



Weekly Comment

Welcome to *Pharmacy Daily's* weekly comment feature. This week's contributor is Natasha Wade consultant, Michels Warren public relations.

The Importance of Building and Protecting Your Brand

As the fight for consumer share becomes more and more competitive in an increasingly crowded marketplace, it is crucial that organisations large and small dedicate resources to raising awareness of the services and products they provide to the community.

In the pharmacy industry regulations, amongst other factors, often restrict businesses from competing on price – so how will you make your brand stand out from the pack?

Public relations activities are one way to increase awareness of your brand to target markets and stakeholders.

PR activities are crucial to grow the understanding of the services and products your business provides and, further to that, to educate stakeholders about the benefits of these.

PR plays an integral role in supporting marketing material and translating features into tangible benefits.

However, these days, just getting your message out there is not enough.

It's important that your campaign is tailored to reach target stakeholders while also delivering a good cut through of key messages.

All communication needs to be clear, concise and consistent.

Remember, good PR is not about 'spin'.

Spin is a good way of getting someone to do something once.

Instead, good PR is about aligning the behaviour of an organisation with the expectations of its stakeholders.



Michels Warren is a leading Adelaide-based public relations consultancy specialising in building and protecting brands.

Pfizer to bypass wholesalers

PFIZER has announced a major change in its distribution strategy in Australia, with prescription medications to be sold directly to pharmacies from 31 Jan 2011.

The change, according to Pfizer, is designed to "meet the needs of the evolving healthcare environment within Australia including current and future Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme reforms, as well as the upcoming patent expiry of a number of Pfizer medicines."

Pfizer also stressed that the move would enable it to build stronger relationships with community pharmacy, which will be supported by the expansion of its customer service team to include a dedicated pharmacy field force.

"In order to develop stronger partnerships with pharmacists and better adapt to the changing environment, we have decided that a dedicated field force with specific pharmacy experience and a direct distribution model for all our prescription medicines sold into community pharmacy are critical," explained Pfizer Australia Managing Director, John Latham.

The pharmacy field team commenced operations this month, and throughout Dec will be calling into pharmacies to explain the changes (and walk them through the account sign-up process) before the system goes live on 31 Jan.

To handle its community pharmacy distribution, Pfizer has appointed its Pfizer Direct distributor, DHL - but both Pfizer and have stressed that they will not be pursuing a share of the Community Service Obligation funding pool for Pfizer products.

Pfizer has also said that its new

business model will only impact the ordering of prescription medicines into community pharmacies, and that Pfizer medicines sold into hospitals as well as consumer healthcare and nutritional products will continue to be distributed as per usual.

MEANWHILE the move looks to be set to significantly impact wholesalers, with **Sigma Pharmaceuticals** this morning warning that the "Pfizer Direct" model would see its annual wholesaling revenues decrease by 10-15% from February next year. "The full impact on future earnings is being assessed," the company said, but warned that the move, combined with the recent PBS Reform legislation, "will accelerate the need for Sigma to further reduce its customer trading terms".

Australian Pharmaceutical Industries also issued an ASX statement, saying it was "in the process of analysing the implications of this decision".

And **Symbion Pharmacy Services** says it's "extremely disappointed" at the Pfizer move, with ceo Patrick Davies saying it would force the firm to "immediately review its pricing structure".

He warned that Symbion would also now review the "ranging and support for the remaining Pfizer and Wyeth products in its business."

RGH E-Bulletin

THIS week's edition of the Repatriation General Hospital Pharmacy E-Bulletin gives an overview of "paradoxical pain sensitivity," opioid-induced hyperalgesia - download free at auspharmist.net.au/ebulletin.php.

PSA competency

THE Pharmaceutical Society of Australia has today announced the release of the updated *National Competency Standards Framework for Pharmacists in Australia 2010*.

The new document includes a consolidation of eight Domains (previously Functional Areas) and 33 Standards to "represent the total competency framework for the profession".

Standards in the document relating to leadership and management; extemporaneous preparation; researchers and educators; collaboration; primary and preventive health care, have also been strengthened.

Additional changes to the standards include a clear articulation of performance criteria expected at initial registration as well as the introduction of the concept of advanced practice to the profession.

The updated competency standards also highlight the importance and relevance of the competency standards to all stages of a pharmacist's professional life, and outline how pharmacists can develop their professional practice profile and competencies required for specific roles, positions or services.

The updated standards are the result of a review led by the PSA and involving The Pharmacy Guild of Australia; Association of Hospital Pharmacists; Association of Professional Engineers, Scientists and Managers, Australia; Australian Association of Consultant Pharmacy; Australian College of Pharmacy; Australian Pharmacy Council; Council of Pharmacy Schools; Australia and New Zealand; and the Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia.

"The commitment and cooperation of all of the steering committee members and their respective organisations was a key to the successful outcomes of this review," said PSA Board Member and Chair of the Competency Standards Review Steering Committee, Dr Shane Jackson.

