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AZ Crestor case

ASTRAZENECA is taking the federal government to court, claiming the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee made a legal error in 2009 when it advised Health Minister Nicola Roxon that AZ's Crestor and Pfizer's Lipitor were interchangeable.

The decision paved the way for the government to slash the pricing on the two popular medicines under the PBS reform process - with Crestor in trouble because its patent expires after Lipitor's.

In a Federal Court hearing on Friday, reported in the *Financial Review*, AZ's barrister Stephen Lloyd claimed that the PBAC erred because not all patients taking 40 milligrams of Crestor would get the same benefits by switching to another medication.

Sigma reports \$235m loss

SIGMA Pharmaceuticals says its underlying business "remains sound and profitable", after reporting a \$235m result for the year to 31 Jan.

The figure included yet more writedowns, including \$220m in goodwill impairment due to the sale of its Pharmaceuticals Division to Aspen Pharmacare.

Sigma also wrote off \$38.3 million on its Healthcare Division - adding to the \$240m impairment last year, with both figures relating to "amounts that were originally capitalised as part of the Arrow acquisition".

The result was also hit by one-off charges amounting to \$49.4 million including \$16.4 million worth of inventory, and a \$14.2 million

doubtful debt provision.

Despite the bloodbath, the company said its Healthcare business "remains strong and profitable," with an underlying EBIT of \$129.2m and full year sales revenue up 6.6% to \$2.9 billion.

"With the business stabilised, we can concentrate on reinvigorating our core operations," said managing director Mark Hooper.

Sigma's board has decided to pay a 15c per share special dividend from the sale of the Pharmaceuticals Division, with the company now focused on its full line wholesaling and retail pharmacy operations.

Hooper said Sigma had worked quickly to identify and implement strategies to deal with Pfizer's withdrawal from wholesaling.

Yervoy approval

THE US FDA has approved a new monoclonal antibody, Yervoy (ipilimumab), for the treatment of late-stage (metastatic) melanoma.

Yervoy works by blocking the cytotoxic T-lymphocyte antigen, which affects the body's ability to fight off cancer cells.

And the 2010 PSA Intern of the Year is...

THE PSA has named Sally Whiting as the 2010 NSW Intern of the Year recipient.

The award comes after Whiting relocated to Mudgee for her 12 month internship which saw her receive top marks for all her assignments and tasks, as well as copious praise from her assessors.

"She quickly established an enviable reputation for her passion in her chosen career which was demonstrated by her compassionate manner, exceptional knowledge and customer service skills," a PSA statement said.

"In addition, she was proactive in managing patients' medication and also assisting them in helping to achieve their quality of lives, confidently embracing the expanding role of the pharmacist in providing professional patient-focused services," the statement added.

The two Intern of the Year runners-up included Adam Zammit from Blaxland Pharmacy and Anjana Rao from McBeaths Pharmacy in Cherrybrook.



Pictured from left is Dinah Graham (MIMS BDM), Sally Whiting, and Peter Gissing (PSA NSW Branch Director).

Competition winners

CONGRATULATIONS to the winners of last week's Chemconsult competition: Ethan Fong of UFS Chemist Mount Gambier, Prabhay Nand of Nands Pharmacy Liverpool, Alexandra Daskal of Varsity Pharmacy, Munaver Gulamali of Wyong Hospital Pharmacy, Wendi Jones of the Friendly Society Qld, Anand Vaitha of Amcal Pharmacy Arundel Plaza, Karen Mailo of Hinterland Pharmacy, Matthew Calanna of Callana Pharmacy Group and Sharon Miller of McCrae Pharmacy.

Pharmacy Daily's congratulations also go out to Joss Beare of Blooms the Chemist Kingaroy who was the lucky winner of Friday's Nicole by OPI competition.

For more chances to win, see p2.

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Weekly Comment

Welcome to *Pharmacy Daily's* weekly comment feature.

This week's contributor is Pharmacy Alliance Group's Marketing Manager, Matt Archdall.

What do you want to be known for?

One size never fits all.

