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Price cuts reap in rewards

THE Government is reaping huge rewards from the April Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme reforms, with the latest data showing the changes have produced a large drop in the average cost to the Government of PBS prescriptions.

The data comes from the first month to include the full impact of the April price reductions, June 2012.

These reductions, according to the Medicines Partnership Australia, have seen a \$5 drop in the average cost of prescriptions – falling from just over \$44 to just over \$39.

"This is the clearest demonstration yet of the significant savings being reaped by the government through the Expanded and Accelerated Price Disclosure program," the Medicines Partnership said.

"It is further confirmation that PBS expenditure is being kept well under control," the Partnership added.

Contained within the Medicines Partnership's PBS Scorecard for August, the June 2012 data found that the volume of prescriptions recorded in the month was 75% higher than the same month in 2011, and was 30% higher than any other month in history.



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NPS August Radar

THIS Month's NPS Radar reviews rasagiline (Azilect) for Parkinson's disease, as well as the PRODIGY study.

Rasagiline is a new monoamine oxidase type-B inhibitor to treat symptoms of Parkinson's disease.

"Rasagiline may be suitable for people presenting with less severe Parkinson's disease symptoms or levodopa-associated motor complications and is an option for people when side effects restrict the use of dopamine agonists or entacapone," said NPS clinical adviser Dr Philippa Binns.

The drug however, according to Binns, may not be suitable for people already on antidepressants, and in instances where this is a possibility, Binns recommends specialist advice be sought.

Meanwhile Binns also used Radar to comment on the PRODIGY study which reviewed the duration of dual antiplatelet therapy.

"The study highlights the need for a review of dual antiplatelet therapy at 12 months," she said.

"For most people the benefit of treatment beyond this period may not be sufficient to offset the risk of a major bleed," she added.

The latest edition of Radar also includes info on PBS listing changes to synthetic infant formulas for protein intolerances; as well as info relating to the bone mineral density T-score cut-off changed in the demasumab osteoporosis PBS listing.

See www.nps.org.au/radar.

This remarkable result has however been downplayed by the Medicines Partnership, which said that it "is clearly not a true reflection of actual dispensing activity in community pharmacies in June".

"Detailed analysis of the data reveals that the Department of Human Services (DHS, formerly Medicare Australia) slowed down their average processing times in the nine months to April 2012," the Partnership said.

"The backlog of pharmacy claims was rapidly cleared by DHS in May and June.

"This volatility is likely to have resulted in 2011-12 financial year growth being overstated in the official figures," the Partnership added.

MEANWHILE, the Medicines Partnership has used the data confusion to argue that the nation needs to have clear, agreed, publicly available measures of volume and price growth in the PBS, so that Government, industry and all stakeholders can make "meaningful comparisons and draw reliable projections".

Pharmacy Alliance

PHARMACY Alliance is promoting its three levels of membership, saying it can help raise gross profit business-wide, see p3 for details.

Brisbane Southside Pharmacy (Receivers and Managers Appointed)

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Expressions of Interest close Friday **14 September 2012**.

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Weekly Comment

Welcome to **PD's** weekly comment feature. This week's contributor is **Roma Cecere**, GM for Patient Care division of GuildLink.



Recording of Clinical Interventions in Pharmacy

Under the provisions of the 5th Community Pharmacy Agreement (5CPA) Australian pharmacies began the recording of Clinical Interventions on 1 July 2012.

As defined in the 5CPA Program Specific Guidelines 'A Clinical Intervention is a professional activity undertaken by a registered pharmacist directed towards improving the quality use of medicines by patients. It may result in a recommendation for a change in the patient's medication therapy, means of administration and/or medication-taking behaviour.'

In January 2012, Dr Michael Ortiz compared the rates of clinical interventions recorded in the PROMISE III Study to the clinical interventions recorded in the GuildCare software, with the results of the study published in the Australian Pharmacist, 'Pharmacy Practice Incentives – increase in clinical interventions in community pharmacies' June 2012.

