with women, highlights a potential double disadvantage for men living in rural areas," Bullock added.

Another factor in this disparity appears to be lower levels of health literacy amongst men living in rural regions, with the report finding that in 2006 men in rural and remote areas were 22% less likely to possess an adequate level of health literacy.



DISPENSARY CORNER

ANTIVENOM and paracetamol please!

An argument at US motel over loud music coming from one guests room, turned weird when Tony Smith, the man behind the music, used a snake slap to hush his irate neighbour.

According to reports Smith and another motel guest got into a heated argument when Smith refused to turn his music down.

All was thought to be solved soon after when the men parted company, however it appears that Smith was harbouring some serious resentment.

Later in the evening Smith approached his neighbor and slapped him across the face with the head portion of a live python.

It is unknown how the man obtained the snake, but he did surrender his slithering compatriot in crime to family members upon his arrest for assault later that same evening.

ALIENS are real?

20% of respondents in a recent Reuters global survey of 23,000 adults across 22 countries believe in the existence of aliens.

The majority of believers appear to come from India and China, with 40% of respondents from these countries reporting that not only do they believe in aliens, but they believe that they are on earth disguised as humans.

Those least likely to believe were found to originate from Belgium, Sweden and the Netherlands.

It also appears that men are more likely than women to believe in unearthly visitors.

FITNESS for food.

A hotel in Copenhagen is set to offer guests free meals in exchange for some pedal power.

The Crowne Plaza Copenhagen Towers is installing two bikes hooked up to a generator, to help generate its own stores of electricity.

As part of its plan guests staying at the hotel who don't mind jumping on one of the bikes and who wish to eat for free must reach specific electric generation targets.

WIN A PURE SPA PACK



Pharmacy Daily is once again giving readers the chance to win an All Pure Spa® baby pack every day this week, courtesy of Aromababy.

Valued at \$45, Pure Spa® offers a simple choice in pure and natural baby skincare and an easy way to care for your precious baby and yourself the way Mother Nature intended.

To win an All Pure Spa® baby pack, simply send in your answer to the question below to comp@pharmacydaily.com.au.

In 50 words or less, tell us why you would use All Pure Spa® natural skincare products on a baby.

There are five packs to be won and the lucky winners will be announced in *PD* next Monday.

Visit the Pure Spa website at www.purespa.com.au.

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Mary Emanuel of ASMI sent in the following response:

My grandchildren all have sensitive skin that is prone to rashes and eczema. With another baby due in the family in just a few weeks time, it would be wonderful to be able to give some organic products that have been specially developed to care for the extra sensitive skin of a newborn, and will also help to look after the new mum's skin.