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New Epilepsy pill

JAPANESE pharmaceutical company, Eisai, has this week launched a new drug in the UK for the treatment of epilepsy, Fycompa (perampanel).

The once-a-day tablet's launch follows its approval by the European Commission.

Designed to be taken at bedtime, the drug is the first and only licensed anti-epileptic drug (AED) to selectively target AMPA receptors, a receptor in the brain which plays a critical role in the spread of epileptic seizures.

Perampanel's approval by the European Commission was based on three global pivotal Phase III studies with 1,480 subjects.

These randomised, double-blind, placebo-controlled and dose-escalated studies showed consistent results in the efficacy and tolerability of perampanel as an adjunctive therapy in people with partial-onset seizures (with or without secondary generalisations).

The most commonly reported adverse events were dizziness, somnolence, fatigue, headache, falls, irritability and ataxia.

NICNAS appointment

DR Brian Richards has been appointed as the Director of the National Industrial Chemicals Notification and Assessment Scheme for a five-year term (NICNAS).

Dr Richards is at present the Principal Medical Adviser for the NICNAS, and also has extensive experience in public, private and not-for-profit organisations.

Sigma sees strong growth

SIGMA has clocked a net profit of \$26.1 million for the half year ending 31 July 2012, a result which the company said was "strong" given the impact of significant PBS reform and ongoing re-investment in the business.

The half year also saw Sigma increase its sales revenue by 3.5% to \$1.4 billion, despite flat PBS revenue.

"The above industry growth of total sales reflected market share gains and includes a full six months of sales revenue from customer groups acquired in 2011," the company said.

Sigma also said it is in a positive cash position at half-year end, with its net cash jumping \$12 million from \$114 in January to \$126 in July.

In light of the company's performance, the Board made the decision to reward shareholders by declaring a 2.0 cent fully franked interim dividend, amounting to a payout ratio of 90%.

Bisolvon awarded

BISOLVON has been awarded the Best Marketing Campaign at the Australian Mobile Awards for its mobile Get Well campaign.

The campaign encouraged consumers to send get well cards to their family and friends who were not feeling their best via SMS, email or Facebook.

The cards then directed receivers to a mobile site replete with info about coughs and product information.

"The Board considered it appropriate to increase dividend payments compared with the corresponding period a year ago, as confirmation of the sound progress the company has made," said Sigma Chairman, Brian Jamieson.

Looking forward, the company said it expects operating cashflows will support strong dividend payout ratios for the foreseeable future, adding that shareholders should expect to benefit from an on-market share buy-back of up to 10% of issued capital.

"This was the right move at this time given the strength of the company's balance sheet," Jamieson said.

Titration for MS

MS patients now have a new tool in their care kit with the launch of the Avonex titration kit.

Developed by Biogen Idec, the kit contains three single-use Avostartclip devices that help measure the correct titrated doses from an Avonex prefilled syringe at quarter, half and three quarter dose.

According to Biogen a 2011 study found that titration significantly reduced the severity of flu-like symptoms, a common treatment-related side effect in MS, by 76% (4-6 hours, p<0.001) following a three week titration period.

The study also showed that the reductions in flu like symptoms severity were observed 12-15 hours post injection by 37% following a three week titration.

Events Calendar

WELCOME to *Pharmacy Daily's* Continuing Professional Development Calendar, featuring upcoming events and opportunities to earn CPE and CPD points.

If you have an upcoming event you'd like us to feature, email info@pharmacydaily.com.au.

15-16 Sep: PSA Qld Sunshine Weekend, Sea World Resort, Gold Coast, Queensland, educationqld@psa.org.au.

16 Sep: Getting Personal: Gene Health and Pharmacy Practice, Lecture Theatre 1, Monash University, 9am-4.30pm deanna.fischl@psa.org.au.

17 Sep: Evening Lecture, What a Nightmare! Sleep disorders in Adults and Children, Gold Coast, 7-8pm. educationqld@psa.org.au.

18 Sep: Evening Seminar, Bowel Health: what's normal, what's not, University of Canberra, 7-8pm catherine.waterman@psa.org.au.

02-06 Oct: Pharmacy Guild of Australia Offshore Conference 2012, Waikiki, Hawaii - pgahawaii2012@arinex.com.au.

