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FRIDAY 4 JUNE, 2010

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Rethink of smoking cessation strategies

Nick O'Donoghue

PHARMACOTHERAPIES for smoking cessation need to be tailored to individuals and combinations of treatments should be offered as part of a rethink of clinical guidelines a community medicines expert says.

Professor of General Practice at the School of Public Health and Community Medicine at the University of NSW Nicholas Zwar said pharmacists and GPs needed to keep up to speed with the latest therapies, regulatory changes and new data.

"There are now expanded indications for nicotine replacement therapies. Authorities have recently approved approaches which allow people to smoke while initiating nicotine replacement

therapies (NRT) and to use combinations of NRT to help improve outcomes, as in combinations of the nicotine patch and lozenge.

"As well as this, therapeutic nicotine is also now regarded as suitable for use by pregnant women who want to quit, some patients who have diabetes, those with renal impairment and in people who are already at elevated risk of cardiovascular disease.

"There is also new evidence with varenicline that suggests increased effectiveness in a range of populations such as those with chronic disease, although these need to be balanced against concerns about neuropsychiatric adverse effects.

"There is also some new data that suggests Bupropion could be suitable for people with

psychosis," said Professor Zwar.

He added there was an onus on health care professionals to inform consumers of the options available to them, as some smokers are unaware of what smoking cessation supports are available.

"There may also be smokers out there who think they are precluded from using certain products because of their age or health status.

"So the onus is on all healthcare professionals to raise awareness about the suitability of various options for different groups of smokers," said Prof Zwar.

Pharmacists attending Pharmacy Expo in Sydney this Sunday will be able to hear Prof Zwar speak on the issue.

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Reduce costs on EFTPOS: Guild Group

PHARMACISTS are being urged to encourage customers looking to pay by card to take the cheque or savings options rather than credit to reduce costs.

Pharmacies have been hit with higher transaction fees as a result of consumers being encouraged by their banks to use the credit option when paying with MasterCard and Visa debit cards, the Pharmacy Guild of Australia's Guild Group reported.

"When consumers select cheque or savings they use the Australian-owned EFTPOS network, which comes at a total cost to the retailer of around five to 10 cents per transaction, regardless of the transaction amount.



"When consumers select credit however, the retailer pays the culmination of three sets of fees.

"For a \$50 transaction, the costs to the retailer could rise to around 37.5 cents, and as the transaction amount increases so will the costs," the Guild Group said.

One solution recommended

by the Guild Group was to get pharmacy staff to ask if customers want to take cash out when they pay by card, which can only be done by selecting the cheque or savings option, and has the added benefit of leaving less money on the premises.

Meanwhile EFTPOS Payments Australia announced a major upgrade of the EFTPOS system over the next three years, as a response to the growth of rival debit cards from international rivals.

The changes will include a move to chip technology, which will allow card holders use EFTPOS for online payments.

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Universities set up alliance for pharmacy's future

Karlie Verkerk

A NEW alliance between four Australian schools of pharmacy has been formed with the focus of providing further education opportunities for existing and future pharmacists.

The National Alliance for Pharmacy Education (NAPE) includes the pharmacy training arms of Monash University, the University of Queensland, University of South Australia and the University of Sydney, to advance both undergraduate and postgraduate education for pharmacists.

“The alliance will provide the best possible further education

opportunities for existing and future pharmacists,” said Professor Iqbal Ramzan, Head of Faculty of Pharmacy, University of Sydney.

NAPE will provide ongoing educational support to pharmacists with the introduction of compulsory continuing professional development from 1 July.

To support the ongoing advancement of the pharmacy profession NAPE will include areas such as demonstration of competences, credentialing, prescribing, and new advanced models of practice.

“NAPE believes that ready access to cutting edge

university postgraduate award courses, including intern training programs, is crucial for pharmacists if they are to contribute effectively to health care delivery in Australia,” a spokesperson for NAPE said.

The alliance will be working with The Pharmacy Board of Australia and other key stakeholders in the pharmacy profession including The Pharmacy Guild of Australia, The Pharmaceutical Society of Australia and The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia.

One of the concerns NAPE has outlined is a potential oversupply of graduates in some metropolitan areas, however

two graduates from Murdoch University in Western Australia, Melody Mugari and Rosie Majid, have led the way in embracing rural pharmacy.

Both pharmacists are now working fulltime with the Broome Pharmacy Group, travelling to remote areas to provide pharmacy services.

“Broome appealed to me because it offered me a different experience.

“With fewer pharmacists working in regional areas you tend to get more experience and that gives you greater confidence in your skills,” Ms Majid said.

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