

## Tambassis re-elected

**PHARMACY** Guild of Australia national president George Tambassis has been re-elected to his leadership role for another three years.

Tambassis, who has been a Victorian community pharmacist for more than 25 years, first became National President in 2013, taking over from Kos Sclavos.

He has been re-elected unopposed, saying "my aim is to work diligently and effectively for all our members and the profession as a whole.

"My new National Council members and I will endeavour to advocate on behalf of members, with our highest priority being the sustainability and success of community pharmacies as an essential and valuable component of our wider health system".

Tambassis said he would continue to work for the trusted pharmacy profession as the most accessible and most visited primary health care destination for the Australian community, "who benefit from our expertise in medicines".

## CW NZ is imminent

**CHEMIST** Warehouse is on the cusp of opening its first store in New Zealand (PD 18 Jul 2017), with the new outlet in Wagener Place in the west Auckland suburb of St Lukes believed to be in the final stages of its fit-out.

The store is across the road from a major Westfield shopping centre, according to NZ trade publication *Pharmacy Today*, which says the opening could be as soon as today.

## Guild codeine back-down

**THE** Pharmacy Guild's push to allow access to codeine in certain circumstances without a prescription once the drug is rescheduled early next year is dead in the water, with Health Minister Greg Hunt on Fri telling the RACGP annual conference that "the Guild has reversed its position".

Hunt also announced a further \$1 million in funding to assist professional groups including the Guild, the PSA and doctors' organisations to communicate the changes to their patients.

While he noted that the final implementation of the rescheduling is a matter for each state and territory as to whether they adopt the decision in their own jurisdiction, "medical authorities, have, however, advised the changes will save lives and protect lives".

"Over-the-counter codeine products have been estimated to be a factor in nearly 100 deaths each year, with evidence that three in four pain-killer misusers had misused an over-the-counter codeine product in the last 12 months," the minister said.

He added that the changes were in line with international practice, with at least 26 countries only allowing prescription access to codeine-based products.

"Research shows that current over-the-counter low-dose medicines containing codeine for pain relief offer very little additional benefit when compared to similar medicines without codeine," he said, thanking the Pharmacy Guild and the Pharmaceutical Society of

Australia "for their commitment to working with their members to assist patients during this transition".

The additional funding includes \$325,000 for the Guild and PSA to provide pharmacists with materials to assist consumers with the change, along with \$250,000 in support for the AMA, RACGP, RACP working with NPS MedicineWise to provide communication material to GPs and specialists.

There's also \$250,000 for the Rural Health Alliance, the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine and the Rural Doctors Association of Australia to provide targeted communications to health providers in rural and remote communities, plus \$230,000 in support of PainAustralia to communicate with consumers suffering chronic and acute pain.

A further \$50,000 will help develop "targeted communication products and forums to communicate to Indigenous and Aged Care providers," Hunt said.

## Pharmacist sentence

**A 37-YEAR-OLD** pharmacist in Kentucky, USA has been sentenced to eight years in prison, after admitting to filling forged prescriptions for opioid drugs.

Michael Ingram, who owned and operated Hometown Pharmacy in Georgetown, pleaded guilty to money laundering and conspiracy to distribute oxycodone, saying his distribution of the drugs was "not for a legitimate medical purpose".

## Superbugs migrate

**INFECTIONS** with the MRSA superbug are down in Australia, but most now encounter it in their community rather than in hospital, according to an Australian study published in the *MJA*.

The authors examined data from almost 40,000 people, finding that over 50% of people carrying the resistant organism had not been admitted to hospital in 12 months.

Those most at risk were under 40, Indigenous or living in an aged care facility, say the researchers.

Infection control efforts need to move from the hospital to the community, the authors add.

**CLICK HERE** to access the study.

## Corum open to deals

**LISTED** pharmacy software specialist Corum Health says it is willing to "consider opportunities to acquire, merge or partner with other parties," according to the company's chairman Bill Paterson.

Writing in the company's annual report, released late on Fri, Paterson detailed the significant changes within the business over the last 12 months, which saw Corum write off \$6.3 million in goodwill (PD 28 Aug).

The impairment mainly related to the carrying value of the company's existing LOTS and Amfac software, with the pending release of the Corum Clear suite which will "underpin the long-term future of Corum within the pharmacy software solutions business".

