

Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today has three pages of news, plus a full page from **Monash University**.

RGH E-bulletin

THIS week's edition of the Repatriation General Hospital Pharmacy E-Bulletin discusses recent concerns within medical literature about increased off-label use of antipsychotics for insomnia treatment without associated psychiatric disorders - **CLICK HERE**.

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PSA launches GP connect

THE Pharmaceutical Society of Australia has today launched a new service which aims to link general practices with pharmacists.

PSA ceo Dr Lance Emerson said the move was a response to the "great support" received for the Society's proposed model to integrate pharmacies into GP practices (**PD** Fri).

The proposed PSA-AMA model launched last year (**PD** 22 Jul 2014) was last week contrasted with a position statement from the Guild which proposed integrating Pharmacist Prescribers into general practices, with the PSA stressing that its plan did not involve an extension of existing pharmacist scopes of activity.

"PSA has been contacted by GP practices interested in the concept, asking PSA to help them find a pharmacist for their practice," Emerson said, with many PSA members also expressing interest in working in GP practices.

He said the new *GP-Pharmacist Connect* solution would help general practices identify their needs, match those needs with a pharmacist and assist in ongoing quality assurance.

The PSA is now in the process of seeking expressions of interest to participate in the program from GP surgeries, Primary Healthcare Networks and pharmacists.

"One of the great strengths of

GP-Pharmacist Connect is that it is overseen by Australia's main Practice Pharmacist experts who are leading innovation in this area both nationally and internationally," Emerson said.

PSA board member, general practice pharmacist and international expert in the field, Dr Chris Freeman, said pharmacists interested in taking up this career pathway can send their CVs in "so we can start to scope their connection with general practices seeking pharmacist clinical services."

"*GP-Pharmacist Connect* is an important new service which reflects PSA's commitment to developing new and innovative career pathways and enhanced remuneration for PSA members," Freeman said.

Pharmacists or doctors interested in finding out more can enquire at GPpharmacistconnect@psa.org.au.

GSK, Pfizer deal

GLAXOSMITHKLINE and Pfizer have confirmed the completion of a transaction which has seen the transfer of GSK's meningitis vaccines Nimenrix and Mencevax to Pfizer.

The vaccines were acquired by Pfizer Ireland Pharmaceuticals effective 01 Oct, with GSK divesting the products in order to satisfy regulatory clearances as part of its three-part transaction with Novartis, under which GSK acquired Novartis' global vaccines business including Menveo and Bexsero.

Effective immediately Pfizer is responsible for the marketing and promotion of Nimenrix and Mencevax, but for a transition period GSK will continue to manage all pharmacovigilance activities, medical information inquiries and product complaints.

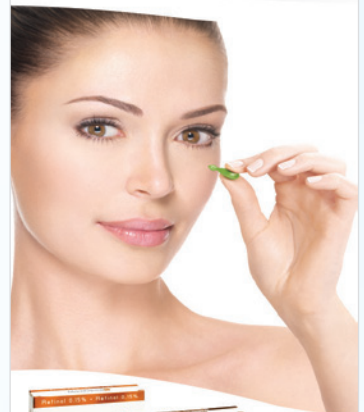
FDA Keytruda tick

THE US FDA has granted accelerated approval for Keytruda (pembrolizumab) to treat patients with advanced non-small cell lung cancer whose disease has progressed after other treatments, and with tumours that express a protein called PD-L1.

Keytruda has been approved for use with a companion diagnostic, the PD-L1 IHC 22C3 pharmDx test, the first test designed to detect PD-L1 expression in non-small cell lung tumours.

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FIP appointment

THE International Pharmaceutical Federation has announced the appointment of Giovanni M. Pauletti as its new Scientific Secretary.

Pauletti is associate professor of biopharmaceutics and pharmacokinetics at the University of Cincinnati in Ohio, USA.

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CHF joins codeine chorus

THE Consumer Health Forum has added its voice to those opposing the rescheduling of codeine-containing cough and cold remedies (**PD** Fri), saying making the products prescription-only is a “very blunt instrument to address what is a complex issue”.

CHF acting ceo Jo Root said consumers want medicines to be affordable, and they “want to be able to get them when they need them to manage their own lives”.

Root said the significant proportion of Australians living with chronic pain are looking for safe and appropriate access to effective medicines, and OTC codeine products meet that need.

“We believe the majority of users, particularly those using it for ongoing or chronic pain, are using responsibly, and they would be unnecessarily penalised by this move,” she said.

“We also know that just making codeine products prescription only will not stop misuse, as people will

still be able to doctor shop and access codeine products that way.”

The CHF has joined with other groups incl the Guild in suggesting a more sophisticated approach involving real-time recording and reporting of purchases to help identify at-risk consumers.

Other measures suggested include changes to packaging and labelling to emphasise the risk of addiction, and a “properly resourced community education program involving consumers, clinicians and pharmacists about using codeine and other opioids to effectively manage pain”.

Root said while the risk of misuse and abuse can’t be eliminated, “nor can we punish consumers who urgently need medication to manage their pain”.

A *Fairfax* report last week estimated the additional cost to Medicare for doctor’s visits to obtain prescriptions for codeine-containing products would be in excess of \$170 million annually.

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Regulators in UK, India to cooperate

BRITAIN’S Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has signed a new Memorandum of Understanding with its Indian counterpart, the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation.

