

## Pharmacy winner

**CONGRATULATIONS** to Karolina Kubiak of Info-Med who was the lucky winner of last Friday's *Pharmacy Daily* competition.

## Narcolepsy finding

**THE** European Medicines Agency's Committee on Human Medicinal Products (CHMP) has found insufficient evidence to link Pandemrix with the onset of narcolepsy.

The CHMP was charged with investigating preliminary research results by the Finnish National Institute of Health and Welfare which looked at differences in the immunological response triggered by different pandemic influenza vaccines as a potential root cause for the development of narcolepsy in persons vaccinated with Pandemrix.

The vaccine was authorised in the EU in 2009 to protect against the flu caused by the A (H1N1)v 2009 virus.

The vaccine was used extensively during the 2009 (H1N1) pandemic, with at least 30.8m people vaccinated in the EU, however data in some EU countries pointed to a potential increase in risk of narcolepsy in kids and teens who had the shot.

After considering the research, the CHMP concluded that the data presented by the Finnish scientists was preliminary and that the evidence presented was insufficient to allow conclusions to be drawn.

The CHMP also said that the data does not lead to any new concerns regarding Pandemrix or other vaccines, including other influenza vaccines.

## BMI has no effect on life?

**HAVING** a high Body Mass Index (BMI) does not affect life expectancy, according to the controversial results of a new Monash University-led study.

The 12-year study looked at 110,000 men and women and examined the effect of BMI on life expectancy and the repercussions for health care systems.

Published in the *Asia Pacific Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, the results found that whilst medical expenditure continued to rise with

increasing BMI, there was little relationship between BMI and how long a person lived.

The researchers also noted one reason for the greater expenditure was that, with age, excess weight is increasingly accompanied by loss of muscle (sarcopenia) and bone (osteopenia or osteoporosis).

"The findings show that, if medical expenditure is to be reduced, people must maintain their BMI in the lower end of the desirable range between 18.5 and 24," the researchers said.

Speaking in the wake of the research, Co-author, Emeritus Professor Mark Wahlqvist from Monash University's Department of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine and the Monash Asia Institute, said "To reduce the health burden, and the associated medical expenditure by both individuals and governments, it is important that people are encouraged to maintain a desirable BMI - and to do so by inexpensive exercise as well as diet."

"It also means greater government effort for the well-being of ageing communities is needed," he added.

## PSOTY announced

**THE** University of Western Australia's Louise Gabrovsek has been named the Alphapharm Pharmacy Student of the Year during a ceremony at the Pharmacy Australia Congress in Melbourne over the weekend.

As an added bonus, Gabrovsek also picked up the audience choice award.

"Every year judging a winner from such talented students becomes harder and harder," said National President of the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia, Grant Kardachi.

"The judges are increasingly faced with students who possess a truly remarkable range of skills and knowledge and who are able to put these talents into very practical uses when counselling 'patients' during the competition.

"However, after extensive deliberation, and I must say debate, the judges have chosen Louise who they believed was outstanding in an already outstanding field of candidates," he added.

## Students score freebies

**IN** a bid to help pharmacy students build their careers outside of university, the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia is giving them access to PSA member benefits free of charge.

"The pharmacy environment is rapidly changing and evolving," said PSA National President Grant Kardachi.

At PSA we recognise that any edge we can give to young pharmacists will be welcome.

"Students can join up for free when they begin their pharmacy studies and have years of access to the wealth of educational, professional and business information available to PSA members whilst completing their qualifying degree," he added.

The free benefits will include: online access to member-only information on the PSA website, including online lectures, CPD and reference material; online access to PSA's official monthly journal *Australian Pharmacist*; and regular electronic newsletters.

Other free benefits include: forums; complimentary face-to-face member events; seminars, conferences and workshops at member rates; and mentoring and networking opportunities such as early career pharmacist social events.

Students will also be able take advantage of discounts on more than 200 textbooks available from the PSA's online store, and will be able to access PSA training programs and offerings at the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia's member prices.

## Xarelto thumbs-up

**THE** European Commission has recommended Bayer's anticoagulant Xarelto (rivaroxaban) for approval for the treatment of pulmonary embolism and the prevention of recurrent deep vein thrombosis.

