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EU safety barcodes

EFFECTIVE this week, the European Union has introduced requirements for most prescription medicines and some over-the-counter medicines for human use to have a “unique identifier” and anti-tampering device on their outer packaging.

The identifier is in the form of a two-dimension barcode and the anti-tampering device is a safety feature that shows whether the packaging has been opened or altered since it left the manufacturer, thereby ensuring that the content of the packaging is authentic.

These mandatory safety features are a “key measure” of the Falsified Medicines Directive which is part of the EU’s strategy to strengthen the security of the supply chain of medicines, and especially protect European citizens against the threat of falsified medicines.

For more see ema.europa.eu.

Female pharmacists dominate profession

ALMOST two thirds (62.4%) of registered pharmacists are female continuing the trend that has been seen for some time now, according to the latest quarterly registration data released by the Pharmacy Board of Australia.

This pattern looks set to continue with female provisional, postgrad training or supervised practice pharmacists twice as numerous as males, the figures reveal.

In terms of age groups, those aged 25-39 years comprise more than half the total, indicating a vibrant young industry, even though there are outliers, with 202 practising pharmacists registered aged 75-79 years and a remarkable 105 still practising at more than 80 years of age.

NSW has the most pharmacists, with 9,527 in total, followed by Vic with 8,035, Qld with 6,237, WA with 3,289, SA with 2,204, Tas with 778, the ACT with 60 and the Northern Territory with 253, making a total of 31,565 across various registration types.

Access the full breakdown at pharmacyboard.gov.au.

Sigma strong to go it alone

SIGMA Healthcare has reiterated to shareholders its \$75 million underlying profit guidance for 2018/19, signifying the company’s “robust business” with an estimated greater than \$100 million in cost savings through a proposed restructure (**PD** breaking news).

The ASX announcement came after the release of the results of a wide-ranging review of the business, undertaken by consulting firm Accenture following last year’s decision not to renew Sigma’s supply contract with Chemist Warehouse.

The four-month project has identified cost efficiencies worth more than \$100 million per annum, which CEO Mark Hooper said would be progressively delivered over the next 18-24 months.

The company said it now expects to deliver underlying earnings of \$55m-\$60m in 2019/20.

The “far-reaching and structured review” will see profits return to current levels by 2023, while “Sigma will be a more robust business that is fit for purpose,” including having significantly lower debt levels, Hooper said.

Sigma is in the process of reciprocal due diligence with Australian Pharmaceutical



Industries (API), which proposed a merger in Dec 2018 after acquiring a substantial shareholding.

The release of the report indicates Sigma’s determination to highlight the value in its existing business and the benefits this would bring to any suitor, including API.

Sigma Chairman, Brian Jamieson, said “We are open to continuing discussions on identifying potential merger opportunities, but this needs to be assessed in the context of what is in the best interest of Sigma shareholders.

“Importantly, independent of API’s proposal, we have a clear vision of where we are heading as a standalone business and are committed to implementing the transformation program to capture the benefits for our shareholders”.

Maxigesic backs PATY

PHARMACY Guild of Australia has announced the sponsors of the 2019 National Pharmacy Assistant of the Year Award (PATY), with AFT’s Maxigesic beginning its third year of support as major sponsor with naming rights.

Guild National President George Tambassis said the Award is the premier opportunity to recognise the outstanding contribution that pharmacy assistants make to the community pharmacy industry.

Alongside Maxigesic, GuildSuper will also support the awards, while Glocojel will again sponsor the Super Star Award.

Lilly pulls Lartruvo



ELI Lilly has withdrawn its soft tissue sarcoma treatment Lartruvo (olaratumab) from the agenda of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC) meeting set for next month, on news of drug trial failure.

The drug was being promoted to the PBAC for a new Section 100 listing, Authority Required when used in combination with doxorubicin, for the treatment of patients with locally advanced or metastatic soft tissue sarcoma not amenable to curative treatment with radiotherapy or surgery.

See the agenda at pbs.gov.au.

Critical fax no. check

UK PHARMACISTS have been asked to double check fax numbers when faxing through medical documents after a hotel group reported receiving dispensing tokens and requests for medication from pharmacies.

In what was a clear breach of privacy, *The Pharmaceutical Journal* reported that NHS England urged pharmacists to check with the recipient before sending and confirm receipt of the fax after sending.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock banned the NHS from buying fax machines from Jan 2019, and wants them phased out by Apr 2020.

Nad’s next generation

SUE Ismiel, CEO of Sue Ismiel & Daughters, manufacturer of hair removal brand Nad’s, is passing on the baton to the next generation, this week naming her daughter Natalie as the new Nad’s Brand Ambassador.

