

Guild Update

This week's update from the Guild

Major UK changes

Last week saw the official opening of the new regulator for the pharmacy professions in Britain – the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC).

While there are no doubts that this body will bring numerous benefits to the British pharmacy system, it also foreshadows a few troubling changes.

With the GPhC taking over the regulation and accreditation of over 70,000 pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and pharmacy premises from the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain (RPSGB), pharmacy's role in guiding its own destiny in Britain has been undoubtedly diminished.

The Guild believes the move to register pharmacy assistants in Britain will ultimately lead to long periods of unsupervised pharmacy technician work, which will likely be the beginning of the end of pharmacists being required in a pharmacy at all times – a move that has already been flagged in discussion papers. Should this occur, corporate pharmacy owners will be quick to capitalise, and employment conditions for pharmacists will be significantly affected.

While it may be difficult for some people to see, the Guild continues to act to protect the entire community pharmacy profession. Our vigorous defence of the current system of pharmacy in Australia benefits each and every pharmacist and is helping to ensure that the future of the profession is a bright one.

While the Guild proudly represents community pharmacy owners, our vigilance helps ensure that current employee and student pharmacists skills are maintained in linking with the patient on each prescription dispensing to maximise quality use of medicines.



The Pharmacy Guild of Australia

ACCC allergy proceedings

THE Australian Competition and Consumer Commission has issued contempt of court proceedings against a company which claims to be able to accurately test for allergic reactions.

Allergy Pathway Pty Ltd, formerly known as Advanced Allergy Elimination, and its director Paul Keir, is the subject of orders for alleged contempt of court, according to an ACCC application.

The move follows a ruling on 27 Aug last year, when the Federal Court in Melbourne declared that Allergy Pathway had engaged in "false, misleading and deceptive conduct" in making certain claims about its allergy treatments.

In particular the company and Keir gave undertakings to the court, promising not to represent that the company could "accurately test for and identify an allergen for a person and/or a substance which causes a person's allergic reaction".

The company also had to promise not to say it could cure or successfully treat allergies, as well as discounting previous claims that

New US division

THE US National Community Pharmacists Association has created a new division "dedicated to advancing the interests of independent long-term care pharmacy providers" to provide a counterpoint to the major publicly-listed firms involved in the sector.

Registration alert

THE Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency has warned health professionals about letters being sent out from The Medical Register of Australia.

This organisation is completely separate to AHPRA, but the agency says the correspondence "may lead you to believe that registration with them is required to comply with the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act 2009".

"This is not the case...AHPRA does not require you to apply for registration with the Medical Register of Australia to be recognised as a registered health practitioner," the Agency said, adding that the Medical Register has no role or relationship to AHPRA, any of the National Boards or the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme.

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E-health flounders

AUSTRALIA'S health care system lags behind all other sectors of the economy in the use of computerised systems - particularly in the hospital sector, according to an article in the *Medical Journal of Australia* this month.

"While general practice and community pharmacy are highly computerised, the hospital sector is not," according to authors Christopher Pearce and Mukesh Haikerwal.

"Multiple funding streams and jurisdictions and the lack of an implementation strategy have slowed e-health development," the article says, with government programs in particular underestimating the costs of change management and the need for training and technology.

"Confusion reigns about responsibilities, but governments must ensure connectivity between health care providers and recognise that the benefits will accrue into the future," the report added, with health professionals urgently needing "technical capacity and expert guidance...to ensure the clinical relevance, utility, safety and acceptability of e-health systems".

Sanofi gets hostile

SANOFI-AVENTIS has launched a hostile bid for Genzyme, after management at the target company refused to negotiate.

The US\$69 per share offer is at the same price already rebuffed by Genzyme a month ago, but is now being offered directly to Genzyme shareholders.

Sanofi-aventis ceo Chris Viehbacher said "we believe the offer will be successful ultimately."

"Sanofi-aventis has a history of being a patient, disciplined buyer."

FDA focuses on TB

THE US Food and Drug Administration has awarded US\$2.9m in research funding for six projects looking at the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of tuberculosis.

"TB remains a major public health challenge with an increasing prevalence worldwide," the FDA said, with the agency saying it had recognised "an urgent need for the engagement and leadership of public health institutions to promote this critical, but neglected area of medical therapeutics".

RGH E-bulletin

THIS week's edition of SA's Repatriation General Hospital Pharmacy E-Bulletin gives an overview of lithium-induced diabetes insipidus, which can occur in up to 40% of patients treated with lithium for bipolar disorder.

The bulletin is available for download at no charge from auspharmlist.net.au/ebulletin.php.



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Victoza approval vital

THE November meeting of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee will be crucial for Novo Nordisk's Victoza (liraglutide), according to industry analysis group Datamonitor.

Spokesperson Lisette Oversteegen said the consideration of the glucagon-like peptide-1 diabetes treatment is "uncertain, considering that it took three years to get Byetta on the PBS."

