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Monday 21st June 2010

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Weekly Comment

Welcome to **Pharmacy Daily's** weekly comment feature. This week's contributor is Gerald Quigley.

Are we losing our relevance?

Further to the academic success in just about removing pharmacists from most discussions about upper respiratory tract infections in children, are we going to take this lying down?

Where are the pharmacists who have built their business on the care and attention given to young mums and their offspring? They're out there, but the younger set is becoming paralyzed by the demands put onto them by academia.

If PSA are charged with representing our professional interests, is this an admission that our educational institutions have failed in their attempts to educate us in paediatric health?

Shouldn't they be examining the professional options we now have available, when a child presents with a wheeze? See the GP?

Sure, and wait a week for an appointment with your preferred one!

I challenge my colleagues to look outside the square! Assert your professional competence, and be informed about the natural medicine options. After all, Cochrane (that barrier behind which all academics stand) advises that dextromethorphan is no more effective than honey.

Additionally, how many academics who hold Cochrane's coat tails, actually speak to patients at the coalface?

Homeopathic medicines have taken a beating recently (it must be a slow news time) but I commend Brauer Cough Relief for kids. From a herbal perspective, consider BioRevive's Prospan, which is accompanied by a raft of European evidence for those who need some sort of reassurance.

Learn about these options, become confident and competent in their use, add liquid echinacea purpurea into the equation, chest rub on the soles of feet, tender loving care and reassurance to the concerned parent (or is that illegal as well?), and you have a customer for life.

That's what Pharmacists have always done, and that's what we should continue to do, in spite of the do-gooders who want to relegate us to a role as some sort of clinical outcast who can't offer meaningful support.



Gerald Quigley is a practicing Community Pharmacist as well as an Accredited Herbalist.

Sigma expects rocky road

SIGMA Pharmaceuticals says reforms outlined in last month's Federal Budget are "likely to place additional pressure on operating margins for the foreseeable future," according to the company's new chairman Brian Jamieson.

Speaking at the Sigma agm this morning, he outlined "disappointing" results for the company's generics business for the first four months of the year but said other areas of the business had been "sound".

Underlying net profit after tax was down 15.5% due to strong pressure in the generics market and a lack

of uptake of year-end promotions, the company reported.

Jamieson also confirmed that Sigma was planning to sell its Herron brand of consumer products along with "a number of other non-core assets" to reduce debt.

Outgoing ceo Elmo de Alwis also addressed the meeting, expressing his disappointment at the company's big loss which led to him tendering his resignation on 15 Apr after 33 years at Sigma.

However he reiterated his continued confidence in the business, saying he had taken his full allocation of shares in last year's capital raising.

"I have never sold any shares in Sigma," de Alwis told investors.

De Alwis said he believes passionately in the long term success of the company and wished his successor Mark Hooper and the board "every success, as they reaffirm Sigma as one of Australia's leading healthcare companies".

Fake Viagra found in Australia

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration is warning pharmacists to be extra vigilant against counterfeit Viagra drugs, following the discovery of phony tablets in both NSW and the ACT.

Earlier this month Pfizer advised the TGA that it had become aware that counterfeit Viagra tablets (sildenafil 100mg) had apparently entered the supply chain.

Following the report, the TGA immediately actioned a product recall to ensure consumer protection, however last week it was again made aware by Pfizer that around nine pharmacies across Victoria had reported holding stocks of the counterfeit batch.

So far, the TGA has said that it has found no evidence that the counterfeit drugs pose a safety hazard to users - only that the batch is likely to be ineffective.

Additionally the TGA is advising pharmacists to check their Viagra stocks to ensure they contain only legitimate Viagra tablets.

The TGA has said that spotting the counterfeit batch is fairly simple because "the counterfeit product has a batch number and an expiry date that do not match any previously supplied in Australia," making it readily identifiable.

Moving forward, the TGA has said that it is "actively pursuing" the matter, and that it will enforce severe penalties (including jail terms of up to five years) to persons who supply counterfeit products, as per the Therapeutic Goods Act 1989.

For more information, contact the TGA on 1800 020 653.

ACNM cancels July

THE TGA's Advisory Committee on Non-prescription Medicines (ACNM) has issued a revised list of meeting dates, with the initially planned 15 July 2010 meeting cancelled.

The next meeting will take place on 19 August 2010, which has been brought forward from 23 September, with a further meeting to take place on 25 November.

Pregnancy helpline

THE Health Department has announced a new expanded 24-hour Pregnancy, Birth and Baby Helpline which will become effective from 01 July.

The service will be provided by independent charitable organisation Royal District Nursing Service Limited, with an overall budget of \$17 million.

Additional AusPARs

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration has added two new Australian Public Assessment Reports (AusPARs) for prescription medications Cleviprex (clevipride) from Kendle Australia and GSK's Tykerb (lapatinib) to its website.

Lodotra launches in EU

A NEW modified release treatment for rheumatoid arthritis, Lodotra(R) (modified-release prednisone), has been approved for use this month in 13 European countries.

The drug is particularly geared towards RA sufferers with morning stiffness due to the fact that its modified release mechanism delivers low-dose prednisone four hours after ingestion, so when taken at 10pm the prednisone hits in the early morning hours when inflammation begins to build up.

