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Pharmacy assistant & student opportunity

IF YOU are active in talking to customers about their choices of over the counter products in pharmacy, you are invited to participate in a project being supervised from the School of Pharmacy, Griffith University titled 'Decision making in non-prescription medicine supply'. The study will examine OTC or nonprescription medicine supply and how individuals decide when a medicine request is appropriate or when to refer to the pharmacist. The research involves a 20 minute telephone interview and participants will receive a \$20 movie voucher for their time. Contact Dr Fiona Kelly at f.kelly@griffith.edu.au or 07 5552 9743.

PPI claiming leeway

PHARMACY owners in areas affected by Cyclone Debbie who are concerned about making their quarterly PPI Clinical Interventions and DAA claim are being urged to contact 6CPA support as soon as possible on 1300 555 262. The regulations stipulate claims must be made during the two week period from 01-14 Apr.

MedsASSIST common sense

THE postponed shutdown of the Pharmacy Guild's MedsASSIST codeine decision support system for pharmacists (**PD** breaking news) is simple common sense that has been backed across the board. With the software scheduled to be shut down at 10pm last night, health minister Greg Hunt intervened at the last moment and expressed his strong support for continuing the system - particularly between now and 01 Feb 2018 when codeine containing medicines will become prescription-only. The Guild said it would keep the system going as a sign of good faith, while the minister seeks urgent advice on the necessary steps to strengthen the regulatory underpinnings of MedsASSIST. Pharmaceutical Society of Australia national president Joe Demarte congratulated the minister for stepping in, saying pharmacists across the country had expressed concerns about the shutdown of the system many were using to help address misuse of codeine. "Pharmacists are strongly committed to addressing the issue of inappropriate use of codeine in Australia," Demarte said. He reiterated previous

submissions to the government about the urgent implementation of a national real-time recording and reporting system, to allow for monitoring of prescribing and dispensing of specific medicines. "There is a need for real-time recording to be expanded to include all drugs of dependence," the PSA president said. The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia also applauded the stay of execution for the system, with ceo Kristin Michaels agreeing that MedsASSIST played an important role in monitoring the supply of codeine-containing medicines.

AHPRA complaints

THE Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency has launched a new online portal, providing a "clearer and simpler process" for consumers making complaints or raising concerns about registered health practitioners and students. The new option, which includes details about AHPRA's complaints handling processes, complements other mechanisms for making complaints including an online form as well as by calling 1300 419 495.

Amcal inhaler help

AMCAL has taken inspiration from a University of Sydney study reported in *Pharmacy Daily* last year (**PD** 26 Jan 2016) that revealed 90% of Australian asthmatics are using their inhaler incorrectly. Effective 06 Apr, Amcal will offer a free in-store inhaler technique check with a pharmacist, involving a six step process to educate users on how to maximise the benefits of their inhaler and reduce the chance of side effects. The study found young children, older adults, people with severe airflow limitation and those using multiple types of inhaler devices were the most likely to be using them incorrectly. The free in-store service will be complemented with a personalised sticker to serve as a daily reminder of what aspects of the technique they need to work on.

Pollie Pedal support

THE Pharmacy Guild of Australia is once again supporting the Pollie Pedal charity cycling event, with Guild national president George Tambassio to ride in stages of the 1000km Albury-Sydney route. The Pollie Pedal, in support of Soldier On, kicks off on Sun 02 Apr.



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Emergency meds supply

EX-TROPICAL cyclone Debbie is still impacting on the supply of PBS items and the Department of Health has announced interim measures to assist pharmacists facing the resulting challenges, especially around dispensing.

The arrangements apply immediately to all affected areas and are applicable until 30 Apr.

If patients seeking medicines do not have their Medicare, DVA or Centrelink card the pharmacist should ring the PBS Inquiry line 132 290 (press option 1), for assistance with a patient's Medicare or concessional details.

Pharmacists can confirm patients' current medication details with their prescriber, or a prescriber may direct a pharmacist to supply a medicine to a patient in an emergency situation.

Patients may be issued the amount authorised by the prescriber who is required to forward a paper prescription to the pharmacy to cover the emergency supply as soon as practicable, in accordance with state law.

