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Today's issue of PD

Pharmacy Daily today features three pages of news, a cover wrap from BioCeuticals, plus full pages from:

- Chemsave
- Wizard Pharmacy

Ease sore muscles

BIOCEUTICALS is highlighting its brand-new Ultra Muscleeze + Pain Relief, which has been formulated to relieve mild joint pain and soreness, and support muscle function and muscle health - see the **cover page**.

Savings add up

DO THE maths and discover how you can save more than \$20,000 a year with Chemsave's limited-time special membership offer. For more information, head to **page four**.

Starpharma launches new venture

AUSTRALIAN biopharmaceutical company, Starpharma, has partnered with life sciences investment firm Medicxi to launch a new UK-based company called Petalion Therapeutics Limited.

The new venture will initially focus on developing novel targeted dendrimer-drug conjugate therapies in oncology, using Starpharma's proprietary DEP dendrimer platform technology.

"We are excited to announce this strategic partnership, which combines Starpharma's expertise in developing dendrimer technology with Medicxi's success in converting development candidates into high-value commercial assets," Starpharma CEO Cheryl Maley said.

"If successful, the oncology therapies that Petalion will develop have the potential to become an important treatment modality for a potentially wide range of cancer indications," she explained.

Medicxi will provide Petalion with an initial investment of up to US\$25



million (A\$38 million) to fund the development of a novel oncology drug candidate.

On an exclusive basis, Starpharma will license certain intellectual property to Petalion for the research, development, manufacture and commercialisation of this potential new therapeutic and, in turn, will gain a 22.5% stake in the new company.

Additionally, Starpharma will also provide R&D services to Petalion on a fee-for-service basis.

"Medicxi is a highly innovative organisation with extensive

experience in drug development and commercialisation," Maley said.

"Their investment in this partnership validates the strong potential of Starpharma's DEP dendrimer technology as a novel drug delivery platform.

"This is just one of many ongoing efforts to prioritise the commercialisation of Starpharma's DEP platform and our partnerships to advance the application of the DEP technology in high-value novel therapeutic areas."

UK-qualified clinical oncologist and experienced pharmaceutical executive, Dr Mehdi Shahidi, has been appointed as Petalion's Chief Executive Officer. JM

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Heart health awareness

NEW Australian data has revealed “alarmingly low” community awareness for heart valve disease (HVD), one of the country’s leading causes of cardiovascular morbidity and mortality.

The research was presented by David Playford, the University of Notre Dame’s Consultant Cardiologist, Cardiovascular Imaging Specialist, and Head of Cardiology, at the American College of Cardiology’s (ACC) annual scientific session.

With more than half a million Australians living with HVD, there is a need for simple, cost-effective strategies to improve patient education, disease awareness, and community knowledge of when to seek a heart health check, Playford told delegates at the conference, which took place recently in Atlanta, Georgia.

“Given more than a quarter of a million Australians are unaware they are living with HVD, and with these figures projected to increase to 435,000 by 2051, this disease represents a serious, emerging public health issue, that warrants urgent attention,” he said.

Only 14% of the 1,041 Australians

aged 60 years and above who participated in the Australian population survey rated HVD as a major health concern, and only 17% were able to explain HVD, the Perth-based professor said.

Severe symptomatic aortic stenosis arising from HSV can cause death within two years without timely intervention.

“Early detection, and intervention are critical for curtailing the rising rates of undiagnosed HVD, particularly given common symptoms - especially exercise intolerance - are often misattributed to ‘old age,’” Playford explained.

“To prevent symptom and disease progression, untimely death, or sudden deterioration requiring hospital admission, a timely diagnosis of HVD is essential.”

He went on to emphasise that regular health checks for people aged 60 years and above may help to achieve an early HVD diagnosis, while increased treatment would substantially reduce cardiovascular disease mortality.

“Fortunately, signs of HVD even before symptoms develop can be detected...during a routine GP visit,” Playford added. *JM*

New study sheds light on opioid use in NSW

A NEW study on oxycodone use in NSW has been released, revealing almost half of new oxycodone use takes place shortly after a procedure or hospital stay.

Oxycodone is a strong opioid medicine often used to manage cancer, acute and chronic pain.

However, it has come under scrutiny due to a prescription opioid addiction epidemic in the United States.

Little was known about its use in Australia - until now.

Published in the *British Journal of Clinical Pharmacology*, the study was led by researchers from the Medicines Intelligence Research Program and National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC) at UNSW.

The team analysed linked data on PBS medicines dispensed, Medicare claims, hospitalisations and ED visits between 2014-2018, involving more than 800,000 people who were prescribed the opioid during that time.

According to the study, 30% of people starting a new course of opioids were specifically prescribed oxycodone.

“Acute care and procedures like



joint or hip replacement surgery, caesarean section and other surgeries accounted for about one half of all new oxycodone use,” says said study lead author Dr Malcolm Gillies.

“On the other hand, hospital admission for injury or a past-year history of cancer were less common reasons for oxycodone initiation,” he added.

