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UTS scholarships

THE University of Technology Sydney's Graduate School of Health has launched a new program seeking funding for scholarships, as part of a strategy to attract the "best and brightest" to pharmacy.

Speaking last night at the UTS Pharmacy Innovative Pharmacist Awards (see page 2), the school's head Charlie Benrimoj confirmed several scholarships had already been secured, with an eventual target of about 20 "high academic, practice based" students annually.

Benrimoj outlined UTS Pharmacy's strategic positioning, with the school only offering a graduate-entry MPharm program because that is becoming the minimum standard for pharmacists around the world.

"We want people who truly want to become pharmacists," he said, with the innovative program already offering segments with a firm eye to the future such as vaccination and a seven week course in pharmacist prescribing - plus new international options.

Benrimoj revealed figures confirming 57% of UTS pharmacy graduates ended up in community pharmacy last year, while 30% went to hospital pharmacy and 11% into research.

As well as the scholarship program, UTS Pharmacy is building links with organisations such as Blackmores as well as developing possible hospital fellowships for pharmacists, Benrimoj confirmed.

Codeine plans a costly fail

THE government's Interim Decision to upschedule S2 and S3 products containing codeine to S4 is merely a "blunt instrument to address misuse and abuse of these medicines" according to Pharmacy Guild of Australia national president George Tambassis, in an opposing response statement sent to members.

With the large number of general public using these products, rescheduling will make pain relief medicines more expensive and difficult to access, may result in additional cost burden for both the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) and the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) and where ready or affordable medical practitioners are not available, pain may go untreated or lead to an increase in hospital presentations, he said.

The positive alternative proposal from the Guild is the urgent implementation of a mandatory real-time online recording of codeine dispensing in all states and territories with relevant government support.

In addition, the Guild recommended that the final decision on codeine be deferred for at least 12 months to allow time for the real-time monitoring system developed by the Guild in partnership with the Australian Self Medication Industry (ASMI) to be implemented and its impact on detecting abuse/misuse evaluated.

Mandatory warning labels, consideration of pack size reduction options, ongoing pharmacist education and a consumer awareness campaign were recommended.

"Given the widespread implications and cost of the rescheduling proposal, it is imperative that a formal Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) must be conducted prior to any final decision on rescheduling," the Guild statement added.

The Guild has said it is confident that real-time online monitoring system can be implemented by June 2016, which is the current implementation date for the Interim Decision to take effect.

Julie McCrossin MC

FORMER ABC radio broadcaster, Julie McCrossin, will be the Master of Ceremonies at the Australian Self Medication Industry (ASMI) November conference on innovations in self care, the self-medication industry peak body has announced.

The ASMI 2015 conference will be held at the Waterview Convention Centre, Sydney Olympic Park, Homebush, Sydney from 9.00am on Wed 11 Nov.

CLICK HERE to register.

Novartis acquisition

NOVARTIS has announced the purchase of Admune Therapeutics, as part of a move to broaden its portfolio of cancer immunotherapies.

The deal adds an IL-15 agonist program currently in phase 1 clinical trials for metastatic cancer.

Novartis has also sealed licensing agreements with Palobiofarma and XOMA Corporation, adding an adenosine receptor and TGF-beta inhibition program to the range.

Safety net changes

LEGISLATION introduced into Parliament yesterday will provide more support from taxpayers for concession card holders.

Under the proposed changes, the threshold for assistance will kick in after \$400 worth of out-of-pocket medical costs, as opposed to \$638 under the current system.

Non-concessional families and singles will also benefit, said Health Minister Sussan Ley, with their safety net thresholds falling from \$2000 to \$1000 and \$700 respectively, while a new online tool will make it easier for family members to combine their safety net payments so they are all counted as one.

Dependent children aged 16-25 who are temporarily unable to work or study due to illness will also be able to count their medical costs towards the family safety net.

Ley said the package aims to create a more transparent fee system "while at the same time encouraging health providers to set more competitive prices".

Cannabis at APP2016



THE Pharmacy Guild of Australia has confirmed a session at next year's APP conference, exploring medicinal cannabis in the treatment of specific epilepsy disorders and key issues for the pharmacist dispensing the medication.

The challenging cases of children with severe, drug-resistant epilepsy, who had achieved some degree of reduced seizures with medicinal cannabis, have led governments across Australia to initiate clinical trials on medicinal cannabis as well as production arrangements.

Presenting the APP session will be neurologist Dr Dan McLaughlin, who specialises in the treatment of seizure disorders with a particular interest in the pharmacology of anti-epilepsy drugs.

Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today has two pages of news, plus a full page from **Pharmacy 4 Less**.

WAKE UP TO NEW SKIN

This week *Pharmacy Daily* and Plunketts are giving away a John Plunkett gift pack each day including Glyco Peel and Crème Cleanser.

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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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Mental health innovation

WESTERN

Australian pharmacist Swarup Afsar from Pharmacy 777 was honoured last night with the UTS Pharmacy Innovative Pharmacist Award for 2015, for the creation of a mental health pharmacy professional service module.

The award was made during a gala dinner in which the Graduate School of Health at Sydney's UTS hosted several hundred present and future pharmacy leaders.

Afsar said he had developed the program for his pharmacy after observing a need from patients for an integrated service.

Patients are able to speak with a counsellor in the pharmacy while waiting for their prescriptions to be dispensed, with the program producing strong results for the pharmacy overall.

The UTS gala dinner also saw awards made to top students in the



MPharm program, courtesy of PSA and SHPA.

Afsar is **pictured** above accepting his award from UTS provost Professor Peter Booth; Syd Cassimaty, Head of Marketing (Respiratory) for AstraZeneca; and Warwick Plunkett, chair UTS Pharmacy Industry Advisory Panel.

Photos below were also taken last night, with lots more now online at facebook.com/pharmacydaily.



DISPENSARY CORNER

WHAT'S not to love about US pharmacy chain CVS? This is customer loyalty to the nth degree.

Four year-old Iris Gill in the US state of Arkansas is so in love with CVS that she cries when her mother Sarah fails to take her to the pharmacy store.

So it wasn't too much of a surprise when she insisted on theming her birthday party CVS, instead of *Frozen*, *My Little Pony* or *Barbie*.

Mother decked out the party room appropriately with a CVS cake, goodie bags and red and white decor, reports the *Daily Mail*.

Apparently CVS headquarters heard about the event and donated snacks while the local store honoured the little girl with a big sign in their window "Happy Birthday Iris".



GASTROPORN?

The brain is very close to the mouth in most species for a very good reason, it is thought.

According to new work from the UK, Japan and Malaysia one of the brain's key roles is to facilitate foraging and feeding and there is a growing body of knowledge around the impact of desirable images of food, dubbed 'foodporn' or 'gastroporn'.

Published in *Brain and Cognition*, the research suggests that the current obesity epidemic is partially caused by the proliferation of delicious-looking foods and images promoting 'visual hunger'.

CLICK HERE for the abstract.

Pharmacy Daily is Australia's favourite pharmacy industry publication.

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