Urgent supplies of oral contraceptives or cholesterol lowering medicines (statins) may be dispensed in a single PBS quantity under Continued Dispensing arrangements.

When a patient has lost medication due to Ex-Tropical Cyclone Debbie, the pharmacist may provide a subsequent supply, but must endorse the prescription with the words 'immediate supply necessary' and sign the PBS prescription.

In the case of lost authority required items, prescribers can contact the PBS Authority line to replace the medication.

Where temporary relocation of the pharmacy to a new venue is necessary, the pharmacist is required to send an email to acpamail@health.gov.au or phone (02) 6289 2425 quoting the name of the affected pharmacy, its current PBS approval number, addresses of the current and temporary premises, and expected timeframe for return to the approved premises (*PD Wed*).

Statutory Declarations will need to be documented if the pharmacy has lost or damaged prescriptions and should include a statement about loss of prescriptions as a result of the natural disaster/emergency, and an undertaking that an insurance claim has not been made.

Statutory Declarations information is found at ag.gov.au.

FDA approves new MS drug

THE US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved Ocrevus (ocrelizumab) to treat adult patients with relapsing forms of multiple sclerosis (MS) and primary progressive multiple sclerosis (PPMS).

This is the first drug approved by the FDA for PPMS and is in an intravenous infusion form to be administered by a health care professional.

HPV vax rates up

SIGNIFICANT improvements have been made across Australia in immunising girls against the human papillomavirus (HPV), according to a new report by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

The school-based National HPV Vaccination Program for girls began in 2007, and was extended to include boys in 2013.

"HPV... affects about four out of five people at some point in their lives," said AIHW spokesperson Michael Frost.

The vaccine can prevent a range of cancers, including cervical cancer, and other conditions such as genital warts, Frost explained.

Rates have improved from 72% in 2012-13 to about 79% in 2014-15, with Murrumbidgee in NSW having the highest coverage at 86% while lowest rates are in Tasmania (67%), Country SA (69%) and the Gold Coast (Qld) (70%).

This report is the first to include local-level HPV immunisation rates for boys. It shows that nationally, more than two-thirds (about 67%) of boys aged 15 were fully immunised in 2014-15, while rates across PHN areas ranged from about 57% to 78%.

See myhealthycommunities.gov.au.

Mandatory reporting

AUTHORITIES in Ontario, Canada are moving towards making it mandatory for pharmacies in the province to report medication dispensing errors to a third party.

The change is part of new recommendations from the Ontario College of Pharmacists.

Strokecheck paused

WITH recent concerns around the Strokecheck program being offered within Amcal pharmacies (*PD* 12 Jan, 27 Mar), Sigma has announced that it is pulling the program from Amcal stores, in spite of some early positive results for patients.

Sigma pointed out that the program was run by Strokecheck, an independent charity and not-for-profit organisation, offering services by a qualified GP utilising the consulting suite of the pharmacy.

"Amcal remains committed to providing accessible care to the community to help entrench a collaborative and proactive approach to improving health management, and to provide referral pathways for patients to re-engage with GP's and the broader healthcare system," Sigma said.

Top 100 drugs app

SIXTEEN schools of pharmacy in the UK have collaborated to develop a 'top 100 drugs' app for undergraduate pharmacists.

The PharmaQuest app consists of a database of information for the 100 drugs agreed by academics as being most useful for students to have a working knowledge of before they begin their pre-registration year - including common indications, methods of action, side effects, chemical structure and more.

A free version with 25 drugs has been made available to download on Android or Apple, to enable users to test the product, after which the full version can be purchased for £2.99.



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Dispensary Corner

SPORT looks to have had a significant effect on the community in Iceland, which is experiencing a record-breaking baby boom exactly nine months after the country's stunning victory over England in the Euro 2016 football tournament.

The famous 2-1 win happened on 28 Jun in France, with last weekend (25-26 Mar) seeing the highest ever amount of epidurals administered to patients in Icelandic hospitals.

Just about every single person in Iceland watched the match - and lots of them clearly celebrated in style, with Britain's *Daily Mail* describing the revelry as having "created a new generation of Vikings".



