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## Heroin helps addicts stay off the streets

Nick O'Donoghue

SUPERVISED injectable doses of heroin are a more effective way to keep addicts off the streets than using methadone a new study revealed.

Published in the *Lancet* today the research found treatment with supervised injectable heroin led to significantly lower use of street heroin compared with supervised injectable methadone or optimised oral methadone.

The 26 week trial involved 127 chronic heroin addicts who had been receiving oral methadone treatment for six months or less at clinics in south London, Darlington and Brighton, randomly split into three groups, with people treated with heroin,

injectable methadone or oral methadone.

Most patients in the trial were white males with a mean age of 37.2 years, were unemployed and had spent time in prison.

They had been using opiates for a mean of 16.6 years and most had been receiving treatment for almost 10 years, all were using street heroin virtually daily and many also reported regular use of cocaine or crack cocaine.

The researchers reported urinalysis showed abstinence from street heroin increased in all three groups in the first six weeks of the trial, with only a slight improvement thereafter.

"Injectable heroin was associated with the greatest proportion of participants with

urine samples negative for street heroin within the first 6 weeks of treatment and thereafter.

"The injectable heroin group was associated with the largest increase in abstinence by the end of 6 weeks," researchers said.

One of the drawbacks of using supervised injectable treatments are intensive for both staff and patients, and need high financial and staffing investments the study's authors said.

However, the gain from reversal of an otherwise adverse disease trajectory is a substantial achievement, especially in view of the extensive harm of heroin addiction for the individual, family, and wider society, they concluded.

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## Terry White opens iconic pharmacy in Victoria

PHARMACY chain Terry White Chemists has opened its new Victorian flagship store in Berwick just outside Melbourne.

Owned by pharmacists Darren Pountney, Chris Allan, Pete Tzimos and Grahame Beecroft the new 750 square metre pharmacy is equipped with a state-of-the-art dispensary, mezzanine level and coffee shop.

Speaking at the opening of the store, Terry White Chemists founder and chairman Terry White described it as "a real must-see flagship for the brand".

"This store is nothing short of magnificent. In classic Terry White Chemists style it successfully integrates the key concepts of health, wellness & beauty.

"It really does make me proud to see such a fantastic group of pharmacists pull off such an iconic



Iconic Pharmacy: Terry White opens new store

pharmacy," he said.

Co-owner of the new store Mr Beecroft said the pharmacy would benefit from Berwick's strong community spirit.

"This is a great area, we feel really lucky to be a part of this community.

"We wanted to make sure we

presented the community with a pharmacy that really delivered," he said.

Mr Beecroft added the aim was to create a store which combined the best of both worlds in terms of its offerings.

"Being a little out of town we have a significant and important role to play in terms of the dispensary and advisory aspects of pharmacy.

"But with this store we wanted to be able to go beyond that and offer a community meeting place - I think we have really achieved that with the coffee shop.

"The range of beauty is also quite substantial. To create a viable business and one which serves the community well, pharmacists need to think outside the square," he said.

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FROM THE GUILD PRESIDENT - KOS SCLAVOS

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## Effective and Efficient in Running Health Awareness Campaigns



THE RUDD Government is committed to establishing Australia's first ever Preventive Health Agency although legislation has been blocked in the Senate.

The agency is a key part of the Rudd Government's decision to invest more in preventative health measures.

The agency was due to start on 1 January 2010 and will receive a significant \$133 million over four years.

### Opportunities

As community pharmacy

looks for new remuneration opportunities it is important to first establish the effectiveness of the pharmacy network in running health prevention campaigns.

Community pharmacy is well placed to run consumer health awareness programs.

Our significant advantage, that we were now aware of, is that the Federal Government has concerns about health awareness campaigns where patients are directed to see their doctor because that would include a significant Medicare cost burden.

Community pharmacy can run awareness campaigns and payment or time and effort could be made via a practice grant which is much more cost effective.

### BowelScreen

We are running a program soon with Bowel Cancer Australia. The Guild will do some data collection and campaign analysis in the weeks after this approaching private program.

BowelScreen Australia is a

pharmacy based bowel cancer awareness, education and screening program.

It's a collaboration between Bowel Cancer Australia and The Pharmacy Guild of Australia and is not part of a Government screening program.

There are a number of key elements to the campaign:

Poster with the key message of, "Don't bury your head in the sand and ignore it! - Bowel Cancer kills more Australians than breast cancer or prostate cancer".

Bag stuffers, which include 8 questions and patients, are encouraged to speak to their pharmacist if they state yes to any questions.

A DL Brochure, which has a great deal of facts and information for patients.

A Pharmacy Counter Box which contains the kits.

More than 13,500 Australians are diagnosed per year with bowel cancer. The pharmacist will play an important role in assisting patients who get a positive test

result. Indeed there are many gastrointestinal conditions that may cause blood in the stool.

### Results

A positive test result does not confirm the presence of bowel cancer but it does indicate the presence of blood that may be invisible to the naked eye in the bowel motion.

The patient will be encouraged to speak to the pharmacist who will encourage the patient to visit their doctor who will initiate further investigation such as a colonoscopy.

Early detection through annual screening is vital. It is preventable, yet it is the second leading cause of cancer related deaths in Australia after lung cancer. A health fund or Medicare rebate may be available for this program.

I ask that you support this campaign as we collect data to prove community pharmacy is well placed to run government awareness and screening programs.

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