Are Aussie sunscreens bad?

A PROTEST involving 20 David Hasselhoff look-likes raised serious concerns yesterday about the safety of sunscreens which use nanoparticles.

Led by Friends of the Earth, the Hoffs presented the new Health Minister Tanya Plibersek with 1,000 signed postcards calling for nano-sunscreen regulation and labelling.

Concerns about the use of nanoparticles in sunscreens, according to Friends of the Earth, revolve around their potential to produce free radicals that can damage DNA and skin cells, as well as the fact that if they are absorbed into living cells they could make sun damage worse.

“We do not yet know whether or not nanoparticles in sunscreens penetrate healthy skin, although it seems possible they will be taken up through damaged skin,” Friends of the Earth said.

“Many chemicals used in sunscreens act as ‘penetration enhancers’, which could also make skin penetration by nanoparticles more likely,” Friends of the Earth added.

Moreover the protesters raised concerns about the fact that nanoparticles are not subject to safety testing before being allowed in sunscreen, and that there are no mandatory labelling regulations for sunscreens containing nanoparticles.

“This is especially a problem for people with skin conditions such as eczema, who may be more vulnerable to skin penetration,” Friends of the Earth said.

MEANWHILE the Australian Self-Medication Industry has responded to the protest saying that concerns being expressed by Friends of the Earth about nanoparticles in some sunscreens were not supported by the weight of scientific evidence.

“Research to date has not demonstrated evidence of a link between nano-sized ingredients found in some sunscreens and serious health problems,” ASMI said.

According to Schoombie, some of concerns by Friends of the Earth appeared to misrepresent findings of research undertaken by Professor Brian Gulson, from Macquarie University’s Graduate School of the Environment, by implying that the zinc found in blood and urine was proof that the zinc oxide, when formulated as nanoparticles, penetrated the skin and could cause harm.

“Although Professor Gulson found that a small quantity of the traceable zinc was absorbed through the skin and detected in the blood, this was true for subjects treated with nano zinc oxide and with micronized zinc oxide,” Schoombie said.

“He concluded that the quantity was not significant and would not cause harm,” Schoombie added.

ASMI also cited a TGA review of nanoparticles in sunscreen in 2009 which found that evidence to date showed that nano-sized particles stay on the outer surface of the skin, and that there was no evidence of toxicity to users of sunscreen despite the known use of zinc oxide in nanoparticle form in sunscreens since 1999.

New pill in Australia

THE Therapeutic Goods Administration has approved a new combined oral contraceptive for Australian women, Zoely (norgestimate acetate/ethinodiol). Zoely is made of a highly-selective progestogen (norgestimate acetate - NOMAC) derived from progesterone and an oestrogen (17beta-oestradiol – E2) that is structurally identical to endogenous oestrogen produced naturally in a woman’s body.

The pill delivers 99% contraceptive efficacy and produces short, light and less painful withdrawal bleeds compared to ethinylestradiol and drospirenone, with a neutral effect on acne and weight for most patients. Zoely is offered in a 24/4 monophasic regimen.

Minister Keynote

THE Minister for Health NSW, Jillian Skinner, has been secured as the Keynote Speaker and Guest of Honour at the Guild Pharmacy Academy – NSW Convention’s official dinner on Saturday, 25 Feb at the Novotel Manly Pacific.

Attendance at the Convention can garner pharmacists up to 26 (Group 2) CPD Credits in just two days, with the educational program including five Streams (35 Sessions). Key themes explored in the program include disease states; medication issues; business, IT and communications; vaccine and injection accreditation; complimentary medicines and harm minimisation.

Session topics can be viewed on the website CLICK HERE.
Pharmacists left out of plan

THE omission of pharmacists from the Government’s Draft Ten Year Plan for Mental Health is “disappointing”, according to the Vice-President of the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia, Claire O’Reilly.

The Government’s Ten-Year Roadmap for National Mental Health Reform was released for public consultation this week (PD yest) and is designed to guide where the Government focuses attention and funding.

According to the Draft, key directions for the future of mental health include: promoting good mental health and wellbeing and preventing mental illness and suicide; early detection and intervention; consumers and carers at the heart of services and support; supporting people to participate in society; and making services work for people.

Speaking in the wake of the release, the PSA said that whilst it is a “first step in helping address what is Australia’s third most prevalent health problem after heart disease and cancer”, it was disappointing that the plan failed to look beyond what it called the “usual suspects, or the current system”.

“Pharmacists are well placed to be alert to symptoms of mental health problems in consumers, and to help advise and refer them for further treatment when appropriate,” said O’Reilly.

“Pharmacists interact with people who suffer from psychological or mental health problems on a daily basis and therefore are in the prime position to help people with mental health problems,” she added.

The PSA is currently working on developing a Framework for Pharmacists working as members of the Mental Health team, and has said that it “looks forward” to providing feedback on the Draft.


SUKIN, NATURALLY YOURS...

Pharmacy Daily has teamed up with Sukin this week and is giving five lucky readers the chance to win a Sukin essential skincare pack, valued at $109.60 each!


The best news is that Sukin offers everyone affordable skincare with no single product retailing for over RRP$24. With everyday skincare pack, the chance to win a Sukin pack is giving five lucky readers the chance to win a Sukin pack.

To win, simply be the first person to send the correct answer to the daily question below to: comp@pharmacydaily.com.au.

Beware the salt and vinegar call of the wild.

BEWARE health risks of the morning commute.

Authorities in Indonesia have come up with an unusual solution to stop the thousands of “train surfers” who travel on top of commuter trains everyday to avoid crowded carriages or simply to avoid paying the fare.

The “last resort” solution involves suspending grapefruit sized concrete balls over railway lines, which for someone who does not duck quickly enough could cause some serious damage.

Congratulations to yesterday’s lucky winner, Jolyon Hawley.

From Aspen Pharmacare. NSW.

Complete this sentence: At Sukin, we believe the most ______ and ______ ingredients for your skin and hair care come from ______.