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Quaid gets medical

HOLLYWOOD hunk Dennis Quaid is the poster boy for a new campaign to get a set of 'Safe Practices' implemented in US hospitals to improve patient care. Having nearly lost his 10-day old twins when they were twice given an adult dose of heparin at Cedars-Sinai Medical Centre, Quaid said his "mission is to drive awareness both of the harm and the opportunity to save countless lives". Amongst the proposed safe practice guidelines are the regular washing of hands and the institution of barcodes next to patient beds to match medications to patients.

Blackmores comp

CONGRATULATIONS to Ella Van Tienen of the Tasmanian School of Pharmacy; Kate Wharton of Pulse Pharmacy; Joyce Cooper of Newcastle University, Pharmacy; Fiona Boumazos of Burwood Plaza Amcal Chemist and Neil Lam of Ken Lai Chemist Advice Caboolture Qld who have all won a \$25 Myer voucher courtesy of Blackmores.

Sigma chief steps aside

AFTER thirty three years with Sigma Pharmaceuticals, Elmo De Alwis has resigned from his position of chief executive officer and managing director. The shock resignation was announced late yesterday afternoon (**PD** breaking news) however Alwis has agreed to stay on until a suitable replacements can be found.

The resignation comes hot on the heels of the controversy surrounding the management of Sigma's recent \$390 million annual loss announcement, which was finally released after months of speculation on 31 Mar and saw the company's share price halve.

Calls for Alwis' resignation came earlier in the year, exacerbated when Sigma suspended its shares from trading for an extended period while it finalised the accounts.

Investors are also angry that Sigma didn't flag any problems last Sep when it raised \$297m to pay down debt and acquire new

product ranges.

In a letter to staff yesterday de Alwis shouldered responsibility for the current state of Sigma saying, "the events of the past two months have been extremely difficult, and as ceo of the company, I believe that I carry the ultimate responsibility for the company's poor results."

"Despite knowing that our underlying business is sound and that the new year is off to a good start, I sincerely believe that the company will be better served by new leadership that will be able to look through a fresh set of eyes at the challenges both in our environment and within the company," he wrote.

He said that the events of the last two months have made him question his ability to lead the company "and without knowing without absolute certainty that I can continue to do so, I feel that I have no option but to step down and let someone new take responsibility for running Sigma".

De Alwis said he felt a "great sense of sadness" at the decision, but also pride "in knowing that the company is strong and destined to be even a stronger business in the future".

Don't mix with warfarin

A STUDY published in the *Archives of Internal Medicine* has urged against the use of antibiotic agent cotrimoxazole in patients on warfarin, due to an almost four-fold increase in the risk of developing a upper gastrointestinal (UGI) tract haemorrhage.

The report said cotrimoxazole inhibits the metabolism of warfarin sodium, increasing the risk.

MA urges careful PBS management

MEDICINES Australia has called on the government to think carefully about how it manages the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme with a Senate inquiry submission saying that "Forming therapeutic groups and having a protracted Cabinet review process are some of the wrong ways to manage the PBS".

The submission to the Senate Community Affairs Committee Inquiry into Consumer Access to Pharmaceutical Benefits highlights the potential risks of forming the groups to patients. Government and the industry.

"The key to having a sustainable PBS that can deliver Australians the new therapies they need in the future is ensuring that companies have some predictability about the environment for the new medicines they bring to the PBS," said MA ceo Brendan Shaw.

He said the formation of therapeutic groups caused a lack of certainty around pricing, a lack of process and a lack of clinical definitions and eligibility criteria.

"The industry lacks confidence in the process," he added.

The groups lead to a disincentive for listing new medicines, potential risks to patients from higher premiums "and the risk that patients may miss out on treatments they need".

MA is also urging a review of the Cabinet approval process for new PBS medicines costing over \$10m a year, leading to significant delays.

Shaw said doubling the current Cabinet approval threshold to \$20m would "be a sensible regulatory reform that improves the system for patients, industry and, frankly, the Government itself".

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.

Vicki Hulands of **The Pharmacy Guild of Australia** sent in the following response:

I would use All Pure Spa on my 1 month old granddaughter because she has beautiful soft and sensitive skin which needs the best care without harmful chemicals and additives.

BLACKMORES

NEW ONLINE EDUCATION PROGRAM



For your chance to **WIN A \$25 MYER VOUCHER** simply go to www.education.blackmores.com.au and follow the prompts to complete Blackmores Nutritional Oils online module:

Which Blackmores fish oil product contains double the omega-3s of standard fish oil?

Send in your answer to elearning@pharmacydaily.com.au

The first 40 correct entries received will win!

WIN!

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 Guild

CPD Calendar

WELCOME to *Pharmacy Daily's* Continuing Professional Development Calendar, featuring upcoming events and opportunities to earn CPE and CPD points.

If you have an upcoming event you'd like us to feature, email info@pharmacydaily.com.au.