The new publication will be distributed by the Pharmacy Board of Australia to all registrants, and can also be accessed through the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia's website, www.psa.org.au/competencystandards.



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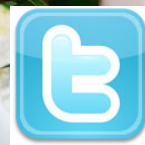
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NZ TestSafe launch

FROM this week, pharmacists in Auckland (NZ) will be able to access patient information via the TestSafe data repository.

Available through a secure internet connection, TestSafe offers pharmacists access to relevant and pre-defined patient information, including laboratory results and dispensing information.

The initiative is part of a regional program, which is hoped will improve information sharing between community and hospital healthcare providers.

Eventually it is hoped that TestSafe will allow pharmacists to access additional information including patients' hospital discharge notes.

Food labelling

CONCERNS regarding the growing consumption of alcohol with caffeinated beverages are set to be referred to the Ministerial Council on Drug Safety for consideration, following a recent meeting of Australia and NZ Food Regulation Ministerial Council.

As such, the Council has said it will ask the Food Regulation Standing Committee to undertake scoping work, and provide advice on possible areas for action.

Board boosts intern capacity

PHARMACY students hoping to gain internship have been given a helping hand, after an agreement between The Pharmacy Board of Australia, and the Australian Health Practitioners Regulation Agency (AHPRA) on a set of initiatives which will support the efficient registration of pharmacy interns.

"The Board and AHPRA recognise this is an anxious time for pharmacy interns as they work to secure a role in a competitive employment market," said Pharmacy Board of Australia Chair, Stephen Marty.

Commencing immediately, the initiatives include a boost in AHPRA's enquiry response capacity, particularly in relation to its website.

"There is pressure on our telephone enquiry capacity but we are committed to responding to web enquiries within 48 hours," said AHPRA ceo Martin Fletcher.

A further initiative will see APRA realign some of its intern application forms, to make the information clearer and more accessible.

To further expedite the process, the Pharmacy Board is also urging

intern hopefuls to use the checklist in section I of the general registration application form (AGEN07) to make sure that all the required information is accurate and complete.

"They should also make sure they meet the Board's proof of identity and certifying documents requirements," he said.

"A significant proportion of applications are incomplete and this is the single most common reason for processing delays," he added.

According to Marty, at present intern applications are taking between two to three weeks to process, however complete applications "are processed more swiftly.

"This is AHPRA's peak registration season with 140,000 registration renewals and 30,000 graduation registration applications now being processed," Fletcher said.

Interns seeking information about their application, are also being encouraged to use AHPRA's online enquiry form as "the most efficient source of information".

MEANWHILE Marty also took the opportunity to remind pharmacists that, as per the recently implemented national registration and accreditation scheme, all pharmacists must meet the new registration standards before they can be registered to practice.

"These standards include criminal history checks which are conducted by an external agency – so there are some things about registration since July 2010 that are different from the requirements of previous state and territory pharmacy boards and processing applications necessarily takes more time," he said.

New CM procedures

THE Office of Complementary Medicines has arranged for the online application system currently used for OTC medicines to also now accept applications for new Complementary Medicines.

The move means that the paper based application form for new registered CMs has been removed from the TGA website, and replaced with a link to the OTC Medicines Electronic Lodgement system (OPAL).



DISPENSARY CORNER

SLEEP just got a little more fun.

A New Zealand resident, Jason Beca, has inspired around 40,000 Dr Who fans, by revealing his special Tardis bed online on the Trade Me auction website.

The bed is a full size replica of the Time Lord's Tardis, which folds down into a single bed.

The Tardis-bed is the brainchild of Beca who created it in order to keep his mind focused whilst his young son, who suffered seizures, was in hospital under induced comas.

"I couldn't sleep, I was just stressing out so I would build something," he said.

The finished Tardis took 200 hours to complete, and features flashing lights, a talking telephone, and a police light which projects the Southern Cross.

PERSONAL training...there's an app for that.

FitnessWorkx has released a new personal trainer application for Apple iPhone and iPod touch users, titled iPersonalTrainer.

The app designs workout routines based on fitness goals and levels, tracks progress and adjusts weights and reps automatically.

The app also includes video tips and exercise explanations.

HE should have asked his pharmacist about weight-loss!

Hollywood actor Ryan Gosling has told media that he lost out on a role in Peter Jackson's 'The Lovely Bones', after gaining a whopping 27 kilos in pre-production.

Initially Gosling had been cast as the lead character, (who was played by the svelte Mark Wahlburg), and as part of his "vision" for the role, he bulked up his frame to 210 pounds.

This however, according to Gosling, did not go down well with Jackson, who replaced him with Wahlburg.

To prepare for the film, Gosling said he drank melted Haagen Dazs icecream instead of water whenever he felt thirsty.

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Every day this week, *Pharmacy Daily* is giving one lucky reader the chance to win a Pure Hair Cleanse from Aromababy.

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