

Pain scepticism hurts

NEW research released ahead of the 01 Feb codeine upscheduling has demonstrated that one of the significant impacts for chronic pain sufferers is widespread scepticism about the veracity of their pain story, from friends, family and colleagues as well as from health professionals.

The Amcal Pharmacy sponsored study described the "silent suffering" with 66% of sufferers encountering disbelief from acquaintances and 28% from their health professional.

A further 68% worry they will be seen as 'complaining constantly' if they talk about their pain, forcing 28% to conceal their pain from close friends and even more than 10% not telling their spouse.

Amcal encourages sufferers to seek advice from their pharmacist.

Codeine - NSW 'go-it-alone'?

A COMBINATION of real-time monitoring and New South Wales ministerial regulation could see the state "go it alone" on allowing pharmacists to supply codeine-containing products under specific conditions, according to Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) NSW Branch president University of Sydney Honorary Professor Peter Carroll.

Carroll has written to NSW Health Minister Brad Hazzard, explaining that concerns about interstate inconsistency need not hinder a local decision to benefit patients, as there are already disparities between different jurisdictions.

Carroll pointed out that even though vaccines are Schedule 4 (prescription only) medicines in all states, NSW regulations allow influenza vaccine to be administered to patients by approved pharmacists without a prescription under approved protocols and conditions.

By contrast, in Queensland different arrangements apply, with more vaccines such as measles, mumps and rubella vaccine also able to be administered by approved pharmacists.

On, or before 01 Feb the "NSW Health Minister, or any other State Health Minister for that matter, could regulate to mandate real time monitoring of the supply

of low dose codeine-containing products in all pharmacies, and allow pharmacists to supply low dose codeine-containing products (up to 3 days' supply) without a prescription for the treatment of acute, short term pain," Carroll argued.

The end result would then "be identical to the situation that exists for vaccines," Carroll added, pleading with Hazzard to "do this in the interests of the hundreds of thousands of people in NSW who use these products safely and appropriately for the short term treatment of acute pain such as migraine, toothache and period pain."

Injector 'a' flag call

IN RESPONSE to recent stock issues involving Mylan's EpiPen autoinjector, Sun Pharma has submitted to the Mar PBAC meeting that its AdrenaJect adrenaline (epinephrine) autoinjector be listed as substitutable, "a" flagged, with the EpiPen product.

SunPharma is calling on healthcare practitioners and patients to express their concerns about the single supplier situation to the PBAC at health.gov.au.

Gong for Mikac

BYRON Bay-based pharmacist Walter Mikac was also cited in this year's Australia Day Honours (**PD** yesterday), receiving an AM for significant service to the community as an advocate for gun control.

Foster bankrupted

THE Federal Court declared Peter Foster bankrupt last week, granting the ACCC's application for a sequestration order after he failed to pay costs in the long-running SensaSlim matter (**PD** 02 Dec 2011).

Foster was found guilty of misleading or deceptive conduct and of making false or misleading representations around his involvement in the SensaSlim franchise scam.

"The ACCC took this action because we are committed to enforcing compliance with court orders made against individuals and companies for breaching consumer law," ACCC Commissioner Sarah Court said.

NPS codeine update

NPS MedicineWise has posted information and resources for health professionals and consumers on its website, to support healthcare professionals and their customers dealing with chronic pain in the run-up to 01 Feb upscheduling of products containing codeine.

The site recommends the use of paracetamol/ibuprofen combinations to help manage chronic pain without seeking GP prescription alternatives, including products containing codeine.

There is a section on codeine misuse disorder and the diagnosis of codeine dependency and an FAQ page for consumers.

See nps.org.au for more.

AMR and dispensing

COMMUNITY pharmacy dispensing of antibiotics has been placed under the microscope in a study investigating the "relationship between antimicrobial-resistance programs and antibiotic dispensing for upper respiratory tract infection: An analysis of Australian data between 2004 and 2015".

