

Reviewing antibiotics

UK COMMUNITY pharmacists will be called upon by the British Government to play an active role reviewing the dose and duration of antimicrobial prescriptions, as part of the country's plans to battle antimicrobial resistance.

The commitment made by the Department of Health and Social Care includes "enhancing the role of pharmacists...to review the dose and duration of antimicrobial prescriptions (especially long-term or repeat ones) and work with prescribers to review those that are inappropriate through evidence-based, system-wide interventions".

The government said targets include cutting the number of drug-resistant infections by 10% (5,000 infections) by 2025, reducing the use of antibiotics in humans by 15% and preventing at least 15,000 patients from contracting infections as a result of their healthcare each year by 2024.

In addition, clinical pharmacists in care homes and GP practices will "enhance antimicrobial stewardship through knowledge exchange and learning", the department said.

Officials also warned that online pharmacies selling antibiotics threaten plans and can also expect "significant regulatory attention".

Meds issues costing \$1.4b

THE annual cost of medication-related problems in Australia has been calculated at a whopping \$1.4 billion - or about 15% of total PBS expenditure - according to a new report released by the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia.

The *Medicine Safety: Take Care* report, developed for the PSA by the Quality Use of Medicines and Pharmacy Research Centre at the University of South Australia, reveals 250,000 medication error-related hospitalisations each year, along with a further 400,000 emergency department presentations.

PSA National President Dr Chris Freeman said the report revealed the "sobering extent" of the issue, and showed the need for medicine harm to become a national health priority in Australia.

He said the number of people admitted to hospital as a result of medication misadventure was almost four times those hospitalised due to car accidents.

"If medicine harm was a chronic disease it would already be a national health priority.

"This report highlights that governments, pharmacists and other health professionals need

to work together to reduce the alarming incidence of medication errors, misadventure, misuse and interactions," Freeman said.

The report's author, Professor Libby Roughead, noted that as the use of pharmaceuticals increases so too do rates of medication error, management problems and interactions with other drugs.

In 2016-17 about 66% of patients visiting GPs took at least one continual medication, with 11% experiencing adverse medication events in the prior six months.

"Four-in-ten older Australians have been prescribed at least one potentially inappropriate medicine, confirming the need for greater checks and balances in the way medicines are prescribed, dispensed and monitored," she said.

The PSA argued that the role of pharmacists wherever medicines are used - in the community, at hospital discharge and in residential aged care homes - had the potential to significantly reduce the number of adverse events.

"There is a clear need for pharmacists to lead medication reconciliation and review activities...they are uniquely placed within the healthcare system, and the frequency with which they interact with patients means they are equipped to identify a medication-related issue and resolve it immediately."

To view the report [CLICK HERE](#).

Pharmacists can ease the burden

THE Pharmacy Guild of Australia says Australia's community pharmacy sector stands ready to fill gaps in primary care, citing a new Productivity Commission report which highlights the burden on GPs and hospitals.

The report said there were three million "avoidable" hospital presentations in 2017-18, where people who should have seen a GP went to a hospital emergency department instead.

One million Australians also put off seeing a doctor because they could not afford it, the report said.

"Community pharmacies are an under-utilised and highly accessible asset in our health system, and we can do more to ease the strain both on hospital emergency departments and on hard-pressed doctors' surgeries," said Guild National President, George Tambassis.

Deprescribing hurdles

POLYPHARMACY is increasing among older Australians, raising their risk of experiencing medication-related harm, according to Wollongong University researchers who identified factors affecting the process of deprescribing by GPs.

"Limited time to review medications, poor communication between prescribers and a perception that other prescribers do not respect their role as overall coordinators of their older patients' medications were considered by respondents to be unsupportive of deprescribing," authors wrote.

They added that "deprescribing is not routinely considered in practice".

The *Australian Journal of Primary Health* paper is at [publish.csiro.au](#).

Cannabis cookies fail

CALIFORNIAN natural medicine physician William Eidelman is fighting to retain his licence after he prescribed cannabis cookies to a four-year-old boy.

He claimed that small doses of marijuana would help control the child's temper tantrums.

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Dispensary Corner

ONCE upon a time it was a trusted medical doctrine to prescribe a course of leeches for virtually any physical ailment, but thankfully very few have remained faithful to its uniform usage over the years.

However there is at the very least one Russian man trying to keep the now very uncommon practice alive, with security agents at Canada's Toronto Airport finding 5,000 leeches secreted in his baggage.

The man spuriously claimed initially that he was bringing the parasitic worms into Canada to help fertilise his orchids with the "waste water" they would create.

That excuse didn't stick with border officials however, who thought the story "sucked", instead suggesting he was intending to sell them for medical purposes. What a leech!



CYCLING may surpass drugs to keep fit and healthy, with one small caveat - not when you're flying over the handle bars.

A lucky bike rider recently had a close encounter with a deer in Arizona while speeding down the side of a mountain.

A GoPro camera captured the incident which saw the galloping huffed mammal charge its way across the road and collect the cyclist along the way.

The rider walked away unscathed, as did the deer which retreated back into the scrub.

View the lucky escape [HERE](#).

Medlab seals Priceline deal

LISTED medical life sciences firm Medlab Clinical has announced a new agreement with Australian Pharmaceutical Industries (API), which will stock Medlab's core nutraceutical range across its Priceline Pharmacy network.

The wide-ranging deal will make the products available through over 475 stores including 350 pharmacies, while API will also wholesale the range meaning more than 2,100 independent pharmacies will also be able to access the nutraceuticals.

"The agreement positions Medlab's nutraceutical range into professional pharmacy, with onboarding expected to take 3-4 months," said Medlab CEO Dr Sean Hall, adding that it was anticipated that the deal would result in a "substantial increase in sales".

The Medlab range is distinguished by its exposure to clinical research, with the company currently holding 27 patents covering a significant number of the nutraceutical products which include NanoCelle items delivered using Medlab's patented delivery platform.

"Medlab is very excited with this opportunity to work with Priceline Pharmacy and other independent groups, as it allows us to support people in the community suffering chronic illnesses by providing them easier access to scientifically backed products," Hall said.

Medlab has also announced it expects to exhibit at this year's APP conference on the Gold Coast, taking place in just over a month.

\$36.8m for Parkinson's

PARKINSON'S disease research has received a boost, with \$36.8 million committed by the Health Department through the Garvan Institute's Australian Parkinson Mission and in Parkinson's nurses to improve the life of people living with the disease and ultimately to find a cure.

The funding comes from the "landmark Medical Research Future Fund, which is giving unprecedented support to the best and brightest minds from our research community," Health Minister Greg Hunt said.

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