19-21 Oct: PSA Pharmacy Australia Congress, Melbourne Convention Exhibition Centre - www.psa.org.au/pac.

01-04 Nov: SHPA 38th annual conference - Medicines Management 2012, Canberra - mm2012shpa.com.

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Prostate awareness

AWARENESS and knowledge of prostate cancer has steadily increased over the past ten years, according to the results of a new report by the Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia (PCFA).

Released this week, the report found over the past decade that there has been a 12% increase in the percentage of men that feel informed about the disease.

Interestingly, the report showed that men aged 40 to 74 see prostate cancer as the single most important disease facing Australian men.

On the flip side however, nearly 40% of respondents agreed that the advice about the usefulness of testing is still confusing.

"We have invested a lot of resources into awareness-raising to ensure all Australians have a greater understanding of prostate cancer," said Dr Anthony Lowe, Chief Executive of PCFA.

"We are very pleased that our survey data shows that awareness is higher than ever," Lowe added.

Pharmacists & mental health

EVERY day, pharmacists across Australia interact with people who suffer from psychological or mental health problems and therefore are in the prime position to help and advise this group of patients, according to the National President of the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia, Grant Kardachi.

The comments follow national R U OK? day yesterday, a mental health initiative which encourages Australians to ask each other 'Are you okay?'

"Community pharmacists are in a position to notice symptoms of mental health problems in consumers, and to then offer advice and refer them for further consultation when needed," said Kardachi.

"We are also closely involved in the day-to-day management of these patients," he added.

In light of the initiative, Kardachi has encouraged pharmacists to ask consumers they are concerned

about 'r u ok'.

Meanwhile the PSA is in the final stages of a *Framework for pharmacists as partners in the mental health care team*.

The framework will detail the services provided by pharmacists in the delivery of mental health care as well as defining future opportunities.

"These can be broadly categorised under four phases – health promotion, early detection and intervention, minimising illness and maximising recovery," said Kardachi.

"In addition, the framework will explore some of the main barriers and enablers to pharmacists becoming partners in the mental health care team," Kardachi added.

According to Kardachi the framework is part of a larger plan to integrate pharmacists' skills into contemporary standards of mental health care, and to consolidate pharmacist skills into the mental health care team.

"The wide-ranging skills and knowledge of pharmacists need to be better utilised in the national health-care system so as to provide better outcomes for patients suffering mental health conditions," he said.



DISPENSARY CORNER

MOVE over Fido here comes Robodog.

The days of battlefield dogs could be numbered after the US military revealed its newly created robotic dog.

The not so catchy named Legged Squad Support System is designed to follow soldiers into the roughest terrain, carry up to 180kgs and walk for 32kms without needing to refuel.

The dog was developed by Boston Dynamics with funding from the US Marine Corps.

The "dog" does not need a driver, because it automatically follows a leader using computer vision or travel to designated locations using sensing and GPS, and there are now plans to make the dog talk. .

"We want a radio operator to be able to tell it to 'sit, stay,'" said Lt Col Joe Hitt, of the Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency.

"Likewise, the robot could tell them, 'I'm stuck, wait,'" he added.



The "dog" in action

WIN A LAVENDER PACK

Every day this week, **PD** is giving one lucky reader the chance to win a Bosisto's Bedtime Bliss Lavender Pack, courtesy of **FGB Natural Products**.

Stressed? Tired? Sometimes you just need a little help from Mother Nature. Bosisto's Lavender Spray contains 100% pure premium grade Lavender Oil, so now you can enjoy Lavender's sleep-inducing, soothing properties at the touch of a button.



Each pack is valued at \$30 and contains a Lavender Spray, a Lavender Oil and Information Guide.

Spray around the bedroom to help sleep or onto a hanky to ease stress and headaches.

It's also perfect to spray in a baby's nappy bin to eliminate odours.

It even helps ease the itch of insect bites!

For your chance to win this prize, simply be first to send in the correct answer to the daily question below.

Where is Bosisto's Lavender Spray perfect for eliminating odours?

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

Hint! Visit www.fgb.com.au

Congratulations to yesterday's lucky winner **Mell Williams**, from **Plunketts Chemmart Pharmacy Wauchope**.

New MS drug in US

THE US FDA has approved a new once-a-day tablet for the treatment of adults with relapsing forms of multiple sclerosis (MS), Aubagio (teriflunomide).

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