

FDA for OTC naloxone

THE US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has issued a statement of formal support for the development of over-the-counter naloxone to help reduce opioid deaths.

FDA Commissioner Scott Gottlieb said, "With the number of overdose deaths involving prescription and illicit opioids more than doubling over the last seven years to nearly 48,000 in 2017, it's critical that we continue to address this tragedy from all fronts.

"This includes new ways to increase availability of naloxone, a drug used to treat opioid overdose."

In an FDA first, the regulatory body developed a model for the consumer-friendly Drug Facts Label (DFL), a critical step in the development of an OTC product, to encourage drug companies to enter the OTC market.

The model DFL comes in two versions, one for use with a nasal spray and one for an auto-injector.

NZ breastfeeding support goes digital

NEW Zealand child and family service Plunket has launched an online lactation support service which is available to breastfeeding mothers 24/7.

The video conferencing system is based on a service called Zoom, and enables six Plunket fully certified lactation consultants to work directly with mothers who have been referred and provide advice as they are feeding.

Pharmacy asthma action

PHARMACISTS are being urged to ask parents if their kids have an up-to-date asthma action plan, with the National Asthma Council Australia issuing a warning about a tripling in asthma cases as children return to school after the holidays.

The Council said visits to hospital emergency departments and asthma hospitalisations always surge during the first month of the school year, with pharmacists able to play a key role by ensuring children are taking preventive medications.

In Australia 20-25% of children's hospital admissions for asthma occur in Feb each year, with possible causes including not taking

medication during the holiday period, the stress of returning to school, allergic triggers such as mould and dust, as well as "close quarters with new classmates who can bring a new batch of cold and flu bugs," the Council said.

Parents and carers are urged to take their children to the GP to have their asthma reviewed if they are using more of their reliever (Ventolin or Asmol) medications.

The Asthma Council also said parents can share a copy of their child's up-to-date written Asthma Action Plan with school staff and after school carers.

Alzheimer's blood test

BLOOD tests can now predict inherited Alzheimer's disease at least a decade before clinical symptoms are evident, according to an international collaboration of scientists from Australia, UK, USA and Europe.

Researchers used the Dominantly Inherited Alzheimer Network and ultrasensitive immunoassay technology to demonstrate that cerebrospinal fluid and serum levels of a biomarker called Neurofilament light chain can identify presymptomatic stages of familial Alzheimer's disease.

It is not inconceivable that a pharmacy finger-prick test could one day provide this information.

The study was published in Nature Medicine at nature.com.

Thermometer recall



ST JOHN

Ambulance Australia, in consultation with the Therapeutic Goods Administration

(TGA), has announced it is recalling all electronic thermometers supplied in the Tiny Tots First Aid Kits - see tga.gov.au.

The TGA said that although these were not designed for use by children, their child-friendly design may encourage children to play with them - of particular concern is the little yellow duck at one end of the device that can easily be removed exposing the button battery.

St John Ambulance will supply a replacement - call 1300 956 625.

Most golden staph in blood susceptible

WHILE the rate of golden staph aureus in the community is on the rise in Australia, 83.8% have been shown to be susceptible to methicillin, according to a new study published in the *MJA*.

During 2016 and 2017 a total of 10,320 incidents of staph aureus in blood (SAB) were recorded in Vic and WA hospitals.

Go to mja.com.au for the study.

WA GP reprimanded

THE Medical Board of Australia has reported that the WA State Administrative Tribunal has reprimanded a medical practitioner, Kenneth Charles Lee for self-prescribing medication, prescribing in the name of his partner (at the time) for personal consumption and for prescribing for his partner.

Lee admitted to self-diagnosis as well as self-prescribing Schedule 4 medications including Eformoterol, Pramipexole, Clonidine, Colchicine, Liothyronine, Testosterone, Desvenlafaxine and Mirtazapine.

In addition, he admitted to prescribing S4 drugs for his partner when they were for his own use.

He presented the scripts to various pharmacies and failed to keep appropriate records although the medications were not inappropriate or in excessive quantities.

As well as the reprimand, Lee was ordered to pay \$4,000 costs, the Board's costs of \$2,500 and submit to conditions around prescribing.

Visit ecourts.justice.wa.gov.au.

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Dispensary Corner

A PERSONAL trainer who claims walking barefoot has cured him of chronic knee pain wants to see the rest of world get over its addiction to shoes.

