Pregnancy and Hg++

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have stated that pregnant and breastfeeding women, those who might become pregnant and young children should eat more fish that is lower in mercury in order to gain important developmental and health benefits.

Draft advice issued this week advised that fish choices lower in mercury include salmon, shrimp, pollock, tuna (light canned), tilapia, catfish and cod, recommending a diet that includes eight to 12 oz per day.

At the same time, the authorities warned against ingesting fish with higher levels of mercury such as tilefish from the Gulf of Mexico, shark, swordfish and king mackerel.

AF anticoagulation

The National Stroke Foundation clinical council member Associate Professor Timothy Kleinig said the release of the UK’s National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) draft guidelines on atrial fibrillation (PD 11 Jun) would help focus people’s attention on the fact that most patients with AF should be anticoagulated with warfarin or one of the novel oral anticoagulants but said NICE guidelines were not necessarily accepted worldwide; for the new oral anticoagulants, the recommendation would not affect Australia, as the country was guided by Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme prescribing criteria, based on the CHADS score.

“Regarding warfarin, most GPs are now aware of the CHA2DS-VaSC score and should use this to guide decision making.

“NSF guidelines do not address primary prevention of stroke – all patients with AF who have had an AF-related stroke should be anticoagulated, unless there is a clear contraindication, and this guideline will not change.

“Whether or not use of the NOACs should be used in patients with CHA2DS-VaSC scores of 0 or 1 is uncertain, and would require new trials.”

Pharmacy can bridge gap

Pharmacy Guild of Australia executive director David Quilty has said pharmacy could play a role in bridging the health gap between major cities and rural and remote Australia.

Writing in forefront, Quilty said the disparity in health services and outcomes between these areas, including the National Rural Health Alliance estimate that there was a $2.4b a year deficit in access to primary health care services in rural Australia, was unacceptable.

Pharmacy could help bridge the divide, with more than 800 pharmacies in rural areas sometimes being the first port of call and only readily accessible health support, Quilty said.

Policy makers should recognise this potential including for pharmacies to take a greater role in the likes of vaccines and collaborative care, Quilty said.

Other opportunities included tele-health hubs, diagnosing of minor ailments and supplying identified treatments through a recordable, pharmacist-only medicines schedule, he said.

National Rural Health Alliance executive director Gordon Gregory said the Alliance was delighted to have the Guild advocating for action to improve country people’s health.

It was hoping to put together a consortium to do a more thorough study of the deficits and to provide government with evidence of ways to modify them, Gregory said.

A three pronged approach was needed, including that health graduates spent some time in rural areas, that health care demand be moderated through illness prevention and that workforce redesign occurred, where the amount of practical experience needed was shared more efficiently, with other members of the health team performing what only more specialised workers usually did in urban areas, he said.

Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) cce Jenny Johnson said rural doctors acknowledged the importance of the pharmacist’s role, however the RDAA would have a number of reservations about pharmacies extending their role too soon.

“Where did not appear to be any evidence that it was easier to attract a pharmacist to a rural role, she said.

Rural GPs were important because they were most likely acting as a visiting medical officer performing other roles such as on call and emergency duties for the local hospital, and shifting focus to other issues could detract from the focus of attracting doctors to rural areas, and these other services would suffer, she said.

There was a lot of potential for collaborative care arrangements and providing continuity of care when it came to doctors and pharmacists working together, she said - CLICK HERE for more.

Statin safety

The UK’s National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) responded to criticism of its draft guidance on statins (PD 14 Feb) from a group of doctors who believed the data supporting the decision was too greatly influenced by drug company-sponsored trials.

NICE proposed that the threshold for offering statins to people to prevent Cardiovascular disease (CVD) be halved from 20% risk of developing CVD in 10 years to 10%.

NICE Centre for Clinical Practice director Professor Mark Baker said the draft guideline did not propose that statins should be used instead of lifestyle adjustments that people at risk of CVD needed to make.

“The independent committee of experts found that if a patient and their doctor measure the risk and decide statins are the right choice, the evidence clearly shows there is no credible argument against their safety and clinical effectiveness for use in people with a 10% risk over 10 years.”

Baker said all NICE guidance was developed by independent expert committees and that other countries had reached similar conclusions.