Not only do our demographics differ widely, but our pharmacies do too.

Some pharmacies focus on price, others on services offered, and others again on being a community leader.

Regardless of what it is that you want to be known for, you need to:

- Advertise the right products at the right price. Why send out a catalogue full of baby products to an ageing area? Promoting the wrong lines is a time and money waster. Promote the products your customers want, at the price you want to promote them at. Why give up GP if you don't have to?
- Send out the right message. What does your store represent? Great service? Great range and value? Make sure you say this loud and clear in all your advertising.
- Grab your customer's attention. Cut through your competitor's advertising by making yours bold and relevant to your audience.

You should tailor your marketing program to represent a mix of what your customers want, and what your pharmacy stands for (that is relevant to your customers and that you can deliver).

You also need to beat the competition's advertising by standing out – and the best way to do this is by highlighting your relevant strengths and your point of difference in a clear and concise manner.



TGA's \$67.5 m Pan payout

THE Federal Court has ratified the \$67.5 million settlement in the long-running Pan Pharmaceuticals class action, meaning that the compensation payouts over the Therapeutic Goods Administration's forced closure of the firm in 2003 has cost taxpayers more than \$120m in total.

The court case was paid for by litigation funding company IMF, which on Friday confirmed the settlement "against the Commonwealth of Australia and others" was fair and reasonable.

The publicly listed Pan Pharmaceuticals was estimated to be worth about \$350m when it failed after the TGA ordered that products it made - which included many OTC brands it made on

contract to other companies - be recalled across Australia.

Pan founder Jim Selim, who died of leukemia last year, was awarded \$55m in compensation in 2008.

The class action was filed against the Commonwealth of Australia as well as TGA staffers Rita McLachlan, Pio Cesarin, Noel Fraser, Terry Slater and Robert Tribe.

Plaintiffs in the class action included 162 suppliers, distributors and retailers of Pan products.

The government settled the case without admitting liability, with the lawyer running the class action, Andrew Thorpe of McLachlan Thorpe Partners saying the deal was "an acceptance that there was a considerable degree of risk in continuing to fight this case".

WIN A MOTHER'S DAY PACK



With Mother's Day only six weeks away, *Pharmacy Daily* is giving readers the chance to win a special pack which will spoil your Mum (or you!), courtesy of **Plunkett Pharmaceuticals**.

The pack contains two full size products - Advanced Collagen Lift Moisturiser and Advanced Skin Perfecting Exfoliator, valued at \$99.90.

Moisturise in the morning, and use the exfoliator followed by the moisturiser at night to rejuvenate and lift as well as reduce fine lines and discolouration. Available at selected pharmacies and online at www.plunkettpharmaceuticals.com.au.

For your chance to win this fantastic Mother's Day gift, simply send in an answer to the daily question below:

In which country are John Plunkett products made?

The first correct entry received each day wins!

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

Hint! Visit www.plunkettpharmaceuticals.com.au

DISPENSARY CORNER

BOOSTING bandaid sales...

A Physics professor in China's Henan Province, Xie Guanghai, has told local media that he is addicted to daily push ups on upturned chopping knives.

Averaging around 4000 push ups every day, Xie says he is able to master the blades because over the past couple of years (and much bleeding), he has developed thick calluses on his hands.

"Four years ago I started to try these blade push-ups after watching a TV program where a folk artist climbed up a ladder made of blades," he said.

Xie is hoping his skill will soon score him a Guinness World Record.

IT'S a dog, not it's a sheep...?

A sheep farmer in China's Shaanxi Province is claiming one of his animals has given birth to a puppy, after he found the mother sheep cleaning her newborn.

According to reports the animal has wool, but its eyes, nose and mouth seemingly belong to a dog.

Scientists have however put the kybosh on the story, saying it was simply not possible for a sheep to give birth to a dog.

Animal researcher, Yue Guozhang from the Xi'an City Animal Husbandry Technology Centre, aimed to dispel the myth which has so far drawn flocks of people to see the sheep-dog, telling local media that "it's likely that this is just an abnormal lamb".



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