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Complementary comeback

THE Complementary Healthcare Council of Australia has hit back against a recent report on herbal medicines by Prof Roger Byard from the University of Adelaide, saying it was "ill-informed, misleading and irresponsible" as well as being "not relevant to complementary medicine products sold in Australia."

CHC executive director Dr Wendy Morrow said the report, which has been the subject of several mainstream media stories, had "spread unwarranted alarm around the country" but said its conclusions were not correct because Prof Byard had looked mainly at herbal products in the US "where the standard of regulation is considerably lower."

She said in Australia all complementary medicines are made under Good Manufacturing Practice, and that TGA procedures which see them either registered or listed ensure their quality and safety.

However the CHC also said GPs have been "burying their heads in the sand for far too long", and should make it their business to improve their knowledge of complementary medicines and potential drug-CM interactions.

"We urge those taking complementary medicines to seek advice from their healthcare practitioners before combining these with other medicines," Morrow said.

UK mail blunder

BRITAIN'S Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency has reported a problem with its 'Yellow Card' system for reporting of adverse events, which has seen a number of cards returned to sender.

The MHRA said the issue is due to an error at Royal Mail, and has urged any health practitioners who have received the cards back to resend them or use an online reporting system instead.

SHPA professional fee push

THE Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia has urged a radical rethink of the way pharmacy works in Australia, which would see pharmacists able to practice "using a professional fee structure similar to allied health professionals".

In a statement issued yesterday, SHPA ceo Yvonne Allinson also suggested that a more "integrated outcome" from the Fifth Community Pharmacy Agreement, could be achieved by having "input from across the pharmacy profession."

The SHPA said that pharmacists' skills and the available workforce should be better utilised, by allowing pharmacists to practice as individual health professionals, or from a community pharmacy, or from a public or private hospital pharmacy service.

"Such a system is already working well for professional pharmacy services (medication reviews) in residential aged care homes," Allinson said.

"Such flexibility would allow pharmacists to work alongside other health professionals in community based interdisciplinary teams e.g. Super Clinics, palliative care or aged care teams."

The SHPA said professional fees would enable pharmacists to work in chronic disease management as "interprofessional team members in various roles" such as taking complex medication histories, documenting medication management plans and providing consumer education.

They could also play preventative roles via primary and secondary control of risk factors using medicines as well as "developing pharmacist prescribing programs."

The proposed SHPA 'connected approach' would give consumers consistent access to dose administration aid services, asthma or diabetes management or other professional services "regardless of

the type of pharmacy base."

It would also encourage similar innovations in pharmacy practice to those which have taken place in hospitals over the last 20 years, which now see the majority of a hospital pharmacist's time spent outside the pharmacy department, working alongside other health professionals on clinical pharmacy services for individual patients.

Allinson said that with hospital care moving to same day and reduced stays in hospital, similar pharmacy services are now in demand in many health settings.

"SHPA urges the government to best utilise the skills of pharmacists to meet health needs in a consistent and seamless way."

Mums and bubs boost

THE Federal Government has announced a \$9.1 million funding boost for ten new mothers and babies services targeted at indigenous Australians.

The funds, to be spent over a three year period, will be funneled into the New Directions program, including pre-and post pregnancy care, standard baby-care information, practical advice over breastfeeding, nutrition and parenting; monitoring of developmental milestones, immunisation status and infections and health checks and referrals.

"This program gives Indigenous children a great start to life through ongoing home visits to ensure they are healthy, happy and ready to learn," she added.

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.

VOYAGES TO ANTIQUITY is offering free flights from Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth to Europe with its 15-Day Athens to Rome 17 May voyage and its 29-day Rome to Venice 30 May adventure.

Priced from \$5295 and \$5575 per person twin share respectively, the deal is available to for bookings made before 08 March www.voyagestoantiquity.com.au.

CORAL SEAS is celebrating the launch of direct flights between Sydney and Rarotonga in the Cook Islands) by offering a five-night air and accommodation package priced from \$1229pp.

The deal includes return Sydney-Rarotonga economy flights with Air New Zealand,

return airport transfers and five nights accommodation at the Castaway Beach Villas with breakfast daily.

More info on 1800 641 803.

TEMPO HOLIDAYS is offering a 20% discount on its six-day Flavours of Cairo and the Western Desert package.

Now priced from \$944pp, the package includes three nights Cairo accommodation, two nights Bahariya accommodation, one night desert accommodation, most meals, private departures, a full day tour with Egyptologist, entrance fees and sightseeing.

The deal is available on new bookings made by February 26 for travel between April 15 and May 15, 2010 - call 1300 362 844.

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Teen gastric banding

AN AUSTRALIAN study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* suggests gastric banding "should be considered for those severely obese adolescents who find primary weight loss methods unsuccessful."

The controversial report was conducted at Monash University and the Centre for Adolescent Health at the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne, and covers a trial which compared the outcomes of gastric banding surgery with those of an "optimal lifestyle program" in 50 children aged 14-18 years.

