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New PBS IT system

THE federal government yesterday announced it would replace Australia's existing health and aged care payments IT system, with health minister Sussan Ley saying the current software is "30 years old and is now obsolete".

The new system will support the government continuing to own, operate and deliver Medicare, PBS, aged care and related veterans payments into the future, Ley said. "A process has commenced... to identify solutions for this new payments system, which will be based on existing commercial technology," she added, with the government to consult extensively with health and aged care providers along with other stakeholders to "inform the final design of the new system".

The consultation will be finalised in Jan 2017, with the project to be led by the Department of Health and supported by the Departments of Human Services and Veterans' Affairs as well as the Digital Transformation Office.

Australian Medical Association president Michael Gannon hailed the project, saying the existing system is clunky and inefficient. "Its many faults create inefficiency and inconvenience," he said.

API profit surges to \$51m

AUSTRALIAN Pharmaceutical Industries this morning released its financial results for the year to 31 Aug, with a healthy 18% increase in underlying net profit after tax to \$51.4 million.

Total revenue jumped 18.1% to \$3.8 billion, net debt declined and the board declared a fully franked final dividend of 3.5c per share.

"Due to the ongoing strength of the operational results and balance sheet position, directors have determined to move towards a 60% payout ratio in the future," according to an API statement.

Outgoing ceo Stephen Roche said the increased profits, low debt and improved working capital position "reinforces the strength of company direction, management capability to execute strategy and now provides flexibility for the company in its future development". He said despite the major industry reforms API has built one of Australia's leading brands and successfully maintained its pharmacy distribution business.

Roche highlighted the growth of the Priceline Pharmacy network, which now comprises 442 stores.

Overall retail sales for the year rose 7.6% to \$1.15 billion.

Including dispensary activity overall sales rose 11.7%, with Roche saying this was driven by attracting new franchise partners and lifting comparable store sales.

"We're continuing to take market share in the key categories of colour cosmetics, skincare, over-the-counter health and prescriptions...we have an enviable suite of marketing assets that are driving brand awareness," he said.

The new high-value Hepatitis C treatments saw API's pharmacy distribution revenues jump 11.2%.

Taking this into account underlying growth was 4.8%, with Roche saying API's market position had remained steady and consistent, reflecting its strong offer to independent pharmacists via the Soul Pattinson, Pharmacist Advice and Club Premium programs.

Roche said API expects to open another 20 Priceline Pharmacy stores over the coming year.

CHF concern over ABS

THE Consumers Health Forum of Australia has raised concerns about reports that the Australian Bureau of Statistics is considering cutting its Patient Experience Survey.

The annual survey collects data on access to primary care, hospitals, pathology and diagnostic imaging.

Wells added that without the data provided by the survey it will be difficult to gauge the impact of the reforms, with the potential ABS move "of concern to everybody who wants health policy based on evidence rather than anecdote".

Dengue vaccine push

SUN Pharma has announced a collaboration with the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB) to develop a dengue vaccine based on a tailored recombinant virus-like-particle (VLP) tetravalent prototype.

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Alliance partners with MPS

PHARMACY Alliance will take advantage of MPS automated medication management systems in a new partnership aimed at cutting time spent on manual packing.

The agreement gives pharmacies access to the robotic packing services of MPS's three TGA-licensed dose manufacturing facilities in Australia, allowing them to avoid inefficient practices associated with dose administration aids (DAAs).

MPS ceo Luke Fitzgerald said the partnership was a great solution for Pharmacy Alliance and would help improve health outcomes.

"We are very excited to be partnering with Pharmacy Alliance to provide them with a proven and trusted solution to assist in managing their customers' complete medication

requirements," Fitzgerald said.

Pharmacy Alliance ceo Darren Dye said: "We are thrilled to be able to provide our members with a time-saving medication management solution which will help them better serve their community and allow their patients to maintain their independence with personalised, convenient and compact medication packs."

The MPS partnership will be presented at Pharmacy Alliance member meetings nationally this month as an important initiative to combat PBS reform discounts.

EBOS profit growth

EBOS ceo Patrick Davies has forecast solid growth after a positive start to the financial year.

Speaking at the company's annual general meeting yesterday, Davies said on the basis of the firm's current trading performance it expected underlying net profit after tax would grow by 7%-10%.

Also at the agm, chairman Mark Waller spoke about the current Pharmacy Review, with EBOS believing there are "some relatively minor changes to the funding model that could be implemented by the Australian Government to make the remuneration of wholesalers more relevant for the industry as we know it today".

Placebos work with the wise and wary

A PAPER published in the journal *Pain* has revealed that a group of people who knowingly took placebos still reported a 30% reduction in their lower back pain.

Expert in placebos from Harvard Medical School and co-author of the study Ted Kaptchuk said the findings turned their understanding of the placebo effect on its head.

Kaptchuk said while a placebo is never going to "shrink a tumour or unclog an artery" it could assist with pain, fatigue and depression.

The new study means placebos could now be delivered without deception - avoiding ethical dilemmas.

MedAdvisor raises \$8m

DIGITAL medicines adherence company MedAdvisor has successfully completed an \$8 million Capital Raising.

The company announced through the ASX that the placement was "significantly oversubscribed" with strong support from both existing and new shareholders including strong participation from leading Australian institutions and pharmacies.

