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GSK execs travel ban

SENIOR GlaxoSmithKline executives in China have been prohibited from leaving the country as authorities continue investigating bribery allegations. Some GSK staff have been detained over the claims which have seen the company accused of transferring hundreds of millions of dollars to a network of travel agencies and consultancies.

The payments were billed as "conference services" but were then allegedly directed to bribes for officials and doctors, aiming to boost sales and prices of GSK drugs.

The company said it's fully cooperating with the probe, and is "deeply concerned and disappointed by these serious allegations of fraudulent behaviour and ethical misconduct by certain individuals at the company and third party agencies".

RB's Nurofen headache

THE TGA's Complaints Resolution Panel has asked the Secretary of the Department of Health and Ageing to make official orders that Reckitt Benckiser comply with a determination relating to advertising of Nurofen, after the company gave "an indication to the panel that it would not comply with all of the Panel's requests."

The panel has requested withdrawal of the advertisements, representations and the publication of a retraction (**PD** 11 Jul).

However a letter from CRP Executive Officer, Judith Brimer, confirms that at a meeting earlier this month the Panel noted that RB's response to the determination "failed to indicate an intention to comply with all of the requests".

The issues raised in the original complaints highlighted Nurofen claims that it "targets" various parts of the body - and the long-running issue has seen Reckitt Benckiser continuing with the campaign for some time (**PD** 09 Aug 2012).

Consumer group CHOICE slammed the advertising two years ago when it gave Nurofen a so-called "Shonky Award" over its range of caplets for migraine, back, tension headache and period pain whose ingredients were identical from product to product.

Following the award, a formal complaint was made to the CRP who requested RB withdraw the advertisements and any such representations.

Reckitt Benckiser however disagreed with the request and has continued to run the ads, saying "Nurofen advises that consumers will continue to see the familiar branding of the Nurofen target and messages of Nurofen working at the site of the pain...this branding includes TGA approved claims on packs that Nurofen provides targeted relief from pain."

Pharmacy academic Ken Harvey, who was one of the complainants, said the issue demonstrates "major defects in the current complaint handling system".

"Sponsors can disagree with the independent CRP determination and continue to promote while the problem is referred to the TGA".

"The current system is heavily weighted in favour of the sponsor and provides the consumer with little protection," he said.

Generics gathering

DRUG regulators from the Heads of Agencies Consortium from Australia, Canada, Singapore and Switzerland met in Canberra in May this year to further develop the processes for generic drug regulation, with details of the meeting now on the TGA website.

Progress was made on the issue of adopting universal quality assessment templates aligned with those developed by the EU.

The main focus of discussion in Canberra was transitioning from "proof of concept" pilots to the integration of regulatory collaboration into routine business practices and submission application processes.

Another topic high on the agenda was the importance of pro-active engagement with industry and other stakeholders, including pharmacists, in order to facilitate the timely availability of safe, effective and quality generic drugs.

International staff exchanges were also identified as important means of enhancing communication, understanding and respect.

The ACT meeting was followed by the larger International Generic Drug Regulators Pilot (IGDRP), and the next meeting of the Consortium Generics Working group will be in Bern, Switzerland in October 2013.

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US compounding

THE US National Community Pharmacists' Association has expressed concerns about a proposals circulating in response to the recent series controversies where several compounding pharmacies have been shut down.

Some lawmakers have suggested granting the US Food and Drug Administration unrestricted authority over a 'do not compound' list, which the NCPA says could impact patient access to compounded medication such as hormone treatments, thyroid preparations & promethazine gels.

Another proposal would see pharmacies required to notify the FDA when compounding medications are in short supply.

NPSA warns on direct model

THE National Pharmaceutical Services Association (NPSA) has warned that reliable access to vital medicines will be threatened if others in the industry move to an exclusive direct distribution model.

A report published earlier this week by consulting firm PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) revealed that 31% of suppliers are considering a "Pfizer Direct"-style model which bypasses full line wholesalers by going direct to pharmacy.

NPSA president Patrick Davies from Symbion said that further moves in this direction will erode the viability of the Community Service Obligation which funds wholesalers to deliver PBS medicines to pharmacies nationally.

He urged legislative action to protect the CSO, the National Medicines Policy and the "principle of equality of access that underpins Australia's healthcare system.

"Pharmacies need more than one source of supply and they need to be able to access all PBS medicines from their full line CSO

wholesaler - otherwise patient care is compromised," Davies said.

The PwC report, which is the outcome of an industry survey, said that 69% of respondents don't see the value in the direct model and don't have distribution expertise.

However "some are open to explore this model to see if they can receive more value from it in relation to existing or specific products," the report adds.

However Davies warned that specialist pharmaceutical wholesaling in Australia depends on economies of scale that will be lost if large pharma companies pull out of the supply chain.

"Our healthcare system is the envy of much of the world and we must act to defend it by ensuring the exclusive supply of PBS medicines is prevented, as part of negotiations around the Sixth Community Pharmacy Agreement," he urged.

NPSA members currently include Sigma, Symbion, National Pharmacies and Central Healthcare Services, but not API.

Pradaxa set for Sep

BOEHRINGER Ingelheim says it's now "extremely confident" that its novel anticoagulant Pradaxa (dabigatran) will be PBS listed on 01 Sep for patients with non-valvular atrial fibrillation and at least one additional risk factor for stroke.

The company said it's now completed all the paperwork and processes to enable the PBS listing, and thanked doctors who cared for around 25,000 AF patients during the past two years as part of the product familiarisation program.

Travel Specials

WELCOME to *Pharmacy Daily's* travel feature. Each week we highlight a couple of great travel deals for the pharmacy industry, brought to you by *Cruise Weekly*.

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PHARMACY staff looking for a stress-free Christmas should consider a Royal Caribbean cruise over the holiday period, with the company offering up to \$200 bonus onboard credit per stateroom on all cruises of five nights or longer departing between 18 and 31 December.

And there's also a free balcony upgrade for the nine night South Pacific and Fiji Christmas cruise aboard *Voyager of the Seas*.

But you have to be quick - the offer is for new bookings made before the end of this month.

Prices start from \$1499 for the nine night Fijian Dream trip on *Voyager* or \$1659 for a nine night *Radiance of the Seas* cruise, both departing from Sydney.

See your travel agent today.

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Every day this week *Pharmacy Daily* is giving one lucky reader the chance to win an entire range of Carmex® lip balm this winter, and stay beautiful, all winter long!

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

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Congratulations to yesterday's lucky winner, **Belinda Mann** from **Actegy Health**.



DISPENSARY CORNER

SNAIL-PACED beauty treatment.

A Japanese beauty salon is offering a new treatment to help woman get rid of dead skin and clean their pores - live snail facials.

The snails are placed on customers' faces and allowed to move at random.

The slime they leave behind is the secret behind the treatment.

Manami Takamura, an employee of the Ci:z.Labo beauty salon in Tokyo, explained: "Slime from snails helps remove old cells, heal the skin after sunburn and moisturise it."

The salon's 'Celebrity Escargot Course' offers customers a 60-minute treatment costing about \$250.

It begins with the face being washed before the molluscs are gently placed on the cheeks and forehead then allowed to move around as they please.

Then comes a series of massages, masks and electrical pulse machines using creams infused with snail mucous to ensure the live secretions fully penetrate the skin.

Customer Sayaka Ito said she had found the treatment so relaxing that she had almost fallen asleep.

"You can feel the snails moving on your face. At first, it is surprising, but it's actually rather nice. My skin really does feel smooth and moist," she said.