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Antimicrobial Budget

THE Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) has announced its support for one of the key health measures in the 2016 Federal Budget, namely the focus on antimicrobial resistance.

SHPA ceo, Kristin Michaels said the decision by the Turnbull Government to invest \$9.4 million in antimicrobial resistance was an important and visionary initiative that addresses an issue that has long been an high priority concern for SHPA members.

"The Budget provision to curb the over-prescribing of antibiotics, supported by further research and surveillance initiatives, is a significant step toward protecting all Australians against the escalating threat of antimicrobial resistance," Michaels said.

"It is very pleasing to see this robust response to the report released in June last year, Responding to the Threat of Antimicrobial Resistance: Australia's First National Antimicrobial Resistance Strategy 2015-2019."

Sigma forecasts 10% uplift

SIGMA Pharmaceuticals ceo Mark Hooper yesterday indicated the company is on track to deliver at least 10% growth in its underlying pre-tax earnings for the first half of the financial year.

Announcing the profit upgrade at the Sigma annual general meeting, Hooper said the first three months of the year had reinforced the company's belief that it has a "roadmap of earnings growth ahead of us from our strategy of investing in non-PBS initiatives".

These include hospital pharmacy services, private label products and income from other services.

Hooper said Sigma was continuing to derive benefits from its CHS, Discount Drug Stores, Pharmasave and Chemist King acquisitions, all of which he said are performing "well ahead of our expectation when we acquired them."

"Over 300 pharmacy brand members were added to our network and are bringing incremental sales through our

wholesaling operations," he said.

The CHS business had cemented its 20% market share in the hospital pharmacy in Victoria, and had more recently pushed into NSW.

Hooper also confirmed ongoing growth in the Amcal and Guardian brands, which have also boosted their levels of brand compliance.

Pharmacy professional service programs including Coeliac testing and Kidney Check programs continue to put the pharmacist at the centre of healthcare solutions, he said, with Sigma "now focused on further improving dispensary efficiency to provide pharmacists with greater scope to come out from behind the counter".

At the agm Sigma chairman Brian Jamieson said the company was in no way concerned by the ongoing pharmacy review chaired by Professor Stephen King, saying it would provide opportunity to "thoroughly assess the industry as it is today and the long term objectives for the future".

CareFacilities Expo

LATER this month a new trade show will launch at Sydney Showground in Homebush, featuring the latest products and services for in-home and facility care for the elderly and disabled.

The CareFacilities Expo will showcase products and services as disparate as innovative healthy eating solutions through to robotics and will also include a series of educational talks to help attendees boost their knowledge.

It's on 20-22 May 2016 - more at carefacilitiesexpo.com.

J&J talc judgement

JOHNSON & Johnson has been ordered to pay over US\$55 million in compensation to an American woman who claims the company's talcum powder caused her to contract ovarian cancer.

62-year-old Gloria Ristesund says she used J&J products on her genitals for decades.

The company says the products are safe and will appeal the ruling.

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Opdivo on PBS

BRISTOL-MYERS Squibb's Opdivo (nivolumab) was PBS listed as a monotherapy from 01 May for patients with unresectable or metastatic melanoma.

Opdivo is an immuno-oncology (I-O) treatment which enables the body's immune system to selectively recognise and attack cancer cells.

Cervical screening

NEARLY 6 in 10 women continue to participate in cervical screening programs in Australia, according to a report released this week by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW).

The report, *Cervical screening in Australia 2013-2014*, shows over 3.8 million women aged 20 to 69 participated in cervical screening in 2013-2014.

The highest participation of 59% was recorded in inner regional areas, with a lowest participation of 52% in very remote areas.

CLICK HERE to access the report.

Dressing recall

AERO Healthcare, in consultation with the TGA, is recalling one batch of 10cm x 17cm Military Trauma and Haemorrhage Wound Dressing due to concerns that the pressure bar material may break during use.

The affected batch number is 15051 expiring 30 Jun 2020.

PSA budget opportunities

PRIMARY healthcare reforms being progressed as part of the 2016-17 Federal Budget should provide opportunities for greater involvement of pharmacists, according to the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia.

However in a post-budget statement the PSA also challenged whether the funding allocated to some primary healthcare programs will be sufficient to have a real impact on consumer health.

PSA national vice president Michelle Lynch said pharmacists welcomed the allocation of \$21.3m over four years to trial the Health Care Homes model, which was recommended by the Primary Healthcare Advisory Group.

The trial will support primary care providers to deliver coordinated care, management and support to approximately 65,000 people with chronic and complex conditions in Australia.

"PSA questions if \$100 (approx.) per patient per annum – or around \$35,000 per healthcare home – is sufficient for patients with the most chronic needs to access genuine integrated care – which includes having a pharmacist on the team," Lynch said.

She added that pharmacists welcomed the tobacco excise increase that will provide a major public health boost for Australians.

This will mean a packet of 25 cigarettes will cost around \$40 by 2020, while the duty-free allowance for tobacco has also been halved to just 25 cigarettes from 01 Jul 2017.

"The evidence-based changes to tobacco excise will improve the health of Australians by reducing their exposure to tobacco products, however this needs to be combined with investment in smoking cessation programs through the highly-accessible community pharmacy network," Lynch added.

Other benefits highlighted by the PSA included the proposed redesign of the Practice Incentives Program (PIP) and small business company tax reductions.

