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Weekly Comment

Welcome to *Pharmacy Daily's* weekly comment feature. This week's contributor is Oskar Hakansson, Business Unit Director (Consumer Products), Symbion Pharmacy.

The benefits of private label

Australia's taste for private labels is showing no sign of slowing.

In supermarkets across the country private label products are booming as consumers look for quality, low cost, home brands.

And a similar trend is now being seen in the pharmacy industry.

It's widely known that private label products offer pharmacists higher margins.

But they also offer much more than that.

One benefit is the 'come back' factor of a private label product.

For example, when a customer chooses a Chemmart® private label paracetamol product, it helps drive return traffic as the pharmacy's brand is on the packaging.

While this is harder to measure, there is a resultant rub-off in credibility and loyalty that pharmacists don't get when they sell branded products.

Private label also offers pharmacies a point of difference over the discounters - as the majority of these don't have a house brand strategy in place.

Typically a pharmacist can expect to make a higher margin selling their own branded private label product as compared with a branded product.

Having a viable front of shop offer helps to offset ongoing loss of margin in the dispensary and therefore private label is crucial to ensure community pharmacies remain viable and profitable.

It's up to us as an industry to continue to innovate and invest in the category while simultaneously educating consumers about the benefits.



Symbion Consumer Products source and distribute high quality own branded products at competitive prices to Terry White Chemists®,

Chemmart® Pharmacy and Pharmacy Choice® members. For more information please call 1300 774 000.

Guild showcases IT prowess

THE Pharmacy Guild of Australia last week took the opportunity to demonstrate its "many IT initiatives" to its international counterparts at a global gathering on the Gold Coast.

The Pharmintercom meeting is an annual gathering of eight peak pharmacy bodies from seven countries, with the aim of discussing issues of "current and best practices in community pharmacy practice and profession-wide development".

As well as the Guild, Pharmintercom members include the Canadian Pharmacists Association, the Pharmacy Guild of NZ, the Irish Pharmaceutical Union, the Community Pharmacist Sector of the Pharmaceutical Society of South Africa, the US National Community Pharmacists Association and the UK's National Pharmaceutical Association and the UK's National Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee.

Guild President Kos Slavos chaired the meeting, with key issues including the tightening of health funding in the post global financial period which he said had "seen a difficulty in pharmacy accessing

Pharmacy E-Bulletin

THIS week's edition of the Repatriation General Hospital Pharmacy E-Bulletin gives an overview of factors influencing anticoagulation with rivaroxaban.

Rivaroxaban is an oral direct factor Xa inhibitor in advanced clinical development for the prevention and treatment of thromboembolic disorders, with a half-life of 6-7 hours.

The bulletin is available for download at no charge from chris.alderman@health.sa.gov.au.

Top SA pharmacist

THE Pharmaceutical Society of Australia has announced the winner of this year's South Australian Pharmacist of the Year, Lewis Pounentis.

A certified pharmacist proprietor, Lewis Pounentis has 15 years of community pharmacy experience under his belt, and is also a certified diabetes educator.

In 2009 Pounentis' pharmacy was named the winner of the 2009 Small Business Competition (Best Pharmacy category).

funds for dispensing remuneration as well as professional pharmacy programs."

He said the Guild outlined the professional programs it had developed privately, as well as the Fifth Agreement programs.

"Systemising reporting through IT enablement was a priority topic," he said, with accurate reporting vital to demonstrate the savings for government as well as establishing the business case for third party stakeholders.

Slavos said he was pleased to report that the Guild's IT initiatives "attracted a lot of interest from the other Pharmintercom members".

Vaccines for kids

THE Australian Medical Association has moved to assure Australians in the wake of concerns over the disparity between the US Advisory Committee on Immunisation Practices and the advice from the Chief Medical Officer in Australia the use of CSL's seasonal influenza vaccine Fluvax in children.

The AMA said that whilst there are differences in advice from US officials on the blanket vaccination of children and Australia's at-risk program, there has been no new concerns raised in Australia by the Chief Medical Officer "despite close vigilance".

In addition, the AMA has thrown its support behind the CMO's recommendation that kids aged between six-months and five years should be vaccinated with Vaxigrip and Influvac, and that children in this age group should not be given Fluvax or Fluvax Junior due to increased risk of febrile convulsions.

PD's Friday winner

CONGRATULATIONS to Jasmine Trethewey of Merck Sharpe & Dohme who was the lucky winner of last Friday's Aromababy Competition.

See page two of today's *PD* for details of this week's new comp.

SHPA 2010 Conference

NEWLY released details of this year's Medicines Management 2010 SHPA National Conference, include the naming of five themes including: 'Bugs and Drugs', 'Life Goes On', 'Painful Situations', 'Broadening the Profession' and '1970s to Now- Changes in Technician Training and Roles'.

Running from 11-14 Nov in Melbourne the 36th national conference is said to offer "smorgasbord of educational opportunities for pharmacists from all sectors and a snapshot of the latest developments in pharmacy practice in hospitals and other settings".

As an added bonus, for pharmacists who book their place before 03 Sep SHPA is offering a \$110 discount - see www.mm2010shpa.com.