Dr Ortiz presented 12 months of results at the recent Health Informatics Society of Australia (HISA) conference reporting that the GuildCare pharmacies recorded over 900,000 clinical interventions, with a large majority of CIs (97%) accounting for the DOCUT categories.

The rates of CI/pharmacy/month increasing from 11 in July 2011 to an average of 61 per pharmacy per month at the end June 2012.

This confirms Dr Ortiz's prediction at 6 months, as pharmacies become more familiar with the classification system and with the software they'll record more clinical interventions.

See www.guildcare.com.au.

Dementia is now a priority

DEMENTIA has been named as a National Health Priority Area, with the Minister for Mental Health and Ageing saying the condition is predicted to be the leading cause of disability in less than four years.

"Today 280,000 Australians live with dementia and by 2050 that figure will have risen to more than 1 million," he said.

"This presents major challenges for health and aged care services," he added.

The move, announced last week, will see dementia designated as the ninth National Health Priority Area, and is likely to enhance the development of a new National Framework for Action on Dementia.

This designation comes as predictions pip that spending on dementia beyond 2060 will outstrip that of any other condition.

"We expect dementia spending to top \$80 billion by 2062-63," Butler told a group of health ministers last week.

"But early diagnosis has been shown to have significant potential benefits for both the person with dementia and their carers and family, including improvements to quality of life and reducing care burden," Butler added.

MEANWHILE Butler also used the announcement to spruik the Government's Living Longer Living Better package.

"We're introducing a new Dementia Supplement in home and residential care, improving hospital

and primary care for people with dementia and putting a big effort into reducing the time between symptoms and diagnosis," he said.

Smiles make the change

IN celebration of Oral Health Month this month and Australia's Smile for Change campaign, Colgate is urging Australians to 'like' its [facebook.com/colgateaustralia](https://www.facebook.com/colgateaustralia) Facebook Page and explain why they would like to sponsor a disadvantaged child.

The 20 most creative responses will be rewarded with the chance to sponsor a disadvantaged Australian child for one year, funded by Colgate.

Heart disease debate

THE increased risk of diabetes may be outweighed by the benefits of a reduction in the risk of heart disease when taking cholesterol lowering statins, according to research published in *The Lancet*.

The study found that patients with at least one risk factor for diabetes were 28% more likely to develop diabetes when using statins, but were still 39% less likely to have a cardiovascular illness and 17% less likely to die over the trial period.

In addition those patients without diabetes risk factors saw a 52% reduction in cardiovascular illness and no increase in diabetes risk.

DISPENSARY CORNER

VOLCANIC ice shelf?

A NZ navy ship sailing around 1,000 from kiwi shores was shocked to come across a huge chunk of solidified lava (pumice), which strongly resembled an ice shelf, moving up and down with the ocean's swell.

"The rock looked to be sitting two foot above the surface of the waves and lit up a brilliant white colour in the spotlight," said Lieutenant Tim Oscar.

"It looked exactly like the edge of an ice shelf [and it was] the weirdest thing I've seen in 18 years at sea," he added.

It is believed that the pumice originated from a recently active underwater volcano near NZ.

IS that an arachnid in your ear?

It is the stuff nightmares are made of, but for one woman, Ms Lee, nightmares became a reality when doctors found a spider had set up shop inside her ear.

It is believed that the arachnid may have entered Lee's ear five days before its discovery as she slept.

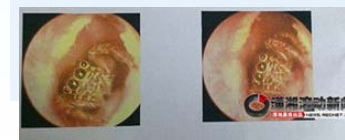
Lee took herself to the doctor after five days of "ear irritation", and was shocked to learn that rather than a scratch, an infection or a mite, the cause was a an eight legged, two fanged spider.

Initially plans were to remove the spider using tweezers, however this plan was ditched as her medical team did not want to risk the arachnid biting Lee, burrowing further down in her ear canal, or digging its leg barbs into her skin.

Instead the team used a saline solution to flush the unwanted squatter out.

Fortunately for Lee the operation went well, and she walked away from the ordeal with a rather disturbing tale to tell.

Doctors posit that the spider crawled into Lee's ear because it was warm, moist, sheltered and dark.



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