CM-Rx interactions

PEOPLE are taking more prescription medications but also more supplements, everything from vitamin and mineral pills to fish and flax seed oils, recent US research published in *JAMA Internal Medicine* has revealed, with significant consequences.

The study showed that with 15% of adults 62 to 85 years are potentially at risk for a major drug-drug interaction.

Improving safety with the use of multiple medications has the potential to reduce preventable adverse drug events associated with medications commonly used among older adults, authors concluded.

CLICK HERE for the abstract.

MA hails predictability

MEDICINES Australia has welcomed the government's commitment to maintaining PBS funding in the budget, saying this will ensure timely access to innovative medicines.

"Following years of significant reform to the PBS, the fact that there are no new PBS cuts in the 2016-2017 budget is welcome," said MA chairman Wes Cook.

Cook also praised funding to speed up TGA processes as well as company tax cuts which he said helped create a more conducive investment environment.

10 year eHealth plan for NSW

NSW Health Minister Jillian Skinner has announced a decade-long eHealth Strategy for the state, envisioning a "digitally enabled and integrated health system with a focus on delivering patient-centred health experiences with quality health incomes".

The plan was launched at the CeBIT Australia technology conference earlier this week, with Skinner identifying key short, medium and long term goals for eHealth NSW, an agency established in 2014.

Achievements so far include the establishment of a high speed network dubbed the "NBN of Health" which currently connects 150 hospitals and health centres, enabling clinical and corporate systems to be used statewide.

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Nutri-Synergy is Natural Dermatology for dry, sensitive and problem skin. NS restores and maintains your skin's natural, healthy condition while supporting the skin's natural protective barrier with ingredients rich in natural moisturising factors for more effective moisturising. Win a pack containing NS Dry Skin Moisturiser and NS Extra Dry Skin Moisturiser, both 250ml pumps.

To win, be the first from SA or NT to send the correct answer to the question to comp@pharmacydaily.com.au

What is one of the vitamins in NS Dry Skin Moisturiser?

Congratulations to yesterday's winner, Simon Harper from Wizard Pharmacy Services.





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Travel Specials

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APT Kimberley Coast Cruising 2017

APT is expanding its Kimberley Coast Cruising in 2017, announcing the addition of a new ship to its cruise portfolio.

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PBS spending dropped 0.8%

TOTAL government spending on pharmaceutical benefits in Australia amounted to \$9.07 billion for the twelve months to 30 Jun 2015, a decline of 0.8% on the prior year.

The figures were revealed in Health Department figures released yesterday, which also confirmed a 0.8% increase in the volume of PBS prescriptions dispensed, which totalled 211.4 million.

Government spending amounted to 82.7% of the total cost of PBS prescriptions, with patient contributions of \$1.48 billion - down from \$1.54b the prior year.

The majority of the government expenditure (77.4%) was directed towards concessional cardholders and the average dispensed price per prescription declined from

\$42.20 to \$40.52 in 2014/15.

The three drugs with the highest cost to government were adalimumab (\$313 million), rosuvastatin (\$216 million) and fluticasone+salmeterol (\$177m).

Atorvastatin was the most frequently dispensed medication, followed by rosuvastatin and esomeprazole.

Dengue development

SUN Pharma has signed a new agreement with the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB) for the development of a new botanical drug called Cipa (cissampelos pariera) for the treatment of the mosquito-borne dengue virus.

Elevit launches new supplement



YESTERDAY Elevit, Australia's number one pregnancy multivitamin, hosted an elegant Baby Shower to celebrate the arrival of Elevit Breastfeeding - a new supplement tailored to support increased nutritional needs for baby's ongoing development.

High profile media GP, Dr Ginni Mansberg, stressed an importance of taking breastfeeding supplements during "one of the most challenging nutritional periods in a woman's life" as

well as provided some valuable breastfeeding tips to the women in attendance.

Lisa Wipfli (Wippa's wife from radio station Nova's breakfast show) shared her story about joys and challenges of being a first-time mum to a 15-month old baby and expecting her second child in the next few months.

Pictured above at the event are, from left: Lisa Wipfli, Stefanie Mortlock, Elevit Senior Brand Manager; and Dr Ginni Mansberg.

DISPENSARY CORNER



THERE'S been a big breakthrough in cat communication, with the launch of a prototype device which claims to be able to translate meows into words.

Dubbed the 'Catterbox,' the gadget attaches to a cat's collar and is equipped with a microphone, speaker, wi-fi and Bluetooth technology which allows feline noises to be recorded, processed and then played back as human speech.

According to the makers, it uses spectral analysis to process audio data and match the sounds with phrases chosen by the owner to represent their cats' personality.

It's the latest development in breaking down the tragic cat-human communication divide, also the subject of a major Swedish research project (**PD** 17 Mar).

The Catterbox has been created by The Temptations Lab which is a division of a major pet food manufacturer, with the makers saying: "We believe that if people understood cats better they'd see just how awesome they really are".

To view the device in action see pharmacydaily.com.au/videos.

HERE'S an interesting new way to get your daily calcium intake.

Food manufacturing giant Nestle has launched a new cheese-flavoured version of its popular KitKat confectionery in Japan.

The company's Japanese website says the tasty delight is a mixture of "powder of Hokkaido melon and mascarpone cheese between sweet wafers and covered in mild white chocolate".

Other interesting flavour combinations which have been previously trialled by Nestle in Japan include wasabi, purple sweet potato, red bean, hot chilli and sake versions of KitKat.

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