To read the response, CLICK HERE.
PSA to Berlin, Paris

BERLIN and Paris are the venues for the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia’s (PSA) Offshore Refresher Course celebrating its 40th anniversary.

Forty years represented the ruby anniversary, said the PSA, and built on the previous initiatives of holding the conference in two cities to give delegates maximum educational and networking opportunities.

Chair of the Offshore Refresher Conference Organising Committee Warwick Plunkett said the 2015 event was drawing on the experience of this year’s Washington and New York event which attracted more than 400 delegates - CLICK HERE for details.

NHMRC research awards

FEDERAL Minister for Health Peter Dutton presented the top prizes for excellence in health and medical research at the National Health and Medical Research Council’s (NHMRC) 200th Council Dinner yesterday.

Dr Sandra Campbell from James Cook University was presented with the Rising Star Award for her research seeking to maximise health outcomes for indigenous women during pregnancy.

NHMRC CEO Professor Warwick Anderson said among this year’s 20 recipients were researchers whose work aimed to deliver breakthroughs in areas such as Alzheimer’s Disease, cancer and immune disease.

Professor Jamie Rossjohn from Monash University was the recipient of the ‘Highest ranked Project Grant’ for his work with infection and immunity with the potential to pave the way for the development of T-cell regulating drugs that could serve as improved treatments for conditions such as tuberculosis.

The University of South Australia team led by Professor Angel Lopez was awarded the ‘Highest ranked Program Grant’ for their study of the function of normal blood cells and leukaemia cells to identify new drug targets and develop new drugs for the treatment of leukaemia.

For the full list, CLICK HERE.

FDA diet drugs alerts

THE US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has advised consumers not to purchase or use La Jiao Shou Shen, a product promoted and sold for weight loss on various websites and in some retail stores.

La Jiao Shou Shen contains sibutramine.

This week FDA reviewed a host of weight loss products which contain sibutramine, a diet drug that was withdrawn from the market in 2010 after it was linked to increased risk of heart attack and stroke.

The drugs are marketed online and through direct mail. They may be sold under a variety of names, including "DIET" and "DIET EXCLUSIVE".

For more details, CLICK HERE.

PSA of a different kind.

Not the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia but a Public Service Announcement - Volkswagen has released a pretty clever and pretty spooky PSA about texting and driving.

In the short clip, movie goers in Hong Kong settle down for the film, first watching what looks like a car advertisement play onscreen for a while. Volkswagen sends a “location based text” in the cinema and people swoop to check their phones - only to look up at the moment the car swerves off the road and crashes.

It’s an effective way to remind people to keep their phones out of reach in the car. View the PSA HERE.

BEARD you didn’t think it.

If you’re a pharmacist working in a hospital who’s thinking of what they can do for charity, here’s one for you - the Reverend Ken Gehling shaved off his beard of 32 years after hospital staff at Mercy Medical Centre - North Iowa surprised their goal of collecting more than 750 pounds of food for a food bank, Associated Press reported.

Gehling quipped the shave, which took off his moustache as well, was like the electric chair but he said he was just happy the team had collected so much food, the AP reported.

THE size of an elephant.

Poor old Tess - the pregnant Asian elephant in Houston has been put on a weight loss and exercise regimen to help her lose 228kg in time for delivery of her calf in about a year, Reuters reported.

About 6% overweight, if she got larger, she might have trouble giving birth, the publication said.

WIN A CANCER COUNCIL PACK

Congratulations to yesterday’s winner, Mirandah Crockett from Coral Coast Pharmacies.

This week Pharmacy Daily is giving four readers the chance to win a Cancer Council BB Crème & Body Lotion, valued at $33.90.

Cancer Council BB Crème is a 3 in 1 formula that corrects skin tone and offers SPF 30 protection. The crème is made with ingredients including grape seed extract to help reduce signs of ageing, vitamin E to increase moisture, mushroom extract to fight bacteria build up and mica to help reflect light, giving skin a flawless finish. The BB Crème is available in light and medium tint.

Cancer Council Body Moisturiser with SPF 30 is a rich crème with aloe vera to soothe dry skin, and vitamin E to nourish, hydrate and protect skin.

To win, be first to send in the correct answer to the question to:comp@pharmacydaily.com.au.

True/false: All Cancer Council cosmetics contain SPF 30?

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