The report also confirmed Corum will not invest any further in the eCommerce side of its business.

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## Expert warns of disruption

**THE** Australian pharmacy profession should be preparing for disruptive change, with the sector likely to be heavily impacted by changes in technology just as much as other



parts of the economy such as retailing (Amazon), taxis (Uber) and accommodation (Airbnb).

That's the blunt warning issued by John Jackson from the Monash University Centre for Medicine Use & Safety (**pictured**), in response to last week's Productivity Commission proposals relating to the rise of automatic dispensing overseen by a new, less-qualified, type of pharmacy staffer (**PD 25 Oct**).

Jackson told *Pharmacy Daily* "what the Commission has highlighted can be easily foreseen, as it is the amalgamation of a range of existing technologies and a replication of what has already occurred

in other industries".

He said wise leaders of the profession should understand and admit "that the status quo, whether in relation to dispensing arrangements or some of the other sacred cows of the profession, will not be maintained".

Jackson urged an open and honest dialogue within the profession in order to further entice pharmacists to strengthen their focus on professional healthcare services - things that cannot as yet be done by a robot.

The alternative, he said, was to "drift further towards a business model based on commoditised product supply that can be easily deskilled and automated".

Jackson said discussions with the regulators and funders of the sector are necessary to ensure that they know the true cost, in both health outcomes and monetary terms, of potential disruptive change.

A paper written by Jackson and colleagues from the Monash Faculty of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences was published last year in *Research in Social and Administrative Pharmacy* discusses the impact of centralised automatic dispensing.

The document says pharmacists are ideally placed to continue to enhance their role in the Quality Use of Medicine under such a scenario, by interacting with the consumer before the submission of an electronic prescription, when the medication is delivered, or both.

"The pharmacy profession has claimed the provision of QUM services as core to its existence for many years, yet to date has failed to have them clearly described, measured, valued and remunerated," the paper continues - view it at [www.sciencedirect.com](http://www.sciencedirect.com).

## Industry (not-so) heavyweights



### Shingrix vs Zostavax

**THE** US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) has heeded evidence from clinical trials that GSK's Shingrix is more effective than Merck & Co's Zostavax.

The endorsement, by a 8-7 vote, promises to boost Shingrix sales and confirm its potential as a product with multibillion-dollar sales potential.

ACIP members also recommended that Shingrix should be given routinely to Americans aged over 50 years, compared with 60 years for Zostavax, and they supported revaccination of people who previously received Zostavax.

Only Zostavax is available in Australia at this point, with the US FDA last week approving Shingrix for adults 50 and over (**PD 24 Oct**).

**COMPLEMENTARY** Medicines Australia has helped raise more than \$12,000 for charity - simply by weighing in on a serious issue.

CMA ceo Carl Gibson challenged the organisation's president Dusko Pejnovic to a weight loss competition three months ago.

The challenge was to lose a combined 20kg and in the process raise \$10,000 for a good cause.

The official weigh-in (**pictured** above) took place last week at the Complementary Medicines Australia Industry Awards.

Gibson told *Pharmacy Daily* the pair beat the target, with a combined total of 22.1kg lost.

The funds raised went to Westmead Children's Hospital and Surf Life Saving, with Gibson and Pejnovic saying they were thrilled to transform from "industry heavyweights to industry lightweights".

### WIN WITH SOUTHERNATURE

This week Pharmacy Daily and SOUTHERNATURE are giving away their Ultra DHA for Pregnancy and Lactation each day, valued at \$49.95 RRP.



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## Dispensary Corner

**ARE** you a navel gazer? Does belly button fluff amuse you? Have you an inny or an outy?

Well there's more to it than meets the eye apparently - that little reminder that we were once floating in a fluid environment like an astronaut undergoes fascinating changes after birth, according to Western Sydney University Professor of Midwifery Hannah Dahlen.

What was your very first toy? Dahlen says many ultrasound scans reveal you probably first played with your umbilical cord.



But after your first breath, blood is shunted to the lungs and the arteries supplying blood to the placenta completely close off.

The resultant withered vessels become ligaments - you can actually feel this if you press your belly button and feel a tingling around your bladder and pelvis.