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Monash students win business plan comp

A TEAM of pharmacy students from Victoria's Monash University has been named as the winners of the Pharmacy Guild's National Student Business Plan competition for 2010.

The group were named the winners after a tense final faceoff at the Pharmacy Women's Congress which was held last weekend in Hobart.

The final saw Monash compete with teams from Griffith University and the University of Sydney, with the finalists providing a range of innovative concepts including genetic testing for tailored solutions to chronic disease, as well as weight loss treatments.

Guild President Kos Sclavos said the competition "helps pharmacy students approach the idea of business ownership and management with confidence.

"We want students to experience for themselves both the challenges and the rewards in buying, owning and operating a community pharmacy in Australia," he added.

The three finalists shared more than \$15,000 in cash and prizes provided by Gold Cross Products and Services and Pharmaceutical Defence Limited.

Patients' generic reluctance

A UNIVERSITY of South Australia study into generic substitution in Australia has shown that more than a quarter of patients in urban areas will not accept generic alternatives, despite being offered them by pharmacists.

According to the 6minutes GP newsletter, the research was published in the *Health Policy* journal on Fri, and found that although 96% of pharmacists recommended generic alternatives, patient acceptance of alternatives was less than 80% overall.

"Government policy has been a successful driver of increasing the frequency of generic medicines substitution in Australia," said the researchers, but this has reportedly not flowed into patient acceptance towards generics.

"Education and information about the quality and effectiveness of generic medicines by pharmacists, government and other health practitioners is needed to

Industry award guide

THE Pharmacy Guild has released a 'Plain English Guide to the Pharmacy Industry Award 2010,' which is now available to members only via the password-protected areas of the Guild website.

improve patient acceptance," they suggested.

The generic substitution practices of 82 pharmacies were included in the study, and although the vast majority recommended generic alternatives, patient acceptance was particularly low for respiratory drugs (63%), skin medications (67%) and hormonal drugs (38%).

Patients with chronic disease were also much less likely to accept generic alternatives to their regular medications, the authors said.

Dummy warning

HEALTHCARE practitioners, parents and carers are being warned of the potential choking hazards caused by any 'Sanbrook Happy Baby Soft Feel Natural Latex Cherry Soothers' or 'Happy Baby Soft Feel Nite Glo Natural Latex Cherry Soothers'.

Australian Competition and Consumer Commission deputy chair Peter Kell issued the warning after 25 reports of teat separation (this year) in the above products came to light, and warned parents and carers to exercise "extreme care" if they are using the products.

"The ACCC recognises this as a matter of significant public safety and are urgently conducting further investigations," Kell said.

"In the meantime, parents and carers should watch infants closely whenever they are using dummies to ensure that the teat does not come off and block the infant's airway.

"If a teat lodges in an infant's throat, choking can happen very quickly," Kell added.

Kell also advised parents to check dummy before each use to make sure the teat does not give way under pressure; never leave a child with a dummy in its mouth if they cannot remove it on their own and to throw dummies away as soon as they show signs of wear and tear.

In addition Kell also advised that parents never leave dummies in direct sunlight, sterilise the products as recommended by the manufacturer; be vigilant for dummy bites during teething and never attach dummies to children or cots with ribbons or string (as the ties can cause strangulation).

For info call 1300 302 502.



DISPENSARY CORNER

CAUTION: Snake Crossing.

Ambulance officers attending an accident in the NSW Hunter Valley, recieved a big reptilian surprise when a 1.5 metre long red bellied black snake slithered onto the dashboard of a crashed vehicle as they were cutting an injured motorist out of it.

Being quick thinkers, one of the enterprising ambo's fended off the snake's advances with a large stick taken from nearby, whilst his fellow officer worked to free the patient.

MEANWHILE a UK policeman recently found himself also trapped - by a swarm of 50,000 angry honey bees.

The officer was trapped for three hours after having been called out to assist a driver hauling 60 boxes of bees whose car had broken down.

In a statement to the press the officer admitted he may have used force on some of his buzzing assailants saying, "it was more or less self defence".

"It was mind boggling how many bees were out there," he said.

"At some point, it was hard to see out of the windows," he added.

According to authorities, the bees most likely swarmed the officer as he got out of the car, because they had just woken up and "were hot and bothered.

"They don't have a queen to guard and they were kind of lost," one expert said.

The bees were eventually subdued and collected up after a crack team of emergency apiarists arrived on the scene with smoke and water spray guns.

JUST blame the cat!

An English sporting legend, bowler Graeme Swan, has blamed his drink driving on his cat.

Swan told the local court that he jumped in his Porsche after returning home from a boozy evening and found his cat trapped under the floorboards.

Deciding instant action was needed, he rushed to the hardware shop to get some tools.

The case continues....

WIN AN EXPRESS KIT



Every day this week, *Pharmacy Daily* is giving readers the chance to win a Designer Brands Express Kit courtesy of **Total Beauty Network**.

Designer Brands are delighted to launch the LIMITED EDITION Cosmetic Kits for 2010. Just in

time for Christmas shopping, last year the demand was so high stock ran out within a month!

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The first correct entry received will win!

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