Associations with a number of interventions, including a series of nationwide educational and advertising interventions for general practitioners and consumers implemented in Australia between 2009 and 2015 were studied revealing on average 14% total reduction in dispensed scripts after the series of intervention programs began in 2009 - journals.sagepub.com.

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Dispensary Corner

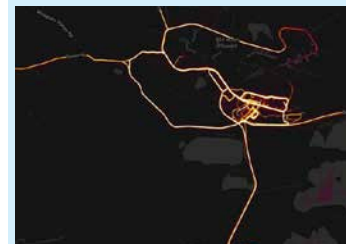
ANYBODY keen for some cardio around Area 51? No? Probably a sage decision.

But if you were inclined to incorporate a secret US military base into your workout, the fitness app Strava would be able to pinpoint the sites in seconds.

Strava comes equipped with a data visualisation "heat map" which experts warn can highlight the movements of military personnel on active service as they track their jogging routines.

Who knew that to be a great military tactician all you needed to do was purchase a Fitbit and join a CrossFit class?

The discovery was made by a 20-year-old student at ANU.



US RAPPER Eminem has turned his creative expertise to coming up with snappy pharmaceutical advertisements.

However, the catch in this case is that the ads were merely a ruse to sell his latest album Revival.

It seems Mr Mathers has been prescribing fake medical ads to the public as part of a marketing stunt, calling for people to conquer the fictitious illness Atrax Rithimus, a phrase in Latin that translates to "bitter rhyme", by taking some 'Revival' medicine.

The ads claim the miracle drug "is a non-injectable medication given through the ear canal and is not intended for anal use."

TWC seals asthma pact

ASTHMA Australia and TerryWhite Chemmart (TWC) have entered a three-year partnership to support people with asthma.

Beginning with this month's Back to School asthma campaign, TerryWhite Chemmart has pledged funding and in-store support to help Asthma Australia reach a broader audience.

Asthma Australia ceo Michele Goldman said, "This partnership allows us to strengthen our presence in the community, building on work we have done in other healthcare settings."

"Pharmacists may be the only health professional that some people with asthma see on a regular basis.

"They are uniquely positioned to offer advice and referrals, particularly for people struggling with symptoms whose asthma is poorly controlled," Goldman said.

She added that demonstrating device technique is another key service pharmacists can offer to help people with asthma ensure they are using medication correctly

and getting the maximum benefit.

The Back to School asthma campaign also reminds parents to update asthma action plans and provide them to schools along with spare medication, to minimise the risk of severe asthma flare-ups.

As well as awareness raising activities, TerryWhite Chemmart pharmacists will connect consumers with Asthma Australia's support services including the 1800 ASTHMA Helpline (1800 278 462) and will raise funds to support people with asthma.

Paracetamol is NICE

ANTIBIOTICS are over-prescribed for sore throats, according to the UK's National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE).

In a statement issued this week NICE suggests the majority of patients suffering from common respiratory tract infections are better served by taking paracetamol, with antibiotics & medicated lozenges only helping to "reduce pain by small amounts".

MHR consultation

BY THE end of 2018, all Australians will have a My Health Record (MHR) unless they choose otherwise, prompting the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) to open a public consultation aimed at creating guidelines for pharmacists around its use.

The PSA invites input from all stakeholders including all health professionals, consumers and government bodies.

Visit psa.org.au for details.

Guild Update

MedsASSIST shutdown

A REMINDER that MedsASSIST will be discontinued nationally from **10 pm Australian Eastern Daylight Time, tomorrow Wednesday 31 January.**

All of the medicines recorded in the MedsASSIST system will shift to prescription only from 01 Feb, and the system will become redundant at that time.

The MedsASSIST clinical decision support tool has recorded over 11 million transactions since it was introduced in Mar 2016. The number of pharmacies voluntarily using MedsASSIST peaked at around 70%.

The Guild thanks the thousands of pharmacies that have used MedsASSIST so effectively since its introduction.

The focus now will be on assisting patients through the transition, and urging the swift introduction of real-time recording for prescription medicines.