The results also found that while two-thirds of the time, people stopped using the medication after finishing a single pack, 4.6% people were still using it a year later.

“The fact that a proportion of people were taking oxycodone 12 months later underlines the need for early, careful assessment of ongoing pain to maximise appropriate use of non-opioid and non-pharmacological pain control,” warned Dr Gillies. *JHM*

PHA welcomes back pain investigation

FOLLOWING ABC *Four Corners*’ investigation last week that revealed the fraud within the chronic pain industry, Private Health Australia (PHA) is welcoming an examination of their own health funds.

“PHA will immediately ask payment integrity experts within our health funds to investigate allegations of fraud, waste and abuse in spine surgery for back pain,” said PHA Chief Executive Officer, Dr Rachel David.

“We expect the Department of Health and Aged Care will launch its own investigation as a matter of urgency and we’ll be seeking confirmation of this.”

After studying the billing records of more than 23,000 patients who had spinal surgery, *Four Corners* found that 77%



were billed for more complex services than provided, 10% were billed for longer services than provided and 7% were billed for spinal fusions for chronic lower back pain without a diagnosis.

“With cost of living escalating and pressure increasing on family and government budgets, it is crucial the government and payors work together as a matter of urgency to restore trust in our medical payments system,” said Dr David. *JHM*

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Dispensary Corner

WHO knew that gos one-hit wonder Peter Andre would one day help a woman regain her voice after suffering from a neurological disorder?

In 2021, a North Yorkshire woman called Leanne Fraser had a C-section and discovered that after giving birth, she had a sudden excruciating pain and lost her ability to speak.

In the following weeks, Fraser experienced spasms and stuttering and after visiting a neurologist, she was diagnosed with functional neurological disorder, a condition that slows the brain's ability to send signals.

However, years later, Fraser finally found her voice after she overheard her son listening to pop singer Peter Andre's *Mysterious Girl*, which was a top 10 hit in Australia in 1996.

By singing the song in her head, it helped Fraser speak.

She continues to use songs to help her talk today.

"It's amazing having my speech back," said Fraser.

"I'm grateful to Peter Andre."

Sadly, Fraser still struggles with fatigue, seizures, mobility issues and tremors.

She describes the experience as "heartbreaking".

"At the start I used to feel like I went into hospital as me and came out a different person; a different mum," she told *Daily Mail UK*.

"But I came out as a mum to a gorgeous baby boy...Henry is healthy and happy.

"That's a really big motivation to me - to be the best mum I can be every day."

Glow Red for Voice Day



IN HONOUR of World Voice Day on 16 Apr, landmarks across Australia and New Zealand will glow red, from Federation Square in Melbourne to the Big Banana in Coffs Harbour, literally shining a light on issues around voice health.

It's part of a campaign from the Australian Dysphonia Network (ADN), which aims to start conversations around the voice disorder known as dysphonia.

The theme for World Voice Day this year has been revealed to be "resonate, educate, celebrate".

According to a press release from the ADN, unlike vision and hearing, the wider community often takes their voice for granted.

However, chronic dysphonia can be the result of damage to the larynx, an underlying health condition, overuse or it can be standalone diseases, like spasmodic dysphonia, which impacts one in every 100,000 people in Australia.

Around 30% of occupations around the world rely on the use of voice, including teachers, salespeople, politicians, lawyers

and plenty of others.

A condition like dysphonia can have dire consequences on someone's career and interpersonal relationships, potentially leading to mental health issues like depression, said the ADN.

Unfortunately, there is a lack of education around dysphonia, and as a result, it is often misunderstood and poorly diagnosed.

The ADN is a not-for-profit organisation that was established in 2016, with the aim of supporting those impacted by a voice disorder and educating the wider community about related issues.

Led by people who either live with a voice disorder or have a friend or loved one who does, the ADN aims to educate the general population, GPs and health practitioners about voice disorders.

It also lobbies for and funds research around the causes, management and social impacts of the disorders.

Visit adn.org.au for more information, support group chats, downloadable resources, tools and webinars. *JHM*



Guild Update

Wages and employment trends webinar tomorrow

THERE is still time to register for the Guild's Pharmacy Business Career Network (PBCN) webinar, which takes place tomorrow night.

The webinar is called 'Insights into Wages and Employment Trends' and offers registered attendees vital analysis of current employment shifts and remuneration trends.

From understanding the evolving roles of pharmacists to implementing effective compensation strategies, this session equips attendees with the knowledge and tools needed to optimise their workforce management practices.

Special guests of the webinar include Heidi Dariz, General Manager at Raven's Recruitment, and the Pharmacy Guild's Workplace Relations and Business Director, Scott Harris.

The session begins tomorrow night at 7.00pm (AEST), will conclude at 8.00pm, and is accessible via Zoom.

The webinar is free to attend, but registration is required.

So don't miss this opportunity to stay ahead of the curve and ensure the success of your community pharmacy.

Register now to secure your spot by clicking **HERE**.

The Pharmacy Guild's PBCN supports the improvement and growth of pharmacists' business performance with insights and advice from a range of industry professionals.

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