The pact aims to increase collaboration between the two countries in the areas of medicines and medical devices, with the purpose of improving public safety.

The central understandings of the deal include promotion of each other’s regulatory frameworks, requirements and processes.

Outcomes will include the facilitation and exchange of information and “opportunities for technical cooperation of mutual benefit, helping to ensure the regulators are better equipped to protect the health of their respective publics”.

The agreement is similar to MoUs previously signed by the MHRA and bodies in China and the USA.

New TWG director

TERRY White Group Limited has announced the appointment of Jane McKellar as a new independent non-executive director.

McKellar has wide experience, with over 30 years in senior management roles in retail, digital, marketing and merchandising.

TWG chairman Terry White said she has a strong track record of “supporting retailers through periods of change and harnessing digital and customer focused strategies to drive growth”.

“Recent regulatory changes in our industry make it critical for pharmacies to have diversified income - and a strong front of shop retail revenue stream - to balance decreases to dispensing payments,” he said, with McKellar’s keen understanding of retail and consumer businesses “invaluable to supporting the Terry White Group in its next growth phase”.

McKellar is currently also a director of ASX-listed McPhersons Limited and travel company Helloworld Limited.

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Guild Update

Codeine re-scheduling not the solution

LAST week's interim decision on re-scheduling of codeine products is not the best way to go for Australian health care consumers.

The interim decision of the Advisory Committee on Medicines Scheduling (ACMS) released on Friday would see all codeine products, including many well known cough and cold relief products, available on prescription only from June 2016.

The Guild acknowledges that codeine dependence is a real and growing concern and that side effects from taking excessive amounts of codeine containing analgesics can be very serious.

However, we believe the proposed re-scheduling is unlikely to address the issue of dependency and may instead create further problems, such as:

- For the large majority of people who use these products safely and effectively, re-scheduling will make pain relief medicines more expensive and more difficult to obtain.

- There will be an increase in the workload of doctors.

- There will be increased Medicare and PBS costs (particularly if doctors elect to prescribe consumers higher strength codeine products or other opioids listed on the PBS).

The alternative to re-scheduling should include:

- A real-time recording and reporting system to identify consumers potentially at risk, to prevent medication misadventure. A prototype of such a system has already been developed, with cross industry and consumer support.

Ambulance roles for pharmacists

AMBULANCE services across Australia are increasingly employing pharmacists to improve medicines use and patient safety, according to an article published in the latest issue of the *Journal of Pharmacy Practice and Research*.

The article relates the experience of South Australian ambulance pharmacist Dr Peter Hayball, who said the SA Ambulance Service had recognised the "real need for pharmacists' clinical skills in this environment," with paramedics giving medicines to patients in about 50% of all cases.

"Initially I was providing governance and patient safety around handling Schedule 4 and Schedule 8 medicines, but the role has blossomed considerably," Hayball said.

The ambulance pharmacist reviews and updates the formulary for paramedics and prepares protocols for their use using limited information in the area.

"The pharmacist therefore needs to use all their training in retrieving and interpreting medicines information," Hayball said.

Other roles include analysing the effect on medicines of the hostile high temperature conditions in parked ambulances.

To view the full article **CLICK HERE**.

Genetic pharmacies?

COMMUNITY pharmacies could be offering pharmacogenetics testing, therapeutic support and advice within the next five years, according to a report presented at last week's FIP World Congress of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences in Germany.

A new plan to explore and implement pharmacogenomics in primary care was outlined by the Royal Dutch Pharmacists Association and the Dutch Hospital Pharmacists Association.

"Pharmacogenomics is one of the first clinical applications of the post-genomic era, allowing precision medicine rather than a one-size-fits-all approach to prescribing," said Ka-Chun Cheung from the Royal Dutch Pharmacists Assn.

The Association has so far developed recommendations for 80 gene-drug combinations which are now integrated into the Netherlands' national drug database incorporated into all electronic systems for prescribing and dispensing.

"With these guidelines, pharmacists can customise the dosing of medicines to the individual's needs," Cheung said.

The plan is now in "exploration phase," with market analysis and education programs beginning this month and reimbursement schemes under development.

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DISPENSARY CORNER



A VERTICALLY challenged Saudi Arabian man has been divorced by his wife of seven months because she thinks he's too short.

According to legal documents from the Saudi city of Al Qatif reported by *Gulf News*, the woman claimed she had had enough of being ridiculed because she towered over him.

She said the height disparity had made her feel "painfully uneasy" and "distressingly uncomfortable".

HERE'S a way to get your vitamins.

A food truck at the University of Connecticut in the US is offering students roasted crickets, in snack-packs costing 99c.

Said to be high in protein and low in fat, the bugs are sold whole in small plastic containers, and are apparently ideal as a taco topping.

The university's dining service is advertising the insects as organic and earth-friendly, obtaining them from a farm which kills them with carbon dioxide before roasting them.

AN AMERICAN football team has brought a special supply of toilet paper to the UK where they are playing a match, because the British version is too thin.

The New York Jets will play an exhibition match at London's Wembley Stadium against the Miami Dolphins - and nothing has been left to chance, according to the UK *Telegraph* newspaper.

It's not clear what impact it's expected to have on their performance, but the 350 rolls of home-grown toilet paper are just one of the measures taken to ensure everything goes to plan.

In preparation for the visit, the Jets also flew the chef from their London hotel to New York for some preparatory training so the players get their favourite foods and the right nutrition in the UK.

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