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Tassie vaccine success

THE Tasmanian branch of the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia has advised that during phase II of the in-pharmacy Swine Flu vaccine program (PD 05 Mar) more than 2700 patients received the vaccine.

In the southern part of the state five of the original phase I pharmacies saw 980 patients immunised by nurse practitioners, while in the north and northwest of the state 1725 vaccinations were given by nurse immunisers at nine pharmacy sites over three days.

Overall 5200 patients received swine flu shots as part of the phase I and phase II trials, with 100% of participating pharmacies saying they would be eager to participate in future seasonal vaccination programs and that they would recommend participation to other pharmacists across the country.

MEANWHILE the National Prescribing Service has issued a reminder to patients to get a flu injection in the lead-up to winter.

NPS ceo Dr Lynn Weekes said that mid-autumn is "when anyone at risk of seasonal influenza should think about having a flu vaccine so your body has time to develop immunity to it before winter starts."

FDA Tarceva approval

THE US Food and Drug Administration has approved OSI Pharmaceuticals' Tarceva (erlotinib) as a maintenance treatment for patients with locally advanced or metastatic non-small cell lung cancer whose disease has not progressed after four cycles of first-line chemotherapy.

Tarceva is a once-daily pill which is already FDA-approved for people whose cancer has grown or spread after receiving at least one course of chemotherapy.

OSI ceo Colin Goddard said the company was pursuing the study of additional uses for Tarceva incl as a first line lung cancer treatment, & ovarian and hepatocellular cancer.

PBS risk to new medicines

THERE'S a "grave risk" that the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme will be unable to continue supporting the development of new medicines in the future, according to Medicines Australia ceo Dr Brendan Shaw.

Speaking at the *Future of the PBS* conference in Sydney, Shaw said the pharmaceutical industry is increasingly concerned that pricing decisions made by governments around the world - including Australia - will "constrain the future development of new medicines".

He said that the drive to cut costs and get medicines at cheap prices could risk limiting the supply of new medicines for future generations.

The long lead time for medicine development meant that pricing policies directly affect companies' commercial decisions about investing in R&D.

"The cost of developing new medicines is increasing globally, but the price of the old medicines against which governments compare these new medicines is falling," he said.

"The result is an alarming disconnect between the reimbursement policies adopted by countries like Australia and the commercial realities of developing new medicines".

Shaw cited the case of new antibiotics which in many cases have become commercially unviable - and despite this about

Sigma class action

SIGMA Pharmaceuticals is reportedly facing possible legal action over its \$297m capital raising last year and subsequent writedown of the goodwill value of its generics business.

A spokesperson for US-based Comprehensive Legal Funding has confirmed an approach by institutional investors in Australia over the company's extended trading halt, according to *The Age*.

seven thousand Australians a year die from drug-resistant bacterial infections such as Golden Staph.

"It has become so hard for pharmaceutical companies to develop new antibiotics that the European Union is now exploring ways of encouraging the commercialisation of more antibiotics in the future," he added.

Shaw urged the government to encourage the industry to continue to develop new medicines "that will contribute to our children and grandchildren leading longer, healthier lives".

Blackmores up 21%

BLACKMORES today reported its financial results for the nine months to 31 Mar, with total sales up 12% to \$162m and net profit after tax of \$19 million, up 21% on a year ago.

CEO Christine Holgate said the result "had been bolstered by a sound sales and product development strategy that responded to consumer needs".

Australian sales were up 13% to \$135.5m but Holgate said there was some weakening in the retail sector, with fourth quarter sales last year "exceptional" due to public concerns about swine flu and the government stimulus package.

WIN A STYLISH COSMETIC BAG



Every day this week, Pharmacy Daily is giving readers the chance to win a stylish cosmetic bag, courtesy of Total Beauty Network.

Exclusive to Designer Brands is a wide range of cosmetic bags, for both men and women. All of the bags are fully lined and made from durable fabrics.

With a variety of colours, shapes and sizes from bright to tame for young and old there is something to suit everyone's needs and taste.

For your chance to win one of these stylish cosmetic bags this week, simply send through the correct answer to the daily question below:

What colour stripes are used in the Stripe Collection?

Send entry to: comp@pharmacydaily.com.au

The first correct entry received each day will win.

Hint! Visit www.tbn.com.au.

Congratulations to yesterday's lucky winner: **Melessa Bone** from **APHS Pharmacy**. The correct answer was: **Leopard & Zebra**.

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STOCK EXCHANGE

WELCOME to *Pharmacy Daily's* Stock Exchange column, where the industry is able to promote close to expiry or surplus items.

Today Pacific Paradise Pharmacy in Queensland is offering the following items:

- Tarceva (erlotinib) 150mg, x 2, priced at \$2800+GST each.

For more information contact David Philippi on 07 5448 9688.

If you have items you'd like to offer through PD's Stock Exchange column please email info@pharmacydaily.com.au.

Malaria rolls back!

STATISTICS from the Roll Back Malaria campaign have encouraged experts in the lead-up to World Malaria Day next Mon 25 Apr, with the African nation of Zambia recording a 66% reduction in malaria rates since its inception.