This in turn is said to reduce patient joint stiffness in the first few hours of waking.

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TGA on Panavax

1773 suspected Panavax vaccine side effects have been reported to the Therapeutic Goods Administration between Sep 2009 and Apr 2010.

The figures were released as part of the TGA's ongoing monitoring of the national Panavax vaccine program, also showed that, to date, 8.7 million doses of the adult vaccine and 370,000 doses of Panavax Junior have been administered nationwide since the inception of the national program on 30 Sep last year.

The majority of reported side effects related to adult vaccinations and included headaches, gastric upset, soreness, swelling and redness at the injection site, whilst only 156 adverse reaction reports were made for Panavax Junior - the majority of which pertained to fever and/or vomiting post injection.

As a result of the figures, the TGA has reiterated its stance that Panavax remains a "safe and effective vaccine for the prevention of H1N1 influenza".

More info at www.tga.gov.au.

Paid parental leave burden

THE Pharmacy Guild says it's disappointed that the new paid parental leave payments approved last week won't be administered by a government agency.

The Guild welcomed the passage of the landmark legislation, saying the reform "recognises the need to enhance the wellbeing of young children in infancy by providing better support for their parents to take time away from work".

However the government rejected amendments to the legislation which would have seen the payments administered through the Family Assistance office "rather than imposing this considerable burden on small business owners such as community pharmacists."

"Throughout the consultation progress the Government has failed to understand the concerns of the Guild and other small business organisations with regard to the additional administrative and compliance burden" of the scheme, the Guild said in a statement.

The Guild added that as the

representative of more than 4,000 community pharmacies across Australia - "many owned and operated by women" - it would also be closely monitoring the resolution of a number of other issues in relation to the legislation, including what happens with regard to on-costs such as workers compensation and payroll taxes.

Quebec looks at cards

THE provincial government of Quebec in Canada has announced a review of all "pharmaceutical card programs" in the region.

The programs include the 'Lipitor Continuity Card' from Pfizer, which "supports patient's choice to remain on brand name pharmaceuticals" at no additional cost compared to using the generic.

Pfizer has been ordered to temporarily suspend the distribution of the Lipitor card while the review is under way.

RGH E-Bulletin

THIS week's edition of the Repatriation General Hospital Pharmacy E-Bulletin gives an overview of revised guidelines for cholicic acid dosing in acute gout.

The bulletin is available at no charge by downloading from auspharmist.net.au/ebulletin.php.

New Chemmart training manager

CHEMMART Pharmacy has announced the appointment of Clint Wallish as its new National Training Manager.

Wallish is a very experienced trainer, having worked previously with fuel company Shell as well as in consulting roles for a number of businesses in the FMCG industries.

"I'm passionate about ensuring the continued growth of our members, in respect to both skills and knowledge, to ensure they continue to meet and exceed customer needs and expectations, and I'm looking forward to helping to drive the continued growth of the brand," Wallish said.

Chemmart executive director Jonathan Layton said the appointment would "further enhance the already solid training focus within Chemmart Pharmacy".

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EXTREME protection measures!

A pharmacy thief received an unwanted shock whilst attempting to rob a pharmacist in the US state of Ohio, when he was tasered by pharmacy staffers.

The gun wielding thief held up staff one hour before closing, and demanded pain killers.

Wily staffers handed over the meds and when the thief turned his back to exit the store, reached for their hidden taser and fired.

Police were on the scene within minutes and were able to take the robber into custody.

According to reports the store's pharmacist bought the taser following a spate of thefts, in order to protect his employees and customers.

YES - male menopause does exist, but it's pretty rare, according to a European research team.

The *New England Journal of Medicine* published a study this week reporting on 3300 men who were assessed for their testosterone levels, as well as being questioned on their mental, physical and sexual health.

The researchers concluded that low hormone levels which could be described as 'male menopause' were present in 2% of those studied.

Other symptoms such as poor concentration, anxiety and changes in sleeping patterns were not related to testosterone.

YOGA is not always a healthy choice.

A Chinese man has been arrested after grinding peak-hour traffic in Guangzhou (population 10.1 million) to a halt doing his morning exercise.

According to reports the man strode out into the middle of the road and performed a yoga routine for one hour before police could reach him.



WIN A NEW YORK NIGHTS PRODUCT



This week **Pharmacy Daily** is giving readers the chance to win a Designer Brands product from the latest New York Nights range, courtesy of **Total Beauty Network**.

Metallic colours to bring out the wild side in you!

The New York Nights range is full of dark, sultry colours dedicated to the night.

Nail Polishes are toluene and formaldehyde free, quick drying with a high metallic finish.

The mascara included is the Pro V5 keratin formula with the Nu-30 brush that lifts and extends. All products on the range made for a long lasting formula a high metallic finish.

For a chance to win your very own New York Nights product, simply send through the correct answer to the daily question below:

The New York Nights Eyeshadow is.....

Email your answer to: comp@pharmacydaily.com.au.

The first correct entry received will win!

Hint: Visit: www.tbn.com.au.