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Tobacco tax hike sees NRT sales boom

Simone Roberts

PHARMACIES are reporting a boom in nicotine replacement products following the Federal Government's 25 per cent tax hike on cigarettes.

National Pharmacies has reported that sales of nicotine patches, nicotine products and similar products have shot up more than 30 per cent since the tax was introduced at the end of April.

"I think you can safely say the substantial increase in the cost of tobacco has convinced thousands of Australians to try to give up smoking," said Neale Burton, general manager of professional services at National Pharmacies.

"The tax was imposed at the end of April and in the first week of May our sales of nicotine replacement products went up by six per cent then in the second



SALES BOOM: Tobacco tax increase leads to a surge in nicotine replacement therapy sales.

week it hit 32 per cent, which is massive.

"Given that National Pharmacies operates 59 pharmacies across South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales, an increase of more than 30 per cent translates into an awful lot of people."

Burton said the chain's figures indicated some of those people who had decided to quit smoking had slipped back into

old habits but the majority was still continuing with the therapy.

Last year the **Preventative Health Taskforce** urged the Government to boost tobacco tax to ensure the average price of a packet of 30 cigarettes would rise from \$13.50 to \$20 within three years.

It also recommended making NRT available through the PBS.

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Pharmacy must help bust flu jab myth: PSA

Nick O'Donoghue

PHARMACISTS are being urged to be part of the solution in busting the myth that the flu vaccine can give patients the flu.

Pharmaceutical Society of Australia board member Dr Shane Jackson said pharmacists had a key role to play in educating the public about the vaccine after the findings of a survey by GlaxoSmithKline revealed one-in-five Australians would not get the vaccine because of fears it would give them the flu.

"What pharmacy needs to do is be part of the solution in relation to the flu vaccination.

"We've been part of the solution

in the past and unfortunately I think we've been cut out of the supply chain this year," he said.

Speaking to *Pharmacy eNews* he highlighted a number of ways pharmacists could be actively involved in promoting the flu vaccine, including pushing to be allowed to vaccinate.

"The way I believe pharmacy should approach vaccinations is on three levels. All pharmacists can be involved in health promotion and the supply of vaccines.

"They can all be involved in promoting it to those at risk, giving accurate evidence based information and actively supplying vaccines where appropriate.

"The second level is where nurse immunisers vaccinate people within a private pharmacy setting...pharmacies can provide sites for vaccinations, because of their accessibility.

"A third level and this might be some way down the track... but we've seriously got to be looking at pharmacists doing vaccinations, because of their accessibility and their access to people who have chronic conditions," Dr Jackson said.

While the survey found 20 per cent of people believe the vaccine could give them the flu, a further 38 per cent reportedly said they did not believe it was effective.

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Ibuprofen link to CVD risk dismissed

Jennifer Joseph

RECKITT Benckiser has stood by the safety and tolerability of ibuprofen following study results linking nonsteroidal antiinflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) with increased cardiovascular mortality and morbidity.

The study, conducted by researchers in Denmark and published online in *Circulation: Cardiovascular Quality and Outcomes*, examined the cardiovascular risk in healthy individuals associated with NSAIDs including naproxen, diclofenac, rofecoxib and high doses of ibuprofen.

Study participants included 1,028,437 Danish individuals with at least one prescription for NSAIDs during 1997 to 2005, while the risk of cardiovascular death, a composite of coronary death or nonfatal myocardial infarction, and fatal or nonfatal stroke associated with the use of NSAIDs was estimated by case-crossover and Cox proportional hazard analyses.

Prescription use of the nonselective NSAID diclofenac

and the selective COX-2 inhibitor rofecoxib was associated with an increased risk of cardiovascular death (odds ratio 1.91 and 1.66, respectively), with a dose-dependent increase in risk.

Authors concluded there was a “small trend” for an increased risk of fatal or nonfatal stroke associated with ibuprofen treatment in higher doses (OR 1.29), but naproxen was not associated with increased cardiovascular risk.

Dr Phil Berry, global medical director at Reckitt Benckiser Healthcare International, manufacturers of Nurofen, said following labelling directions is essential to ensuring safety and efficacy.

“There is no clinical evidence to suggest that consumers need to be concerned about their safety in relation to an increased risk of cardiovascular events when taking ibuprofen products, such as Nurofen, as directed,” said Dr Berry.

Study author Dr Emil Loldrup Fosbøl said OTC NSAID use is unlikely to have had a significant influence on the results.

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BRIEFS

GET OUT IN THE SUN

After a summer of being told to stay in the shade Victorians are now being encouraged to soak up some winter sun to boost vitamin D levels.

Cancer Council Victoria's SunSmart program announced today that people in at risk groups should take the opportunity to increase their vitamin D levels by exposing themselves to sunlight for up to three hours a week until the end of August.

SunSmart Manager Sue Heward said ultraviolet (UV) radiation is a good natural source of vitamin D but also the main cause of skin cancer.

She added exposure to sunlight may not be sufficient and they would need to take supplements.

CANCERTRIALS APP

Technology savvy health care professionals will be able to keep up to date with all the latest results from clinical oncology trials on their iPhones and iPads.

A new app developed

by MedTrust Online and GlaxoSmithKline Oncology, will allow users to find and share information about experimental therapies in clinical trials with their patients.

The app will provide a quick search menu based on 12 common cancers and will enable users to refine searches for criteria such as gender, age, trial status and more.

BOWEL CANCER

People in rural New South Wales have the highest risk of developing bowel cancer than Australians living elsewhere in the country.

New data from the Spotlight on Screening report released today revealed the NSW towns of Jerilderie and Balranald has the highest death rate due to bowel cancer in the country.

While the figures showed NSW had the highest rate of bowel cancer, the [National Bowel Cancer Coalition](#) mortality map highlighted people from all over the country are at risk.

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