The success is in part being attributed to the use of nets with long lasting insecticide as well as improvements in local education.

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.

BEYOND TRAVEL is offering a last minute special for its 18-day 'Croatia and Slovenia By Land and By Sea' small group tour package.

Savings of up to \$3000 per couple are currently available for the tour's 10 June departure, if booked by 31 May.

The fully escorted package includes two nights in Zagreb, visits to the Slovenian capital Ljubljana, excursions to the Istrian Peninsula, Mostar and Medjugorje in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kotor and Budva in Montenegro as well as an seven-day cruise through the Dalmatian Islands aboard the new Pape Prvi boat.

The package is priced from \$4400pp - details 1300 363 554.

VIRGIN BLUE has joined with Tourism Victoria to promote The Great Ocean Road, and is offering a Great Ocean Road Break which includes return airfares, three nights accommodation at The Sebel Deep Blue Warrnambool, four days car hire, two full day Port Campbell Touring walking tours and a one hour spa pool treatment from \$689pp including flights from Sydney - for info call 13 15 16.

Or treat your staff at the NSW Hunter Valley's brand new **CHATEAU ELAN** which is offering an opening conference special which includes mid-week Spa King accom for \$227 per night, and conference day delegate package for \$75 - call 02 9331 1311.

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Harvey slams generic code

LA TROBE University's School of Public Health has formally objected to the proposed Generic Medicines Industry Association Code of Practice (PD 13 Apr), saying it is "considerably weaker (and less specific)" than the codes of Medicines Australia and the Australian Self-Medication Industry.

The university's Ken Harvey says the GMiA Code only requires the reporting of promotional activities to prescribers and not dispensers, adding that he believes this is inappropriate given previous concern about 'educational' events directed at pharmacists, such as the controversial Sigma cruises..

He's also pointed out that fines imposed under the code are much smaller than those which apply to Medicines Australia members, and also taken exception to the GMiA process which sees complaints go first to member companies rather than an independent panel.

Harvey said the anomalies highlight issues previously raised with the variety of "complex and convoluted co-regulatory systems

for therapeutic claims and promotional practices".

He's also sent the submission to Parliamentary Secretary for Health Mark Butler, urging the adoption of a govt-funded single overarching Code applicable to all therapeutic claims and promotional practices, supported by one monitoring process, a single complaint and appeal process and one set of effective sanctions.

Chloramphenicol protocol for all

THE Pharmaceutical Society of Australia has opened availability of its new protocol for dealing with the rescheduling of chloramphenicol (PD Tue) to all pharmacists - not just PSA members.

The protocol is related to the 01 May move of chloramphenicol to S3 and was released to PSA members only earlier this week.

"But due to the importance of the protocol in patient care, it has been decided to make it available to all pharmacists on the PSA public website," said PSA national president, Warwick Plunkett.

"Overwhelmingly this protocol has been praised as a very useful reference for pharmacists and members felt there was a public service in making it more widely available," he said.

It's now online at www.psa.org.au.

Kids asthma video

THE National Asthma Council of Australia has released an online video designed to demonstrate to children the correct usage of an asthma inhaler and spacer.

The video features step by step subtitled instructions alongside footage of NACA asthma educator, Judi Wicking overseeing a girl as she uses her medication.

Although designed with kids in mind, it is hoped that the video's release will help to re-educate the estimated 90% of Australians who do not use their inhalers correctly.

"Anyone who uses an inhaler would benefit from reviewing how they use it to ensure they are really getting maximum impact from their medication," said Judi Wicking.

To view the video go to www.NationalAsthma.org.au.

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DISPENSARY CORNER

BUNGLED burglar should have learnt his A,B,C's!

A double blow was dealt to a US pharmacy thief, after it was revealed that not only did he get busted, but he misread the label on the pills he stole, and nabbed the bladder control medication oxybutynin instead of the painkiller oxycontin.

The thief was caught in the act of rifling through pills when an alarm in Matlack's Hometown Pharmacy alerted police officers to his break-in.

He was arrested making off with the pills in his car.

"Sadly, illiteracy affects all lifestyles, including criminal activity," said the arresting officer David Sherma.

"This suspect wasted his time breaking in to steal narcotic painkillers because he couldn't even decipher the labels properly, even through simple phonetics," he added.

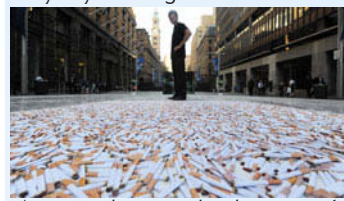
NOT the sharpest tools in the shed!

In pharmacy related crime news closer to home, a district court in Adelaide has heard that two would-be pharmacy robbers made the mistake of revealing their identities when they called their local pharmacist by name.

The pair attempted to rob two pharmacies in Nov last year, but were apprehended soon after their foiled spree and now face sentencing in May.

IN a bid to confront smokers about the reality of their habit, yesterday Pfizer launched its 'Stamp Out Smoking' campaign in Sydney's Martin Place (PD Tue).

The campaign includes a fairly scary display of 219,000 cigarettes (the amount it is estimated a smoker will consume in their lifetime) laid out in the busy city thoroughfare.



A city smoker considers his options!