Approval is now expected before year-end.



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## Weekly Comment

Welcome to *PD's* weekly comment feature. This week's contributor is **Terry White Chemists' Professional Services Pharmacist, Chris Campell.**



## University research funding

**VICTORIAN** universities have been granted a research windfall with the Government dishing out a combined \$290 million for 498 in grants for health and medical research.

University of Melbourne topped the nation-wide list for funding, winning a massive \$89 million for 161 grants, whilst Monash University came in second securing \$86.2 million for 147 grants.

"These grants support our research community to continue to do what they do so well – making cutting edge discoveries that improve the diagnosis, treatment and cure of illnesses that touch all Australians," said Parliamentary Secretary for Health Catherine King.

"The grants announced today will ensure that young researchers have a solid foundation for their career, experienced researchers can run innovative research projects and clinicians can integrate their clinical skills into research practice," she added.

Overall the National Health and Medical Research Council doled out a total of \$652 million worth of medical and health grants nationwide in the 2013 funding round, with other winners including the University of Sydney for projects including *Cancer Radiotherapy 2020*; the University of NSW, with grants going to projects including a comparison of HIV-1 treatments in patients who have failed a standard first-line combination ART regimen; and the University of WA for research such as *Understanding and applying macrophage-mediated effects on liver progenitor cells to treat liver disease.*

The University of Queensland also received several grants for investigations including *A new and effective approach to reversal of allergic airways inflammation by turning off allergic responses*; whilst the University of Newcastle scored funding for research including *Keeping people with communication disabilities safe in hospital.*

Other winners included the Australian National University, the University of Tasmania, the

University of Western Australia, Edith Cowan University, La Trobe, Deakin University, Griffith Uni, University of South Australia, QUT, Flinders University, Macquarie University, and the University of Adelaide.

In terms of a breakdown by topic, cancer grants topped the lot, scoring \$131.3m in funding, followed by cardiovascular disease (\$81.7m), child health (\$80.3m), mental health (\$68.2m), ageing (\$50m), Indigenous health (\$37m), diabetes (\$36.3m), obesity (\$26.3m), arthritis (\$21.4m), asthma (\$16.7m), and HIV (\$13m).

Following Victoria in the funding scoreboard, NSW institutes scored 157.5m, Qld took home \$94.3m, South Australia came in fourth with \$46.3m, followed by WA with \$35.7m, Tasmania with \$9.5m, ACT with \$9.4m and the NT which was given \$9m.

## Aussie organ donations

**AUSTRALIA** has been ranked 22nd in the world for organ donation rates, behind Spain (1), the USA (6), France (8), Italy (10), Ireland (11), and Latvia (13).

## DISPENSARY CORNER

### SELF control?

A computer programmer in the US has employed an unusual method to increase his productivity, hiring a person to sit beside him and slap him if he starts to procrastinate.

The man, Maneesh Sethi, placed an advert on Craigslist offering US\$8 an hour for someone to "slap me if I get off task", after he realised he spent around 19 hours a week procrastinating surfing the net and social media websites.

"I'm looking for someone who can work next to me at a defined location (my house or a cafe) and will make sure to watch what is happening on my screen," Sethi's ad said.

"When I am wasting time, you'll have to yell at me or if need be, slap me," the advert added.

Within one hour Sethi had received over 20 responses to his request, and eventually selected a woman named Kara for the job.

Since Kara came on the scene Sethi has said his productivity has gone up 38% to 98%.

## WIN A BOSISTO'S SOLUTION PACK



*Pharmacy Daily* has teamed up with **Bosisto's** this week and is giving five lucky readers the chance to win a Bosisto's Solutions prize pack, valued at \$40 each.

Bosisto's has the 'Solution' to a chemical-free home!

Bosisto's Solutions – available in Eucalyptus, Tea Tree and Lavender varieties, each containing the famous Bosisto's 100% pure essential oils in a water-soluble base.

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To win, simply be the first person to send in the correct answer to the question below to: [comp@pharmacydaily.com.au](mailto:comp@pharmacydaily.com.au).

True or False:  
Each product in the range contains 100% pure essential oils?