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Sinemet supply alert

THE New Zealand Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Authority (Medsafe) has updated its alert around the short supply of Sinemet (carbidopa + levodopa) products.

Medsafe says there is potential for confusion among prescribers and dispensing pharmacists.

See details at medsafe.govt.nz.



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AMA warns against S3 OC

CALLS for oral contraceptives to be downscheduled to pharmacist-only should be resisted despite the potential savings the move could deliver, the Australian Medical Association (AMA) believes.

Research sponsored by the Australian Self-Medication Industry (ASMI) - which is rebranding as Consumer Healthcare Products (CHP) Australia (*PD 27 May*) - found the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) could create \$3.4 billion in savings by rescheduling the medicines as pharmacist-only or Schedule 3 (S3).

AMA Vice President, Dr Chris Zappala, warned the move could have unintended consequences, by removing the need for patients to visit their GP for an assessment.

"You can currently get a script for a year, and that is enough time for your medical history to change, for the medications you're taking - including over-the-counter medications to change," he said.

"Many GPs use what might, in some ways, be a brief consultation as an opportunity for preventive health.

"And...you really shouldn't probably be just handing out a pill and contraception like that without having some sense of people's sexual history and understanding, for example, their STD risk."

However ASMI/CHP CEO, Dr Deon Schoombie, said the findings of the study "should serve as a prompt for all key stakeholders to investigate whether it would be appropriate to switch from prescription to non-prescription.

"Increasing access to non-prescription medicines, where

appropriate, will substantially benefit consumers, healthcare professionals, government and industry," he said.

"Both sides of politics have recognised the potential benefit with the Queensland Labor Government instigating a trial for continued dispensation of oral contraceptives in April, Federal Labor committing to tasking the TGA to investigate ways to increase access to oral contraceptives during the 2019 Federal Election and the Liberal Opposition in Victoria committed to making oral contraceptives available over-the-counter during the 2018 State Election," Schoombie noted.

The TGA is currently reviewing the possibility of adding a new appendix (Appendix M) for S3 medicines, which would potentially allow appropriately trained pharmacists to dispense oral contraceptives, erectile dysfunction drugs and other commonly prescribed medications, over-the-counter (OTC) (*PD 29 Mar*).

TWCM pain priority

TERRYWHITE Chemmart (TWCM) has launched a new Pain Information Hub, which aims to help pain patients engage with relevant videos and other resources in "meaningful and effective ways".

Unveiled during this month's TWCM Melbourne Masterclass, the innovation will complement an upcoming intensive pain management blitz, which will see pharmacists encourage as many eligible customers as possible to request a MedsCheck.

The hub also functions as a resource for pharmacists to support patient counselling, alongside offering tips on holistic solutions and a collaborative approach with other health professionals to help manage pain.

There's also a social-media based peer-to-peer special interest group for TWCM pharmacists, which aims to consolidate the experiences, knowledge and wisdom of the network "and shift the silo nature of retail pharmacy practice to a more collaborative and evolved experience of working".



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Pharmacy Daily



Dispensary Corner

AUSTRALIA'S severe flu season is driving demand for pharmacist-administered flu jabs, but it is also sending funeral home share prices skyward, according to stockbroking firm, Bell Potter.

With more than 100 flu-related deaths already in 2019, investors appear to be in seventh heaven with the morbid industry's news.

In recent months Australia's second-biggest funeral home group, Propel Funeral Partners, has seen its stock jump 30% climbing close to \$3.20 a share at the time of writing, from as low as \$2.42 on 11 Jan.

Speaking to the *Australian Financial Review*, Bell Potter analyst Sam Haddad, noted the upward trajectory of the funeral services industry.

"The level of flu activity can provide a strong gauge of death case volumes in first-world markets, particularly those with an ageing demographic such as Australia," he said, setting a 12-month target price of \$3.54 for Propel's stock.

Propel CEO, Albin Kurti, moved to allay investor excitement, saying "the peak season for the funeral industry is from June to October".

Rival listed undertaking group, InvoCare, has also seen its stock rise, reporting that "the improved trading we experienced in the early part of the year has continued through Q1".