After the completion of the study participants who underwent gastric banding had lost an average of 79% of their excess weight, while those on the lifestyle program achieved a loss of 13%.

E-Health "foundations laid"

THE Federal government has introduced legislation into parliament which it says "lays the foundations for a future secure electronic health system".

The *Healthcare Identifiers Bill* provides for the creation of a unique 16-digit number - an Individual Healthcare Identifier or IHI - to be created for every Australian and all health care providers, including both pharmacies and pharmacists, by the middle of 2010.

Health minister Nicola Roxon also confirmed that the bill would see amendments made to the Privacy Act (*PD Tue*) to ensure that action can be taken against any individual or company which misuses the healthcare identifiers.

She said the establishment of

IHI's spells the end of the current fragmented approach "which causes inaccuracies and inefficiencies in the health system and puts patients at a higher risk of mismatched records and duplicate medical tests."

Victoria gets sunsmart

A NEW UV Exposure and Heat Illness Guide was launched in Victoria today by SunSmart and Sunplay with the celebrity support of Vic cricketer Bryce McGain.

The guide provides tips and information on proper sun protection and also covers prevention and treatment of heat related illnesses.

It is hoped that the initiative will encourage the state's sporting residents to take a more proactive approach to the old slip, slop and slap sun protection, whilst helping clubs to manage and prevent heat related illnesses in players.

"Sadly, Australia is one of the skin cancer capitals of the world," said SunSmart manager, Sue Heward.

"In Victoria, UV levels are high enough from September to April to cause skin damage (from tanning and sunburn) and increase the risk of skin cancer... (and) In the winter months, UV levels are also high in alpine areas and near reflective surfaces like snow," she added.

The guide is now available online at www.sunsmart.com.au.

Health workforce

THE Australian Health Ministers Conference will tomorrow hold a special meeting to finalise new arrangements for future clinical training places, to meet the growing health workforce demands across the country.

Numbers of medical, nursing and allied health graduates are expected to increase from 1544 in 2007 to 2920 in 2012, with training to be coordinated by the new Health Workforce Australia agency which is now operational.

Health minister Nicola Roxon said she was looking forward to HWA "improving the integration of our workforce planning across public and private settings and across Commonwealth and State investments".



DISPENSARY CORNER

ROMANTIC druggies in Holland will be disappointed at the confiscation by Dutch customs authorities of 20,000 roses last weekend.

The move came after an estimated €1.3m worth of cocaine was found to be secreted in the cardboard boxes containing the flowers, which apparently originated in Colombia.

A HINDU man in Britain says he's "overjoyed" after winning a court battle which will allow him to be cremated on an open-air funeral pyre after he dies.

71-year-old Davender Ghai says he believes a traditional pyre is essential to a "good death" and the release of his spirit into the afterlife.

He was initially denied a permit for an open-air cremation in a remote part of Northumberland, but the Court of Appeal ruled in his favour after he agreed that the pyre would be surrounded by fireproof walls, and a roof with an opening.

British law prohibits the burning of bodies anywhere outside a designated crematorium.

"This case was truly a matter of life and death for me," Ghai said.

"Today's verdict has breathed new life into an old man's dreams," he added.

A FAMILY in Cuba is claiming to have held a 125th birthday party for their matriarch, a woman named Juana Bautista de la Candelaria Rodriguez.

According to the state-run news agency, Prensa Latina, official documents show the elderly lady was born on 02 Feb 1885 in the village of Santa Rosa.

The party was reportedly attended by her extended family including 15 great-grand children and four great-great grandchildren.

However the Guinness Book of World Records says it's never heard of the case, and is currently reviewing a number of claims after its previous record-holder, Gertrude Baines, died last year aged 115.

WIN AN EMU SPIRIT PACK



This week *Pharmacy Daily* is giving readers the chance to win one of four gorgeous Emu Spirit packs, courtesy of Emu Spirit.

Valued at \$125, the Emu Spirit pack contains a Moisturising Soap, Arthritic and Muscular Rub, Oil of

Emu, Day Crème Refresh & Renew, Night Crème Repair & Restore, Advanced Hand & Body Crème and a genuine Emu Egg!

Emu Spirit is an all Australian company established in 1993 which strives to offer natural products for inflammatory conditions with their Emu Spirit therapeutic and skincare range.

Emu Spirit's patented rendering process, OilTek™, devised by one of the world's leading oil chemists, Mr Andy Baker, is exclusive to Emu Spirit and Emu Spirit's products.

For your chance to win an Emu Spirit pack, simply send in your answer to the weekly question below to: comp@pharmacydaily.com.au.

In 50 words or less, tell us why you would like to win this Emu Spirit pack.

We'll announce the winners in Friday's issue. One of yesterday's entries was from **Claude Zhang** from the **University of Queensland**, who wrote:

I'd like to win an Emu spirit pack because I think it would be a lovely gift for my mother. Without her, I wouldn't have been able to graduate from university and be the intern pharmacist that I am today.

Check out the Emu Spirit website at www.emuspirit.com.