

## New head for consultant pharmacists

Simone Roberts

CONSULTANT clinical pharmacist Debbie Rigby has been appointed chair of the Australian Association of Consultant Pharmacy (AACCP).

The announcement was made at the association's annual conference ConPharm in Hobart over the weekend.

Ms Rigby replaces Judy Liauw as chair and will serve a two year term.

"It's an exciting time to be involved with AACCP," Ms Rigby told *Pharmacy eNews*.

"AACCP has just hit 1900 accredited pharmacists this month – that's an all time high. The next few years will see the continued growth of home medicines reviews (HMRs) and residential medication management reviews (RMMRs). We are really gathering



AACP: Debbie Rigby named as new chair.

momentum on good quality evidence about the benefits of the reviews."

Ms Rigby said while changes to both models under the Fifth Community Pharmacy Agreement would allow for greater flexibility, the removal of the Medicare accreditation incentive could have a negative effect on accredited pharmacist numbers.

"Certainly the cost is a disincentive to some people but I think we need to focus on the

opportunities for remuneration through HMRs and RMMRs and not see the \$1500 cost of accreditation as a significant barrier," she said.

The discontinuation of the MMR facilitator program in the new agreement would also be a loss, Ms Rigby said.

"Having the facilitators in the Divisions of General Practice really was a benefit to the pharmacy profession because it gave us a link to primary health care providers, in particular GPs. It will now be up to other organisations such as the Guild and PSA to really focus on strengthening those links with primary care," she said.

The weekend's conference also saw Peter Tenni and Penny Kraemer named joint winners of the AACCP Pfizer Consultant Pharmacist of the Year award.

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## Roadmap for pharmacy's future launched

A NEW strategic plan for the future of pharmacy under the Fifth Community Pharmacy Agreement, which comes into place next month, has been launched.

The document called The **Roadmap** – the Strategic Direction for Community Pharmacy, published by the Pharmacy Guild of Australia, is designed to help pharmacists deal with the challenges and opportunities the new agreement presents.

Guild president Kos Sclavos, who first **outlined** the plan at APP earlier this year, described the roadmap as a "living document", designed to provide the mechanism by which community pharmacy can develop.

"Our vision brings together our strengths and aligns those

strengths with the new direction of the health system - a health system where the patient is at the centre.

"Community pharmacies are located in most suburbs and every region, and pharmacists have always engaged with their communities.

"The evolving health system calls for community pharmacy to further extend its important primary health care role," he said.

Published online today (hard copies will be distributed to members later in the week), the roadmap documents the range of services pharmacy will provide in the future, dividing them into four quadrants: prescribed medicines services and programs, pharmacy medicines and health products services and programs,

in-pharmacy health services and programs and outreach health services and programs.

The document has previously come **under attack** from the Pharmacy Division of APESMA who branded it a "road to nowhere".

The Guild has also launched an appeal to encourage members to register for the **Good Pharma** initiative before it ends on 30 June.

Good Pharma, which was part of the fourth agreement's Practice Change Program, was designed to provide the support and advice pharmacists need to improve their services.

Funding for the program was not included in the new agreement.

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## Confusion over flu vaccine

**Nick O'Donoghue**

A DISTORTED market is making the roll out of the seasonal influenza vaccine difficult this year, Pharmacy Guild of Australia president Kos Sclavos said.

The shortage of supplies of the vaccine and concerns over its safety have led to a fall in the number of doctors prescribing it this year.

While many pharmacists have been unable to get stocks of the vaccine, Mr Sclavos told *Pharmacy eNews* some pharmacies have been holding up to 200 doses, with GPs assuming it was not available.

"Our problem this season is not that we have too many vaccines, but the fact that a lot of pharmacists don't have any stock and now the perception is there is no vaccine available.

"There are pharmacists that have up to 200 flu vaccines available and doctors are no longer writing scripts, because their perception is that there's a shortage everywhere," he said.

Mr Sclavos' comments come as the country's chief medical officer

Professor Jim Bishop advised the **suspension** of the seasonal flu vaccination for children under five-years-olds due to the higher than usual occurrence of fever with convulsions in young children following vaccination.

While extensive investigations by the authorities have failed to identify the reason behind the increase in adverse reactions among children, manufacturer **CSL Laboratories** has updated its prescribing information and contacted doctors to highlight the changes.

The vaccine manufacturer has also announced a retrieval program for the remaining stocks of its 2010 paediatric flu vaccine from medical centres and distributors.

CSL Medical and Research Director Dr Darryl Maher said reports of fevers and convulsions in children under five were not consistent with the company's previous vaccines.

"The actions taken by CSL reflect the utmost importance we place on patient safety and the quality of our products," he said

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## BRIEFS

### HUMIDITY AND FLU

A new comprehensive white paper found low humidity levels in buildings during the winter months provide the perfect environment for the flu virus to survive.

The research showed that homes kept at 40 to 60 percent humidity are likely to contain fewer flu viruses in the air and on often-touched surfaces such as taps, door handles and countertops.

After evaluating data from a number of studies over the last 70 years the researchers at the Harvard School of Public Health concluded the humidity produced by vaporisers available from pharmacies may help prevent the flu virus.

### SIGMA OPENS BOOKS

Shareholders of Sigma Pharmaceuticals are being urged to hold onto their stock after the company's board agreed to allow Aspen Pharmacare monitor the books.

Having received a \$0.60 per share bid 12 days ago, Sigma's general counsel and company

secretary Sue Morgan-Dethick announced the South African company had been granted due diligence for the next four weeks.

"As part of that agreement, Aspen has been granted limited exclusivity by Sigma for the next four weeks, during which time Sigma has agreed not to solicit rival bids for another whole of business transaction for Sigma, or to enter into contracts in relation to asset sales," Ms Morgan-Dethick told the Australian Stock Exchange.

### DANGERS OF SMOKERS

Passive smoking is not the only danger smokers present to children according to a national immunisation expert Professor Robert Booy.

The director of research at the National Centre for Immunisation and Research at Sydney's The Children's Hospital at Westmead warned smokers were prime candidates to carry the potentially deadly meningococcus bacteria in the back of their throats, which they could pass on by "normal family cuddles and kisses" even if they smoke outdoors.

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