IT'S a brewery, but not as you know it.

Some 300,000 babies are born every year with genetic blood disorders like sickle cell anaemia and thalassaemias but now researchers from Boston Medical Centre have figured out an answer - brewing blood that can meet transfusion demands.

The researchers are working on growing personalised blood cells, and in essence 'brew blood'.

The technique involves taking a small sample of a patient's blood, and reprogramming the red blood cells to become master stem cells - cells capable of being regrown into the same cell type.

Setting pregnancy record straight

APPROXIMATELY \$18 million worth of pregnancy tests are sold through pharmacies each year in Australia, and the recent Therapeutic Goods Administration probe into the sector (*PD Tue*) appears to have generated significant confusion, according to

Geoff Lovell from Pharmabroker.

A number of mainstream media reports have picked up on the controversy, which saw a number of manufacturers withdraw their products from the market rather than have them tested by the TGA.

However the message in some cases has evolved into recommendations to visit a doctor, rather than a pharmacy, to find out if you're pregnant.

Lovell cited the example of the Forelife pregnancy test kit brand, represented by Pharmabroker, which is supplied to both retail pharmacies and doctors - meaning pharmacists and staff can be confident to recommend it despite what consumers may have seen in the press.

Forelife is owned by an Australian company based in the NSW Southern Highlands, and has a medical business supplying doctors with the kits, which are not available in supermarkets.

He said with pregnancy test kits, a "good sized category" in pharmacy, it was important that consumers were reassured they could come to a pharmacy to ascertain if they were pregnant in the first instance.

Measles outbreaks

VACCINE hesitancy and supply chain problems have been blamed for the relatively widespread outbreak of measles in Europe especially in France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Romania, Switzerland and Ukraine, reports the *BBC*.

Although the measles mumps rubella (MMR) vaccine is available throughout, the hurdles of limited access to simple walk up vaccination is seeing a "loss of herd immunity" according to the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control.

In France, hesitancy is created by further barriers - people need to appoint and see their doctor for a script, go to the pharmacy to collect the vaccine and then rebook with their doctor for its administration, the report said.

Win with SkinB5

This week **Pharmacy Daily** & **SkinB5** are giving away each day the Acne Control Extra Strength Tablets.

SkinB5 is an all-natural acne supplement that works from within to treat acne on the face and all over the body. The SkinB5 Extra Strength Tablets is based on a potent dosage of vitamin B5, proven to increase skin health and reduce acne by regulating the skin's production of sebum, or skin oil. See www.skinb5.com for more.

To win, be the first person from VIC or TAS to send the correct answer to comp@pharmacydaily.com.au



Are the products tested on animals?

Congratulations to yesterday's winner, Anna Phan from Pooraka Compounding Pharmacy.

Events Calendar

WELCOME to *Pharmacy Daily's* events calendar, opportunities to earn CPE and CPD points.

If you have an upcoming event you'd like us to feature, email info@pharmacydaily.com.au.

29-30 Apr: Victorian Pharmacy Conference 2017; Monash University, Parkville; register here: www.psa.org.au

21 May: 2017 PSA WA Annual Seminar; Pan Pacific Perth; register here: www.psa.org.au

4-5 Jun: Naturally Good Expo; ICC Sydney; pre-register for free or \$30 at the door - details here: naturallygood.com.au

16-18 Jun: ConPharm 2017; Hotel Grand Chancellor, Hobart; find out more: www.aacp.com.au

28-30 Jul: PSA17; Hyatt Regency, Darling Harbour, Sydney; for details see: www.psa17.com

5-9 Aug: Medici Capital Pharmacy Snow Business Conference 2017; Mt. Buller, Victoria; register your interest here: www.medic.com.au

1-3 Sep: Pharmacy Connect; Hilton Hotel Sydney; register here: www.pharmacy-connect.com.au

26-28 Oct: Pharmacy Assistant National Conference; QT Gold Coast; for details see: www.pharmacyassistants.com

16-19 Nov: Medicines Management Conference 2017; ICC Sydney; details tbc: www.shpa.org.au

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