Maybe it's worth a gaze after all.

**THOSE** spectacularly ugly lumpy and generally unpleasant beasts from Queensland - no we mean cane toads - apparently have become emboldened the further they travel.

Sydney-based researchers have found behavioural divergence between range-core (those who stay put) and range-edge (those



who venture further) cane toads

which their studies show have evolved to make the disgusting beasts better invaders.

## Bubs focuses on China with CW



**LISTED** infant and child nutrition producer Bubs Australia has



announced the launch of several products in China via the Chemist Warehouse Tmall Global e-commerce platform.

Chemist Warehouse China division chief operating officer, Nancy Jian said she was confident Bubs infant formula would be well-received by Chinese parents.

"The 'Mother and Baby' category is our largest product category, making up around 30% of all Chemist Warehouse sales.

"We are excited to be the first Australian retailer to launch Bubs new range of organic baby cereals and teething rusks in Australia and now China, in the lead up to our peak period for Singles Day shopping extravaganza," she said.

A key marketing initiative for the Singles Day sales event on 11 Nov will see all parcels dispatched by Chemist Warehouse - forecast to be in excess of 1.3 million - contain a "virtual reality brochure" featuring Bubs products.

Consumers can scan the brochure using their mobile device to see a virtual real store in Australia, and zoom in to see Bubs products on shelf "adding to the authenticity that underpins Bubs provenance and brand heritage".

## VPA storage and display focus

**THE** Victorian Pharmacy Authority (VPA) has said it will continue to focus on appropriate storage and display of Schedule 3 medicines including Schedule 3 codeine and pseudoephedrine products in its latest Communiqué.

Other areas flagged for attention include adequacy of references, reconciliation of schedule 8 stocks and records, routine barcode scanning, adequacy of arrangements for privacy throughout pharmacy and appropriate security of keys to schedule 8 safes.

Of the three Sep panel hearings referenced, two related to pharmacists failing to manage storage and records for schedule 8 medicines - **CLICK HERE**.

## Amazon progresses

**AMAZON** has received approval from regulators in about twelve US states to do business as a pharmacy wholesale distributor.

The move was revealed by the *St Louis Dispatch* which cited approvals in Nevada, Arizona, New Jersey, Louisiana, Alabama, Idaho, New Hampshire, Oregon, Michigan, Connecticut and Tennessee.

Amazon would still need to obtain a pharmacy license in order to ship prescription drugs directly to consumers, analysts said.

## Lloyds UK closures

**CELESIO** UK, the parent company of pharmacy giant Lloydspharmacy, has announced the planned closure of 190 "commercially unviable" branches across England.

Managing director Cormac Tobin said the cuts were due to "changes to government policy on reimbursement and retrospective clawbacks over the past two years". He said the branches would cease trading through a combination of store closures and divestments, telling staff the decision had not been made lightly but that it was "necessary for the business to adapt to the changing landscape".

Currently Lloydspharmacy operates a total of about 1,500 branches across the UK.



Welcome to **PD's** weekly comment feature. This week's contributor is **Associate Professor Elgene Lim**, NBCF funded researcher



## Making cancer cells vulnerable to therapy

**THIS** year marks the 15th anniversary of the Pink Ribbon Breakfast campaign held by the National Breast Cancer Foundation (NBCF) in October for International Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

Funds raised through Pink Ribbon Breakfast will support NBCF researchers including my team and I at the Garvan Institute of Medical Research.

My research aims to target hormone receptors (estrogen and androgen receptors) in breast cancer tumours, specifically to identify ways to sensitise these cancer cells to endocrine therapies. The success of this research could open doors to potential development of treatments for patients living with breast cancer.

Therapeutic breakthroughs in breast cancer have stemmed from fundamental discoveries in laboratories in the last decade. These have led to a significant prolongation of life in women with breast cancer. Even in the setting of advanced breast cancer, survival has increased to many years in many patients.

Success in research would not be possible without the funds raised from the Australian community. NBCF is urging the community to host a Pink Ribbon Breakfast to support ongoing research for this devastating disease.

Register to host a Pink Ribbon Breakfast at [www.pinkribbonbreakfast.org.au](http://www.pinkribbonbreakfast.org.au)