

Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today has two pages of news plus a full page reminding pharmacies to order their **API Calendars**.

Drug pricing challenge

BRITAIN'S Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has issued a statement of issues saying Pfizer and Flynn Pharma possibly breached UK and European law by ramping up the cost of an epilepsy drug used by over 50,000 patients.

The case relates to phenytoin sodium capsules supplied by Pfizer to Flynn Pharma, which in turn distributes them to UK wholesalers and pharmacies.

The "provisional view" of the regulatory body was that Pfizer and Flynn Pharma abused their dominant market position by charging "excessive and unfair" prices for the medication.

Prior to Sep 2012 Pfizer sold the drug under the brand name Epanutin, but from that date Flynn Pharma took over UK distribution and "genericised" the drug - still made by Pfizer, which charged Flynn up to 17 times the previous price.

Flynn then in turn on-sold the drug to customers at prices up to 27 times higher than that historically charged by Pfizer.

The state-run National Health Service (NHS), which used to spend around £2.3m on phenytoin sodium capsules annually, saw its bill jump to more than £50 million in 2013 and more than £40 million in 2014.

However the CMA said the findings were "provisional" with no conclusion able to be drawn on whether the law had been broken.

"We will carefully consider any representations from Pfizer and Flynn Pharma," the agency said, with both firms saying they are cooperating with the probe.

Opportunity knocks for TWC

TERRY White Chemists co-founder Terry White says the challenges facing the Australian pharmacy sector mean there has "never been such a great opportunity" for the Terry White brand.

Speaking at the TWC annual conference which kicked off in Melbourne yesterday, White (**pictured** at the event with Blackmores chairman Marcus Blackmore) said it was clear the industry was "experiencing the start of significant consolidation" - not least with the addition of more than 220 pharmacies to the TWC network via the acquisition of South Australia's Chemplus brand (**PD** 28 May).

"The future of pharmacy lies in what we as an industry can do for the health of the nation...a national solution requires a national approach, and as we move towards that point it has become clear that more and more pharmacies will need the support of a national retail brand with the right retail infrastructure to move forward," White said.

More than 500 delegates from across the country have gathered for the TWC conference which continues until tomorrow.

GM Anthony White said recent strong retail results across the



group were encouraging, with "strong, consistent growth" above the rest of the market.

Like-for-like pharmacy growth in retail sales in Jun was up 16%.

"Retail sales are powering the network and are supported by the significant investment we have made in retail infrastructure that enables pharmacists to focus on being pharmacists," he said.

"We're in the business of health, but we are also aggressive retailers," White added.

The TWC group now turns over around \$1.2 billion annually.

Sanofi oncology deal

SANOFI has announced an agreement with Apeiron Biologics and Evotec to develop "small molecule-based immuno-oncology therapies" which will target solid and haematological cancers by enhancing the ability of the human immune system to fight tumours.

Sanofi will fund the research for two years and have responsibility for all development, commercialisation, regulatory and manufacturing of any products which result from the project.

New BP website

THE UK's Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has announced that all of the existing British Pharmacopoeia websites have been integrated into a single "user-friendly resource".

Previously operating separately under pharmacopoeia.co.uk and pharmacopoeia.gov.uk, the combined sites have now gone live at www.pharmacopoeia.com.

The new site has been developed in partnership with official publisher TSO and will allow users to access their subscription and order BP chemical reference substances all in one place.

Further technical information, reference materials and material safety data sheets will also be available on the site, with users having the opportunity to give input on draft new and revised monographs before they are published.

FIT Emeritus Scientist

HOWARD Chandler, the inventor of the 'brush' form of the faecal immunochemical test (FIT) sold in Australian pharmacies, has been appointed as the first "Emeritus Scientist" by Clinical Genomics.

The move will see Chandler return to the company he co-founded in 1997, with his new role seeing him play an "important role in the development of future products".

Knife robber arrested

SOUTH Australian police have arrested a 20-year-old man who allegedly stole prescription drugs from a Priceline Pharmacy in Goolwa after threatening staff with a knife on Saturday morning.

The man is now facing charges of aggravated robbery and assault, reports the *Victor Harbor Times*.

Drug shortage app

THE US Food and Drug Administration has launched an Android app called Drug Shortages 2, an upgrade from the original which identifies and alerts users to the status of drugs in their therapeutic classes of interest.



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Guild Update

New course to help pharmacy assistants with pain relief medicines

A NEW online QCPP Refresher Training course for pharmacy assistants aims to help them give advice on Pharmacy Medicines to relieve pain.