The November PBAC agenda also includes consideration of Novartis' Galvumet (vildagliptin/metformin).

Victoza has already shown "significant benefits over Byetta, including its once-daily administration compared to Byetta's twice-daily dosing," Oversteegen said.

Also in the wings is Eli Lilly's once-weekly Bydureon formulation of exenatide which is expected to launch after 2011.

"It is therefore vital for Novo Nordisk to receive PBS listing for Victoza on its first try in November," Datamonitor said, with the company requesting that reimbursement be made available for its product in dual and triple combination therapy with metformin and a sulfonylurea.

UK conviction

A 51-YEAR old man in Britain has received a suspended sentence of a year's imprisonment for the illegal importation, sale and supplier of an unlicensed medicinal product called 'Triamazon'.

The product was claimed to be a non-toxic treatment which selectively targeted cancerous cells throughout the body.

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Changes for gentamicin

MAJOR changes in the way that antibiotic gentamicin is used in Australian hospitals have been proposed by the authors of Therapeutic Guidelines:Antibiotic.

Writing in the October issue of NPS' *Australia Prescriber*, the Guidelines' Expert Writing Group (GEWP) says that many clinicians are reluctant to prescribe gentamicin because of its toxicity - which has resulted in increasing use of alternative drugs such as broad-spectrum cephalosporins.

This in turn has been linked with the increasing prevalence of drug-resistant organisms, with the experts recommending "clear distinctions between empirical and directed therapy".

For empirical therapy, the recommended treatment duration with gentamicin is now limited to a maximum of 48 hours in all patients.

After this initial treatment, ongoing therapy should be guided by results but even if results are not available by 72 hours the gentamicin should be discontinued

and an alternative regimen used.

If a susceptible Gram-negative organism is identified, gentamicin should only be continued if the patient has a particular "specific and uncommon indication" for directed therapy.

In these cases monitoring of plasma concentrations is essential, and the GEWP is mandating the use of "more accurate computerised methods of monitoring" to discourage long-term use of gentamicin - meaning that the guidelines will in future intentionally omit the monitoring nomograms.

"Patients should be in a facility that has access to a computerised monitoring program and skilled personnel to interpret the information.

"It is hoped that the changes will lead to better patient care by striking a practical balance between the benefits of the breadth of activity of gentamicin and its rapid bactericidal activity, especially in bloodstream infections, versus the limitations of toxicity with prolonged use," the group said.



DISPENSARY CORNER

PEOPLE who play electronic games are prone to a new variety of injuries, according to a presentation at a conference in San Francisco last week.

Researchers from the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia analysed data from the US National Electronic Injury Surveillance System, which found almost 700 video game-related injuries over a five year period - which coincided with the 2006 arrival of the Nintendo Wii console.

Unlike earlier games, the Wii controller encourages interactive play in which the remote contains accelerometers to allow users to mimic the movements of particular sports such as tennis or bowling.

Many of the injuries were due to finger and wrist repetitive strain incidents from more traditional consoles, but there were scores of shoulder and ankle strains due to the Wii.

Interestingly, the Wii also gave rise to a spate of "bystander injuries" in which onlookers - usually children aged under 10 - were hurt by wild swings of the console's controller.

GOOD news for theme park operators - riding on roller coasters can help with asthma symptoms.

That was the finding of a pair of Dutch scientists, who have this week been honoured for their discovery at the annual "Ig" Nobel prizes which were awarded in Harvard University yesterday.

Other winners included three researchers from Britain's Keele University, who were awarded the IgNobel Peace Prize after managing to prove that swearing is an effective way to relieve pain.

The physics prize went to a team from New Zealand's University of Otago who showed that wearing socks outside of your shoes can reduce the likelihood of slipping on a frozen pathway.

And the winners of the Public Health prize found that scientists with facial hair were more likely to pose a risk to their families because bacteria stayed in their beards even after washing.

WIN THE NEW FRAGRANCE BY ENGLISH BLAZER



Pharmacy Daily has teamed up with English Blazer this week and is giving 8 lucky readers a chance to win BLACK - the new fragrance for men.

English Blazer, the timeless classic fragrance, introduces Blazer BLACK. More revolution, than evolution, Blazer BLACK delivers style with edge for today's urban sophisticate. Self assured and masculine, Blazer BLACK sets a new benchmark for fine fragrance. Edgy, with fresh top notes of Bergamot and Mandarin display spunk and character

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Each prize is valued at \$32.90 and contains BLACK by English Blazer EDT 50ml & 24hr: Anti-Perspirant Deo 150g.

For your chance to win this great prize, simply send through the correct answer to the daily question below:

What is the new fragrance by English Blazer?

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

First 2 correct entries received each day will win!

Hint: Visit: www.keysun.com.au