17 Apr: PSA NSW 'Pharmacy Horizons: Careers' session; Frankston Hospital - 02 9431 1126.

18 Apr: PSA Qld 'Chronic Kidney Disease Workshop', Travelodge Rockhampton - 07 3896 1900.

18 Apr: PSA Tas 'Medicines Update', Mercure Hotel Hobart lorraine.norris@psa.org.au.

20 Apr: PSA Vic 'Therapeutic Choices for Menopausal Symptoms', Ballarat Health Service - 03 9389 4013.

20 Apr: PSA 'Pandemic Flu Season' in Unley SA - more information 02 9431 1114.

14-18 Apr: Australian College of Pharmacy conference Barossa Valley - 1300 651 239.

28 Apr-7 May: The PSA will hold its 35th annual offshore conference in Beijing and Shanghai - details in 1300 139 293.

30 Apr-01 May: Blackmores Research Symposium in Sydney - details 1800 151 493.

06 May: Medici Capital/Lawler Partners pharmacy dinner in Newcastle NSW - 03 9853 7933.

09 May: Drug Interaction Seminar presented by Debbie Rigby and Geraldine Moses, Brisbane - aacp@aacp.com.au.

26-28 May: The NPS's National Medicines Symposium 2010, Melbourne - nms2010.org.au.

29-31 May: The AACCP's annual ConPharm clinical seminar at The Grand Chancellor Hotel in Hobart - www.aacp.com.au.

04-06 Jun: Pharmacy Expo in Sydney - earn up to 20 CPD points in 3 days. More info www.pharmacyexpo.com.au.

15-18 Sep: Pharmacy 2010, the Pharmacy Management Conference on Hamilton Island - www.pharmacyconference.com.au.

11-14 Nov: The 36th National SHPA Conference, Medicines Management 2010 in Melbourne - mm2010shpa.com.

Consumer Agreement push

THE Consumers Health Forum has called for the implementation of an accountability system for services funded under the Fifth Community Agreement.

According to the Forum, extensive consultations with consumers revealed that "services currently funded under the Fourth CPA are not being universally provided".

"[The consumer consultations] provided CHF with examples of the failure of many pharmacies to distribute or offer Consumer Medicines Information (CMI), deliver counseling as a matter of course when dispensing a prescription, or routinely conduct Home Medicines Reviews," the CHF stated in its Implementation Discussion Paper.

Online Pharmacy bust

FIVE US citizens have been charged with conducting a continuing criminal enterprise, drug distribution, and money laundering after it was discovered they were operating a series of online pharmacies which were distributing medications mixed in Mexico.

According to reports, the online pharmacies included lighthousemeds.com, and sold controlled substances such as Ritalin, Valium, Phentermine and Xanax which were manufactured across the border.

It is alleged that the online pharmacies distributed around 11 million pills and just one site alone netted \$1 million a month.

As a result, the Forum is now pushing for the inclusion of a "robust" auditing process" which would hold pharmacies responsible and accountable to deliver the services they are being paid to deliver.

Proposed standards for the audit system include the regular reporting of required information as well as public access to the audit info, its usage to inform 'quality improvement systems and the subsequent CPAs'.

Pharmacist flu shots

US PHARMACISTS have so far administered 10% of all influenza vaccinations across the US this year.

A total of 7.8 million flu shots were given by US pharmacists, up 32% compared to this time in 2009.

"Pharmacy is instrumental in expanding public access to immunisations," said Tom Menighan, executive vice president of the American Pharmacists Association.

These figures are now being trumpeted by the pharmacy industry as proof that the US government needs to expand the range of vaccines pharmacists are allowed to administer.

"Our goal is to make it easier for people to get flu shots and a wide range of other immunisations through our expansive network of immunizing pharmacists, nurse practitioners and physician assistants," said Kermit Crawford, executive vice president of pharmacy at Walgreens.



DISPENSARY CORNER

DEATH is no major obstacle to political aspirations!

According to the latest reports streaming out from the Tennessee township of Tracy City had proved death is not the final frontier- in fact you can still rule the roost whilst laying around six-feet under.

The story commences when local council member, Carl Garey decided to run against the unpopular Mayor Barbara Brock in the local Mayor elections.

Tragically Brock died one week before the votes were cast, however he still managed to defeat her from beyond the grave, nabbing 268 votes to 85.

Perhaps not aware of her words as she could have been, after her defeat Brock bravely told the press "I'll live".

Now declared as a vacant seat, it has fallen on the city's four remaining council members to select an appropriate replacement.

CAN omega-3 help artistic tendencies?

A Beluga whale in China has made quite the name for himself after taking up painting.

According to his trainers the whale discovered the hobby all by himself after a visitor left behind a paintbrush and he quickly nabbed it and started playing with it.

Beluga whales have particularly sensitive tissue around the mouth, making it easy for him to manipulate the brush to create more detailed "works".

"He showed a lot of interest in painting right from the start so now all we have to do is give him the brushes and hold the paper while he paints with his mouth," said his trainer Zhang Yong.

"His favourite colour seems to be blue and he's best of all at seascapes... his people always look like seals," Yong added.

This is definitely a watercolour.



Corrien's a Wii winner

CORRIEN Murr from Chen's Pharmacy has won a Nintendo Wii Sports Pack by nominating the new tag line selected for the 2010 NSW Pharmacy Assistant Conference.

Corrien came up with "Knowledge - the KEY to Success" which will become the theme for the State Finalist Awards Dinner and the conference to be held at Bondi Beach in August.