The 'Medicines to relieve pain' QCPP Refresher Training course emphasises the ASK, ASSESS, ADVISE protocol and appropriate pharmacist referral.

The learning objectives for this course are to:

- Identify and differentiate between the different types of Pharmacy Medicine analgesics.
- Describe the action of each of the active ingredients available in Pharmacy Medicine pain relief medicines.
- Identify the appropriate choice(s) of Pharmacy Medicine analgesics for a given customer profile.
- Apply the Ask, Assess, Advise protocol within a customer case study.
- Identify customers and situations where a request for a Pharmacy Medicine analgesic requires referral to a pharmacist. Pharmacy assistants can access the course for free via the Guild Academy's online learning site, myLEARNING.

CHS/DDS strong for Sigma

SIGMA Pharmaceuticals will pay an additional \$8m-\$10m to the vendors of the Central Healthcare Services (CHS) and Discount Drug Stores (DDS) businesses, after they exceeded expectations announced at the time of their acquisition by Sigma.

CEO Mark Hooper said initially the deals had been expected to boost revenue by \$400 million and \$8m-\$10m in EBITDA, however the first 12 months had proven more successful than anticipated "due to the continued commitment of the CHS, Pharmasave and DDS teams".

CHS and DDS were acquired for an initial investment of \$49.9 million (PD 09 Sep 14, 27 Mar 14) with the potential for an "earn-out" payment effective 30 Jun 15.

Early estimates in the Sigma accounts allowed for a further \$37.4 million payment, but "given the sustainable success of these businesses, the actual final earn-out payable is likely to increase to between \$45.4m and \$47.4m," the company said in an ASX statement issued yesterday.

That means the additional earn-

out of \$8m-\$10m must be written off as a one-off adjustment to the first half accounts for Sigma.

"It is counter-intuitive to write off the additional consideration paid as a result of the investment being more successful than anticipated, but this is the quirk of the accounting standards we need to deal with," Hooper said.

"More importantly, the CHS, Pharmasave and DDS businesses continue to perform well and contribute to the growth of Sigma," he added.

The final figure is subject to audit review and sign off by the board, with Sigma's first half results set to be announced on Thu 10 Sep.

Aust/NZ lead the way

AUSTRALIA and New Zealand are ahead of the curve in introducing bread with iodised salt, along with recommending iodine supplements to pregnant and breastfeeding women, potentially saving millions of dollars in their respective health systems, according to a study published in *The Lancet Diabetes & Endocrinology* this month.

New estimates suggest that introducing iodine supplementation in pregnancy in the UK could save the National Health Service (NHS) around £200 per expectant mother and provide monetary benefits to society of around £4,500 per child from increased lifetime earnings and lower public sector costs.

The authors highlighted the potential "substantial benefits" of universal iodine supplementation.

[CLICK HERE](#) for the abstract.

\$35.6m for research

FEDERAL minister for health, Sussan Ley, yesterday announced \$35.6m for six Dementia Research Team Grants, including the largest clinical trial in the world for people aged 55 to 75 to test an online dementia tool.

It is estimated that within forty years there will be more than a million Australians with dementia, Ley said.



DISPENSARY CORNER

WAS Shakespeare stoned?

That's the tricky question with which scientists in South Africa are now grappling, after the discovery of cannabis in pipes dug up in the "puffing playwright's" garden in Stratford-Upon-Avon.

Researchers from the Transvaal Museum in Pretoria used gas chromatography mass spectrometry to analyse the 400-year-old clay artefacts - and found traces of marijuana.

According to a paper published in the *South African Journal of Science* some of the pipes also contain traces of cocaine.

Although they date back to the 17th century when hemp was widely used in the production of items such as rope, sugar and clothing, some are interpreting the findings as confirmation that people in Shakespeare's time also used drugs for pleasure.

They have pointed to the bard's Sonnet 76 which contains references to a "noted weed" as well as "compounds strange".

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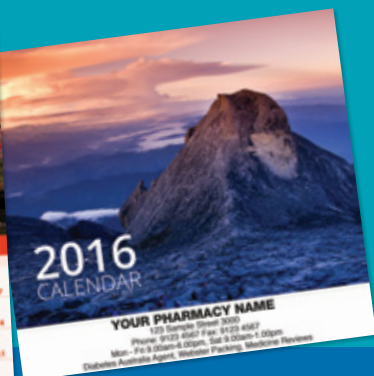
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