InvoCare's share price hit a 12-month high of \$16.18 on 28 May, having reported a 9% increase in operating earnings after tax on 14 May.

As they say, it's an ill wind that blows nobody any good.

DDS celebrates 12 years

DISCOUNT Drug Stores (DDS) celebrated during its recent 12th national conference by highlighting an outstanding year of achievements from its franchise partners across Australia.

The group scooped top prize for Roy Morgan's Annual Customer Satisfaction Awards in the Chemist & Pharmacy category for 2018 (**PD** 22 Feb 2019) and followed that up with a January win as well (**PD** 08 Apr 2019).

New initiatives announced included an advancement in clinical relationship management (CRM) software tool, Script; a partnership with Doctors on Demand to allow customers to have an online in-pharmacy doctor's appointment; and the establishment of the DDS National Council to facilitate collaboration between stakeholders on the future of the DDS brand.

Acting Head of Sigma's Discount Pharmacy Retail Group (DPRG), Stephen Dunstan, said the conference was the perfect opportunity to connect with franchisees.

"As pharmacy services and programs are continually evolving, it's critical to be able to keep our franchise partners up to date so they can be better armed with the knowledge required to support their customers' needs," he said.

The event also celebrated the graduation of the first intake of future pharmacy leaders who had completed the DDS Leadership Program, announced at last year's conference.

Delegates received an update on the new "WholeLife Pharmacy & Healthfoods" retail models introduced last year, which officially joined the Sigma DPRG in Feb



2019 as part of a joint venture with WholeLife founders, Frank and Vince Pappalardo.

WholeLife already has nine sites in operation - six 'big box' models and three 'store within a store' - with plans to expand to 10 standalone WholeLife sites in the coming 12 months and further roll out the 'store within a store' concept in up to ten DDS sites.

Cold-chain breaches

THE Victorian Pharmacy Authority (VPA) has alerted pharmacists to the importance of how medicines are stored securely and within cold-chain requirements in its latest communiqué.

All drug refrigerators are to be dedicated to the storage of medicines and equipped with a temperature data logger.

Temperature logs need to be maintained and procedures need to be in place to follow in the case of cold-chain breaches - see Appendix 5 in the VPA guidelines - **CLICK HERE**.

Three recent panel hearings were enunciated.

Case 1: A non-pharmacist staff member accessed the pharmacy prior to a registered pharmacist arrival - entry devices were not restricted to registered pharmacists, constituting a breach.

Case 2: Unauthorised compounding without safety measures and Schedule 8 poisons records were not accurate.

Case 3: Inadequate measures were in place to ensure returned medicines were not re-used and there were security and hygiene concerns around S8 products.

Pharmacists involved were either reprimanded or cautioned.

CLICK HERE for the VPA circular.

Connect program out

THE full agenda for this year's Pharmacy Connect conference has been released, with the event at the Hilton Sydney 05-07 Sep themed as *Innovation, Transformation and Collaboration*.

More than 30 speakers are presenting - for full details and regos see pharmacyconnect.com.au.



Events Calendar

WELCOME to *Pharmacy Daily's* events calendar, opportunities to earn CPE and CPD points.

If you have an upcoming event you'd like us to feature, email info@pharmacydaily.com.au.

05 - 13 Jun: PSA Offshore Refresher Conference; Montreux, Switzerland and Lyon, France; registrations now open: www.psa.org.au

22 - 23 Jun: SHPA Electronic Medication Management Conference; Novotel Manly Pacific, Manly, NSW; register here: www.shpa.eventsair.com

28 - 30 Jun: ConPharm 2019; Pullman on the Park Melbourne; for details see: www.aacp.com.au

26 - 28 Jul: PSA19; Hyatt Regency Sydney; registrations now open: www.psa19.com

04 - 07 Aug: Medici Capital Pharmacy Snow Business Conference 2019; Mt Buller, Victoria; register your interest here: www.medicic.com.au

05 - 07 Sep: Pharmacy Connect; Hilton Hotel, Sydney; for details and to register visit: www.pharmacy-connect.com.au