Aynsley Lynam from the UK is a vegan fitness trainer who swears by the benefits of barefoot exercise, claiming a host of positive health effects.

"Humans weren't born to wear shoes," Lynam said.

"The way in which you walk barefoot puts a lot less stress on the knees, ankles and quadriceps and lower back - it also causes you to become more aware of your current surroundings as you don't want to step on anything too sharp," he added.

Even if this turns out to have some scientific merit, surely the plunge in personal hygiene at the gym would be far too big a cost to pay, right? Sniff, sniff, errrgh!

GP slams dispensing costs

GOLD Coast GP Evan Ackermann has written an argument against pharmacy dispensing charges for chronic disease medicines, calling for longer term supply packs to reduce patient costs.

Published in *MJA InSight*, the article calls the monthly medication dispensing for many long-term health conditions "an anachronism that needs to go".

"The evidence available favours longer prescription durations for selected chronic conditions for both health and financial outcomes.

"It is time to consider 3- or 6-month medication supply for many of these chronic diseases, and transfer savings from excessive pharmacy fees back to patients."

While Ackermann admits that increased drug supply is clearly not suitable for all chronic disease medications, such as antipsychotic agents, analgesics and other expensive drugs, "for a sizable proportion of chronic disease management, longer prescribed medication supply is safe and appropriate".

"In Canada, maintenance drugs for long term conditions are

encouraged and already being dispensed in 100-day supply."

He argues that with chronic disease medications topping the prescription counts in Australia, the savings to the health system in dispensing and administrative fees would be "considerable", although he does not quantify what that means.

"The main obstacle to this reform is pharmacy.

"Loss of revenue from prescription, administrative and handling fees would be significant.

"The practice of routine monthly supply of medications simply increases costs and inconveniences patients without any health benefit," the GP wrote.

Ackermann concludes his story with the unquantified claim that "High prescription numbers place an unnecessary workload on pharmacists, which is associated with dispensing errors", and a reference to health costs as an election issue.

"Addressing the costs of "routine" medication repeats and intervals should be a priority," he finished.

See his article at mja.com.au.

Pharmacy Guild Update

6CPA program Administration

MEMBERS would be aware that the administration of the 23 Community Pharmacy Programs funded under the Sixth Community Pharmacy Agreement (6CPA) are transitioning from the Pharmacy Guild of Australia to the Pharmacy Programs Administrator.

From 1 February 2019 all new claims should be submitted to the Pharmacy Programs Administrator.

The Guild and the Pharmacy Programs Administrator are committed to working closely together to make the transition of services as smooth as possible

A Pharmacy Programs Administrator website www.ppaonline.com.au has been established which has details relating to:

- Transition Overview - Claims processing
- Support Centre
- Website
- Pharmacy Programs Administrator - Registration and Claiming Portal (New Portal)
- Guild - 6CPA Registration and Claiming Portal (Old Portal)
- Program Specific Transition Information.

Full details can be accessed here www.ppaonline.com.au.

Win with Plunkett's



Is Plunkett's Aloe Vera certified organic?

Everyday this week Pharmacy Daily and Plunkett's are giving away an Aloe Vera prize pack valued at over \$60 each including Plunkett's Pure Aloe Vera gel 240ml, Plunkett's Pure Aloe Vera gel 75g, Plunkett's Pure Aloe Vera Spray 125ml, Plunkett's Pure Aloe Vera Moisturiser 200ml and one Plunkett's Pure Aloe Vera facial mask.

Aloe Barbadensis 'Natures medicine plant' is renowned for its soothing, cooling and hydrating properties. Plunkett's Aloe Vera is fragrance and colour free and contains pure certified organic Aloe Vera extracted from Aloe Barbadensis Leaf - rich in vitamins, minerals, amino acids and antioxidants to restore dry and damaged skin all year round.

Visit: www.Plunketts.com.au.

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

Congratulations to yesterday's winner, Juliana Kobryn.



EXERCISE app Strava looked at more than 685 million entries in the United States and found that 17 Jan is the day that Americans are most likely to give up their New Year's fitness resolution.

Perhaps the only way to avoid getting depressed about this collective lack of persistence is to start a new tradition, 17 Jan, the day we vow never again to set ourselves unrealistic health goals? Too pessimistic?