MedAdvisor said the new resources will be used to fund the acquisition of Healthnotes which will strengthen the company's market position and fuel additional growth initiatives and scale.



Anex bulletin launch

THE Anex Bulletin, a specialty publication for workers in Australia's needle and syringe programs (NSPs), has been relaunched in electronic format.

The updated version is produced by Penington Institute with funding from the Health Department, and aims to reinforce the importance of NSPs in saving lives.

Community pharmacies are a key part of NSP service delivery, with the Guild saying they account for about 15% of syringes used for injecting drugs and are ideally placed to assist in the distribution of sterile injecting equipment.

See penington.org.au.

Adult NIP Zostavax

THE first adult addition to the National Immunisation Program (NIP) in a decade, Zostavax, marketed in Australia by CSL's vaccine arm Seqirus, has been announced by the Department of Health.

Herpes-zoster, aka shingles, is a painful blistering rash caused by reactivation of the varicella zoster virus, aka the chickenpox virus.

Effective 01 Nov, people aged 70-79 years will be able to access the vaccine free of charge within the national scheme to help prevent this debilitating painful disease.

The shingles rash occurs when the dormant chickenpox virus is reactivated in the nerve tissue, causing inflammation of the nerves.

Sometimes pain in the affected region can be prolonged and if exceeding three months is labelled post herpetic neuralgia (PHN).

Two particularly dangerous complications are ophthalmic zoster, which occurs in up to 25% of shingles cases and the increased risk of stroke in sufferers.

Professor Dominic Dwyer, Clinical Professor at the Western Clinical School of the University of Sydney has indicated that as with other attenuated live vaccines, it is not recommended that Zostavax be administered outside of a full clinical support setting.

The vaccine may be concurrently administered with flu vaccine (an inactivated vaccine).

In terms of storage, Zostavax needs to be refrigerated (2 to 8°C) until reconstituted and the diluent kept at room temperature.

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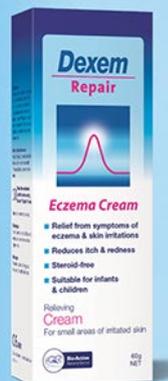
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Trial program "slow rollout"

PHARMACY Guild executive director David Quilty says community pharmacies are "increasingly concerned about the slow rollout of the \$50 million Pharmacy Trial Program (PTP)".

Writing in the Guild's fortnightly *Forefront* update yesterday, Quilty said pharmacies are worried about being able to access the \$600 million allocated in the Sixth Community Pharmacy Agreement for new and expanded pharmacy programs from 01 Jul 2017.

"There is an urgent need to expedite the PTP," he added, urging the government to remove any impediments holding back the implementation of the first three trials unveiled by Health Minister Sussan Ley (**PD** 18 Mar).

They include medication management for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, continuity of medicine management after hospital discharge, and the diabetes screening trial which saw some progress this week with pharmacies invited to participate.

Quilty also highlighted the need for cost-effectiveness reviews of existing programs before they can

be expanded to access the \$600m.

These reviews are yet to be completed, meaning there is a real risk that existing programs shown to be cost-effective will not be able to be expanded from 01 Jul 2017 - such as dose administration aids and staged supply.

Quilty said further trials could include a new medicine service and an asthma management service which has already been trialled under the Fourth Agreement.

He added the current Health Care Homes trials "do not sufficiently recognise the vital role of the patient's community pharmacy", with the Guild to "continue advocating until these important issues are satisfactorily addressed".

SHPA cannabis update

THE Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia has published an update on the current state of play for medicinal cannabis in Australia, summarising the various legislative moves and clinical trials underway.

Details are provided for each state and territory - see shpa.org.au.



Dispensary Corner

WOULD you let someone film you and your partner having sex for the price tag of £400 (AU\$640)?

Coventry University in England is offering couples just that.

And no, it's not pornography, it's a campaign to promote safe sex.

The "tastefully shot" videos form part of the University's Chance 2 Change Project which aims to show that "putting on a condom doesn't kill the mood".

Three couples aged between 18 and 25 will be filmed getting it on in "natural settings" like student accommodation or a car.

CLICK HERE for more information on the project.



A ONE inch hole in the oesophagus probably wasn't the prize one American man was hoping for when he entered a ghost pepper eating contest.

A case report presented in *Journal of Emergency Medicine* describes the way the 47-year-old man arrived in the ER with severe abdominal and chest pain followed by violent retching and vomiting after he ate a burger topped with a "ghost pepper puree".

The ghost pepper is one of the world's hottest chillis and has a Scoville (heat) rating of more than a million!

The condition is potentially fatal but the man's life was saved with emergency surgery and he spent a further 23 days recovering in hospital.

WIN WITH SOUTHERNATURE

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SOUTHERNATURE's Omega 3 Concentrate is Australia's only 5 Star Rated fish oil, receiving the highest rating for purity, potency and freshness from the only third party testing and certification program for fish oils, IFOS (International Fish Oil Standards). SOUTHERNATURE's Omega 3 Concentrate tests for a number of industry benchmark marks including fish oil stability, purity, potency, heavy metal levels and even radiation. SOUTHERNATURE's Omega 3 Concentrate is made only from Sardine and Anchovy oil to ensure premium amounts of EPA and DHA. For more info **CLICK HERE**.

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



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Congratulations to yesterday's winner, Vahid Mohebaty from Main Street Pharmacy.

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