

Woolworths drop pharmacy trademarks

Nick O'Donoghue

WITH little prospect of being allowed to open a pharmacy, supermarket chain Woolworths has cancelled two trademarks - Pharmacist@Woolworths and Pharmacist at Woolworths.

A spokesman for the chain told *Pharmacy eNews* the trademarks were now "redundant" as it is unlikely Woolworths would be allowed to establish itself in the market.

"There are no pharmacists at Woolworths and there's very little prospect of pharmacists being in supermarkets in the near future, so that trademark would have been redundant," he said.

Pharmacy Guild of Australia president Kos Sclavos welcomed

the move, which he said was probably the result of rules set out in the Fifth Community Pharmacy Agreement prohibiting the collocation of pharmacies in supermarkets.

"Obviously the agreement and the securing of the supermarket co-location rules as part of the agreement gives pharmacists certainty for five years and importantly that may have led to Woolworths withdrawing their application.

"At the end of the day, these large supermarket groups are always looking for incremental change to achieve their goals and we believe that an application such as co-location of pharmacies is just them trying to get into pharmacy via the backdoor," he said.

With the move towards electronic health records, Mr Sclavos said the Federal Government was unlikely to ever allow supermarket groups have pharmacies.

"We don't believe the Government will ever give the supermarkets access to the electronic health records and that's where the health system is heading, and that's why the Guild has been the champion of electronic prescriptions and the move towards e-health," he said.

He added the Guild's court case with rival supermarket group, Coles, over the ownership of grandfather pharmacies highlighted how seriously it takes the threat of co-location.

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Online pharmacies can boost in-store sales

Nick O'Donoghue

PHARMACIES can more than double their average in-store sales by having an active online presence, business expert Bruce Annabel from JR Pharmacy Services said.

Speaking at Pharmacy Expo 2010, Mr Annabel told pharmacists they needed to build websites to take advantage of the growing numbers of people who use the internet as a resource to find information about offers, products and ways of solving problems.

He said having a website would complement the traditional "bricks and mortar" shopping channel giving consumers greater flexibility to buy when it suits them.

"The research has proven if you have two channels, not just the bricks and mortar [store], the average sale per customer



GET ONLINE: Bruce Annabel on future sales.

increases significantly.

"The average sale per customer in community pharmacies, if you exclude scripts, is only about \$4, the average sale through an online operation is more than double that," he said.

Stressing the importance of having an active online presence, Mr Annabel noted research from the Centre for Retail Studies at Monash University showed 50 per cent of all in-store sales across Australia were influenced by the internet.

He added the online business in itself might not be a big profit earner, but said having a website makes it convenient for customers, allowing them to order products online and pick up them up from the pharmacy.

"You're creating traffic that in many cases you've never seen before, because of the convenience [of being able to order online and pick up instore]," Mr Annabel said.

Catherine Bronger, managing partner at ChemistWorks in Wetherill, NSW, said growth from the pharmacy's online store has exceeded expectations since it was set up in September.

She added consumers had responded well to the establishment of the site, with month on month sales growth averaging 50 per cent.

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Prepare for flu pandemic: Guild

Nick O'Donoghue

PHARMACISTS are being urged to get ready for a flu pandemic, with the Pharmacy Guild of Australia distributing a range of resources to members.

The Guild's Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Program (PIPP) builds on the knowledge and experience gained from last year's swine flu pandemic, president Kos Sclavos said.

The PIPP pack, which has also been called the Kung Flu Fighter, contains materials highlighting the importance of infection control and plans to run pharmacies through a pandemic.

"The resources are free, and will assist pharmacies in the crucial areas of infection control and business continuity planning.

"Equipped with relevant training and practical tools, community pharmacies will be better prepared and able to ensure that the vital supply of medicines continues to operate effectively during a pandemic.

"To undertake the training pharmacies can enrol online, request a workbook, or attend

workshops during June and July. CPD points are available for attending or completing several areas of the program," Mr Sclavos said.

The program also provides a free 12-month subscription (one per pharmacy) to an online product called **ContinuityCoach**, which assists pharmacy owners and managers to create a business continuity plan.

As part of the program all community pharmacies will receive a 60 day supply of surgical face masks for pharmacy staff.

This will enable pharmacists to respond quickly to an influenza pandemic and allow adequate time to secure an ongoing supply of personal protective equipment.

Risk manager of the Guild Group, David Roddis, said it is important for pharmacists to get plans in place to deal with a pandemic, to ensure continuity throughout the period.

"Timing is crucial – community pharmacies must act now; for the sake of their staff, customers and business, and for the assurance of viable health services in the face of a health care emergency," he said.

BRIEFS

NEW ANTI-MELANOMA DRUG

Researchers say a new experimental drug extends the lives of patients with advanced melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer.

Melanoma cases have climbed faster than any other cancer type over the past 30 years with few treatment options.

Twenty-four per cent of patients with advanced melanoma have survived for an unusual two years after being administered intravenously with the new drug Ipilimumab developed by Bristol-Myers Squibb and Medarex.

The study points out 44 to 46 per cent of patients treated with Ipilimumab were alive after one year of trials compared to 25 per cent of people treated with other methods.

WIG U-TURN IN WA

Cancer patients being treated at Western Australia's biggest public hospital will continue to receive money for wigs after a plan with withdraw funding was shelved.

The Australian reported the WA government Health Minister

Dr Kim Hames overturned the decision and ordered Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital to restore the \$160 voucher previously available for wigs.

The savings made by the cut would have amounted to less than \$20,000 a year, Dr Hames reportedly said.

BOWELSCREEN AUSTRALIA

Australians over the age of 50 can now take part in a regular bowel cancer screening program through pharmacies.

BowelScreen Australia, launched on Friday will give people outside the Federal Government's screening program, which includes people aged 50, 55 and 65 only, the opportunity to be screened for the disease, which claims the lives of 73 Australians every week.

The program was established by the Pharmacy Guild of Australia with Bowel Cancer Australia and testing kits will be available for purchase through participating pharmacies.

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