

## Students training to immunise

**Mark Gertsakis**

IN a development that is set to further push the case of pharmacists administering vaccinations, the pharmacy faculty at Charles Sturt University (CSU) has started training its students to immunise.

Fourth year pharmacy students finishing at the end of this year will be qualified in administering vaccinations after the university introduced the component at the start of the current semester.

Last week, the Tasmanian government **confirmed** that a swine flu vaccination program would be rolled out to additional pharmacies this month after a trial offering free swine flu jabs in the state's pharmacies proved to be very popular.

"We are preparing pharmacists for vaccination on the basis that we are convinced that it will come," SCU pharmacy professor Patrick Ball told



**LEARNING TO JAB:** Vaccine administration is now part of pharmacists' university training.

*Pharmacy eNews.*

"It is going to come to a head in the near future. So it is to some extent pre-empting that."

Prof Ball said between 80 and 90 per cent of US adults were getting their vaccinations in pharmacies with every state in the US now

allowing pharmacists to administer vaccines.

He said pharmacy students at CSU would not only be taught the practical steps of administering vaccines, but also how to deal with first aid problems that may arise.

"Anaphylaxis is what everyone thinks of but, in actual fact, anaphylaxis is remarkably rare and, provided you have EpiPens available, the vast majority of people entering anaphylaxis will survive," Prof Ball said.

"More of a problem is actually identifying those patients who just faint at the sight of a needle. So we'll be teaching them to identify such episodes."

He believed, however, that if pharmacies were going to "go down this road" of administering vaccines, they would need to have private areas within the premises to do that.

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## Pradaxa listed on PBS against VTE

AUSTRALIA'S first oral direct thrombin inhibitor is set to be listed on the PBS for the prevention of venous thromboembolism (VTE) in patients undergoing total hip or knee replacement.

Pradaxa (dabigatran etexilate) will receive a public subsidy at the start of April less than two years after first being approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration.

According to Professor Hatem Salem, head of the Australian Centre for Blood Diseases, the PBS listing of Pradaxa will help simplify post-operative VTE prevention both in and out of hospital.

"As the only oral direct thrombin

inhibitor available in Australia, Pradaxa represents a major milestone in the advancement of anticoagulation," Professor Salem said.

"Wider access to effective and well-tolerated oral therapies such as Pradaxa, which do not require monitoring or dose adjustments, will help increase uptake of, and compliance with, anticoagulant therapy outside the hospital setting."

Pradaxa binds directly to both free and clot-bound thrombin, blocking its effect within the coagulation cascade, therefore preventing thrombus formation.

Professor Salem said the use of some current anticoagulants was limited outside the hospital because they required injection.

"As many orthopaedic patients are discharged from hospital within days of surgery, it is important that they understand the need to continue anticoagulant therapy outside hospital and have access to therapies which facilitate this," he said.

"Without appropriate preventative treatment, up to 60 per cent of orthopaedic patients may develop VTE."

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## Micardis offers new option for cardiovascular protection

ANTIHYPERTENSIVE agent Micardis (telmisartan) 80mg has been approved for the prevention of cardiovascular morbidity and mortality in patients with vascular disease or high-risk diabetes.

Pharmacists can now advise patients 55 years or older with a history of coronary or peripheral artery disease, stroke or TIA, or diabetes with end organ damage.

Following the results of the ONTARGET study, Micardis 80mg became the first and only angiotensin II receptor antagonist (AIIA) approved for the prevention of cardiovascular (CV) morbidity and mortality in a broad group of high CV risk patients – regardless of their blood pressure.

"The new indication for Micardis 80mg will not only change the way many patients at high CV risk are managed but how health care professionals view AIIAs and ACE inhibitors," said University of Melbourne Associate Professor John Amerena, an ONTARGET investigator.

The study, which involved 25,620

patients at high cardiovascular risk, revealed Micardis 80mg was associated with a similar level of cardiovascular morbidity and mortality as the ACE inhibitor ramipril 10mg.

In the previous HOPE study, ramipril 10mg had been shown to reduce the risk of heart attack, stroke or cardiovascular death by 22 per cent compared with placebo in a similar high CV risk patient group.

ONTARGET also found significantly lower rates of discontinuation with Micardis 80mg than ramipril 10mg, largely due to lower rates of cough reported with Micardis compared to ramipril.

Professor Greg Fulcher, director of diabetes, endocrinology and metabolism at the Royal North Shore Hospital, said pharmacists should counsel patients who experience side-effects from an ACE inhibitor – such as coughing – on the availability of alternative treatment options associated with similar efficacy and fewer side effects.

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### BRIEFS

#### UNITY URGED ON HOSPITALS

The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA) has today called on all pharmacy bodies to work together in response to hospital reforms proposed by the Federal Government.

"SHPA believes that during health reform, organisations must resist the impulse to pursue a minority agenda and rather embrace the best options for the profession as a whole to serve the community," a statement from SHPA said.

"The Rudd Government announcements are a catalyst for the profession and all pharmacy organisations to embark on a truly collaborative effort as health care develops new care paradigms."

#### REPRODUCTION SEMINAR

The Pharmaceutical Society of Australia will hold a seminar on reproductive health in Lorne, Victoria, on 20-21 March.

*Reproductive Health: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* will cover sexually transmitted infections, contraception, conception and pre/post natal care.

The seminar will feature a

presentation by the Monash IVF international medical director, Professor Gabor Kovacs AM.

#### CONSTIPATION GUIDELINES

Pharmacists will today have access to new clinical best practice guidelines to identify, assess and treat constipation and impaction in older people.

Developed by a multi-disciplinary team of 10 leading experts and chaired by gastroenterologist Professor Peter Gibson, *IMPACT Bowel Care for the Older Patient* contains a comprehensive, practical and easy-to-use set of guidelines, assessment tools and treatment pathways.

"The availability of such a comprehensive resource is a welcome addition for pharmacists and other health care professionals who manage and treat constipation in older patients," said Erin Dunn, a pharmacist from the Prince Charles Hospital in Brisbane.

To request a copy, ring 1800 636 000.

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