

**SUBSCRIBE**  
Not a subscriber?  
**CLICK HERE**  
to register for your  
**FREE** daily news  
update.

## Cancer drugs set to boom

Mark Gertsakis

THE market for cancer drugs has been tipped to almost double in value in the next decade amid a spate of new approvals and PBS listings in the past week.

Business analysis firm Datamonitor has predicted sales of Australia's top 20 oncology drugs to reach \$1 billion by 2018 after growing by 30 per cent to \$545 million in the three years to 2008.

Although this growth was tipped to slow due to the entry of generics, Datamonitor said the largest slice – more than three-quarters of the entire market for cancer drugs – would be taken up by new generation molecular-targeted therapies.

Yesterday, drugmaker Roche **announced** that it would be applying for another PBS listing for Avastin (bevacizumab) after the

Therapeutic Goods Administration approved the drug as a single agent for the treatment of patients with grade IV glioma.

The Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC) last week **considered** listing Erbitux (cetuximab) on the PBS for the treatment of metastatic bowel cancer while chemotherapy drug Taxotere (docetaxel) was **approved** for PBS listing at the start of April for the treatment of breast cancer.

"It is an increasingly common school of thought that tumour-targeted agents could become some of the most powerful tools in the fight against cancer due to their ability to discriminate between cancerous cells and other healthy cell types," Datamonitor's senior health care analyst Lisette Oversteegen said.

According to Ms Oversteegen, the future uptake of Avastin in

particular depended on the level of Government subsidy which had, so far, been elusive for three out of four indications.

"Assuming the PBAC will not create too many hurdles on its path to reimbursement for additional indications, Avastin is expected to become the second-highest selling cancer drug in Australia by 2018 behind MabThera (rituximab)," she said.

Ms Oversteegen said the popularity of another of Roche's molecular targeted therapies, high selling breast cancer drug Herceptin (trastuzumab), would come under threat from GSK's Tykerb (lapatinib).

"Tykerb, also a molecular targeted treatment, has the advantage of oral administration, while Herceptin is only available as an intravenous drug," she said.

To comment [click here](#).

## Pfizer kicks off pharmacy adherence program

PFIZER has launched a new initiative to help pharmacists enrol and offer support to their customers on drug adherence programs.

A collaboration between the drug maker and Corum Health Services, Pfizer Empower will offer a new way for pharmacists to register customers at the point of sale for its various compliance programs designed to help patients better understand their condition, manage their medicines and make the lifestyle changes necessary to optimise their treatment outcomes.

"These patient support programs aim to complement advice from the health care provider and provide the patient with information and



**STICK TO QUITTING:** Pfizer launches pharmacy based adherence program for Champix.

support to assist adherence to their medication regimes," Pfizer's primary care medical director Dr Peter Stewart said.

Pfizer Empower will be made up of three 12-week programs: Everyday Counts for newly-initiated Lipitor patients, My Time to Quit for newly-initiated Champix patients and Eye Comply for new or existing patients using Xalatan or Xalacom.

"Feedback from customers joining Pfizer's support program for Champix and My Time To Quit has been positive, with more patients reporting success in quitting and completion of the full course of treatment," NSW pharmacist Riccardo Fantuzzi said.

To comment [click here](#).

pharmacy  
expo2010  
the premier pharmacy practice event

**Visitor  
Registration  
Now  
Available!**



**Click here to  
Register for  
Pharmacy  
Expo 2010**

[www.pharmacyexpo.com.au](http://www.pharmacyexpo.com.au)



Australian Government  
Medicare Australia

Stay up-to-date—  
subscribe to receive  
*Bulletin Board* online today



# Tamiflu resistance still a flu concern

THE resistance to popular antiviral Tamiflu (oseltamivir) is set to be high on the agenda during the coming influenza season which is, once again, predicted to be dominated by strains of swine flu.

Experts have warned that the A(H1N1) pandemic virus would return to cause the bulk of flu infections across the country this winter, with fears that rare mutated versions could also be circulating.

According to virologist Professor William Rawlinson, from the University of New South Wales and Sydney's Prince of Wales Hospital, these strains had developed resistance to Tamiflu.

"A handful of resistant viruses were seen in Australia towards the end of the season last year and a small number of resistant viruses seen overseas," Prof Rawlinson said.

"It's an area that is going to be a focus of this year – making sure that we can detect resistant strains

and look for the emergence of resistance to Tamiflu."

He said alternative drugs would have to be used to treat those who contracted a mutated version of the swine flu.

Professor Robert Booy from the National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance at the University of Sydney said swine flu would account of up to 75 per cent of all cases of the flu seen in the community this winter.

"We will see a repeat of last year with a large number of people getting relatively mild infection but the number with severe infections will be less than last year. That's our best guess," Prof Booy said.

"Given the ongoing attempts around Australia to get more people vaccinated, we may well get on top of this next wave to the point where it is not much more than a standard seasonal level of disease."

To comment [click here](#).

## BRIEFS

### PPIS HELP REDUCE BLEEDING

Patients with serious coronary disease who took proton pump inhibitors (PPIs) as well as clopidogrel were at a reduced risk of hospitalisation from gastroduodenal bleeding, a new study has found.

The research, published in the latest edition of the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, concluded that gastroduodenal bleeding in concurrent PPI users was 50 per cent lower than in nonusers.

Researchers found that PPIs reduced hospitalisations for gastroduodenal bleeding by 28.5 for every 1000 patients.

[MORE](#)

### ASMI 2.0

The Australian Self-Medication Industry (ASMI) has today launched a social networking initiative to educate consumers on self help remedies.

A blog, a Facebook page and a Twitter feed will promote steps that individuals can take to improve their health, such as diet, exercise, regular health check-ups and appropriate self-medication.

"We want to create a comprehensive collection of news and information to ensure that consumers have the knowledge and the tools to effectively and safely take greater personal responsibility for their health," ASMI executive director Juliet Seifert said.

[MORE](#)

### WARFARIN GENE TESTING

Simple gene testing can help pinpoint the precise dose of blood clotting drug warfarin, a study in the US has found.

The study, led by Medco Research Institute and the Mayo Clinic, found that hospital stays could be reduced by one-third by undertaking DNA testing to determine the sensitivity of patients to the widely-used drug.

"Patients may get to a stable dose more quickly and therefore have a lower risk of negative outcomes," Dr Robert Epstein, chief medical officer and president of the Medco Research Institute, said.

The study was presented this week at an American College of Cardiology conference.

Advertisement  
removed