Nad’s has been in the market for the last 27 years, while Natalie has been part of the team since 2002.

Sue Ismiel said Natalie would uphold the company’s values “as she continues to build professional relationships built on honesty, integrity and trust”.

Her new role coincides with next month’s launch of a new “Nad’s 100% Natural Sugar Wax” product into Australian pharmacy and grocery stores.

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Dispensary Corner

LAWMAKERS in the US city of Nashville have come up with a novel way of combating the opioid crisis - put combination locks on pill bottles (pictured).

The so-called "Pilfering Prevention Act," introduced into the Tennessee state legislature this week, would mandate a combination lock for any prescription opioids or stimulants.

Pharmacies would give the code to the patient along with the drugs, with the thinking that ordinary tablet bottles are too easy to open, and the drugs are too easily stolen.

A spokesperson for a local addiction charity noted that 80% of prescription drug addicts start by experimenting, taking pills that don't belong to them.

"This lockable pill bottle would prevent that from happening," he said, adding that if a legitimate patient forgot the code they could simply call their pharmacist.



WORRIED about shoplifters? Maybe keep some KFC on hand.

Police in New Orleans, USA have reported the strange case of a thief who entered a fast food restaurant with the intention of robbery, but was unable to open the cash register.

Instead he just grabbed some fried chicken and ran, with officers able to quickly track him down and arrest him, using his greasy fingers as evidence.

Patients silent on CM use

ABOUT two in three patients who use complementary medicines (CMs) do not tell their GP or other health professionals what they are taking, according to a new University of Technology Sydney-led study published this month in the *Scientific Reports* journal.

The systematic review looked at 86 scientific papers reporting disclosure rates and/or reasons for disclosure or non-disclosure of CM use to medical providers.

"Complementary medicine... is often the focus of relatively hidden patient health seeking, yet is making its presence felt in primary care, chronic disease management and other areas," authors wrote.

They also noted that CM users visited a GP more frequently than non-CM users, and while serious adverse effects from CM use appear relatively rare, "substantial associated direct and indirect risks remain," meaning it is important that patients advise their GP of anything they are taking.

"Reasons for non-disclosure

included lack of inquiry from medical providers, fear of provider disapproval, perception of disclosure as unimportant, belief providers lacked CM knowledge, lacking time, and belief CM was safe," the authors noted.

The paper highlighted high rates of concomitant complementary and conventional medicine use, with disclosure "increasingly identified as a central challenge facing patient management amidst concurrent use over the last 13 years".

The authors suggested that low disclosure levels could potentially be addressed by medical providers through communication with patients about complementary medicine "in a direct, supportive, non-judgemental manner to build trust and communicative success".

The paper urged a greater focus on encouraging disclosure, particularly for primary care providers acting as "gatekeeper in their patients' care".

The full report is available at www.nature.com.

Win with SkinB5

This week **Pharmacy Daily & SkinB5** are giving away each day the NEW SkinB5's Clear Skin Superfood Booster valued at \$63.90.

Clear Skin Superfood Booster is an innovative nutritional approach to skin wellness for blemish and acne prone skin, using specially selected ingredients to supply the body with key vitamins, minerals, essential fatty acids, amino acids, digestive enzymes, probiotics & prebiotics. Available from Sigma PDE CODE 301911 and API PDE CODE 43816. Watch the YouTube video **HERE** for more. For more info see www.skinB5.com.au.

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

What type of collagen does Clear Skin Superfood Booster contain?

Congratulations to yesterday's winner, Elisabeth Tan.

UK, Russia reg deal

MEDICINE regulators in the UK and Russia have signed a new Memorandum of Understanding to support their collaboration on improving public health.

Key elements include exchanging information on drug regulations and safety information, and collaboration on GMP inspections.

Guild Update

Funds to support pharmacist service

THE Guild congratulates the NAPSA pharmacy students who recently raised more than \$16,000 for the Pharmacists' Support Service (PSS) which provides volunteer pharmacists trained in peer support and telephone counselling to assist their colleagues.

At the recent National Australian Pharmacy Students' Association (NAPSA) Congress 2019 in Adelaide, the student body presented PSS with \$16,534 which was raised by students during the congress through various social activities, raffles and competitions.

The Pharmacists' Support Service (PSS) is available to provide a listening ear from 8am to 11pm AEDT every day of the year. Pharmacists can call 1300 244 910 for anonymous and confidential support from a pharmacist colleague.

More information about PSS and some useful resources for pharmacists can be found on the PSS [website](http://www.pss.org.au).