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Mums overmedicating children

Nick O'Donoghue

NEW RESEARCH shows one-in-three mums are overmedicating their children in an attempt to relieve pain or fever.

Researchers said the findings of the Understanding Pain Survey by Nurofen for Children sent a clear message to pharmacists that parents may need more advice and guidance when it comes to giving their children over-the-counter (OTC) relief.

The survey found one-in-five mothers admitted to giving their child the incorrect dosage when administering medication.

"The findings raise concerns that Aussie mums are not equipped with the right information about how to help

manage their children's pain," researchers said.

The survey found more than half of Australian mothers could not identify the most common signs a child was in pain, such as becoming quiet and withdrawn, refusing to move and changes in their sleeping patterns.

While 60 per cent of mothers turn to a health professional for advice about how to treat their child's pain, 50 per cent still confess to having felt scared and worried when treating their first child's pain, the survey revealed.

"The local pharmacy is the first point of call for information and reassurance for most parents when their children are sick or in pain.

"Front-line staff should never

underestimate the massive role they play in helping parents and, as these statistics suggest, how much general advice and guidance is appreciated.

"The survey reveals that while some mums are receiving advice clearly, other vital information is not getting through to mums," the survey said.

The research also found 45 per cent of mothers believed ibuprofen was not a suitable pain medication for children.

However most Australian mums were aware of the importance of increasing their child's fluid intake when they are ill, with younger mothers being more conscious of the importance of fluids than mums in their 30s.

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Risk of antiretroviral resistance not higher in IDUs

Nick O'Donoghue

A META-ANALYSIS of studies shows HIV-positive injecting drug users (IDUs) are not at an increased risk of developing resistance to antiretroviral treatments.

The analysis published in *The Lancet Infectious Diseases* revealed there was no evidence to support the common practice of withholding antiretroviral treatment from HIV-positive IDUs on the basis of an elevated risk of resistance.

Researchers reviewed the findings of 12 studies involving more than 9050 patients, 23 per cent of whom were IDUs and found the risk of developing resistance did not differ significantly between IDUs and non-IDUs.

The rates of loss to follow-up and virological failure were also



IDUs: Not at increased risk of HAART resistance.

similar in both groups according to the analysis.

"We found no evidence that HIV-positive IDUs were at significantly higher risk of developing antiretroviral resistance than any other HIV-positive populations.

"This meta-analysis suggests that existing evidence does not support the common practice of withholding antiretroviral therapy from HIV-positive IDUs owing to a perceived high risk of antiretroviral

resistance," the researchers said.

The analysis noted IDUs are accounting for increasing numbers of new HIV infections in many countries around the world, the researchers believe clinicians should consider treating IDU patients with highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART), give the lack of evidence to support current practice.

The researchers noted 90 per cent of new HIV infections in Russia were among IDUs.

"Since our findings have immediate relevance to areas of the world where HIV epidemics are largely driven by injecting drug use, clinicians and authors of therapeutic guidelines should consider reassessing advice and practices to address provider bias," researchers said.

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Caffeine and paracetamol combo eases pain

Nick O'Donoghue

A SPOONFUL of sugar may help the medicine go down, but new research reveals a little bit of caffeine boosts the pain relief of paracetamol.

Research published in *Pain Medicine*, the official journal of the American Academy of Pain Medicine, revealed a combination of paracetamol (1000mg) and caffeine (130mg) was more effective than paracetamol alone at relieving a range of acute pain states.

Researchers analysed eight relevant studies and a review of the effects of the combination on the liver showed no compelling data to suggest a clinical meaningful increase in hepatotoxicity with the use of a paracetamol and caffeine combination.

"Paracetamol/caffeine (combination) is effective and safe for use in acute management of pain.

"The hepatotoxicity of overdoses of paracetamol results from its oxidative metabolism, caffeine does not produce any

increase in oxidative metabolism of therapeutic concentrations of paracetamol," the study concluded.

Co-author of the study and Director of Clinical Pharmacology and Toxicology at St Vincent's Hospital, Sydney, Professor Ric Day said the combination treatment would offer an alternative for people whose pain was not revealed by paracetamol alone.

"It's important for people to be able to select a medication that is suitable for them and their level of pain.

"The balance of evidence supports the view that the combination of paracetamol and caffeine is effective and suitable for use in the management of acute pain if paracetamol alone is insufficient," he said.

GlaxoSmithKline marketing manager Rod Stosic welcomed the study's findings, which come after the company's pharmacy only paracetamol and caffeine combination analgesic Panadol Extra was introduced to the Australian market.

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BRIEFS

MS "CANNABIS" DRUG LAUNCHED

The first licensed medical drug containing whole cannabis plant extracts has been launched in Britain to treat symptoms of multiple sclerosis.

Taken as a mouth spray, Sativex is used to help alleviate symptoms of involuntary muscle stiffness and spasms associated with MS and is said to be the first symptom relief drug specifically for those with the condition.

It's the first cannabinoid medicine derived from whole plant extracts of the cannabis sativa plant and is only the second cannabinoid drug to be licensed by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency.

ED RED FLAG

Erectile dysfunction (ED) should not be seen as a malfunction in the bedroom, but a potential sign of other serious health issues.

Dr Carolyn Allan from Andrology Australia says ED should raise a red flag for other potential health issues like diabetes heart disease obesity and depression.

She says studies suggest the

degree of risk for a cardiovascular event after developing erectile dysfunction for example is similar to that of a smoker.

TRIAL RECRUITMENT

GlaxoSmithKline has commenced recruitment in Australia for three trials of a new once-a-day drug for people with asthma and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD).

Pharmacists are being urged to identify patients who would be suitable for involvement in the study, particularly those who may benefit from a change from widely used twice-a-day treatments.

For more information patients should contact the hotline on 1800 800 285.

GOOD PHARMA

Pharmacists have until 30 June to register for the Practice Good Pharma online tool free of charge.

Registration for the tool designed by experienced pharmacists to help implement professional service programs under the Fourth Community Pharmacy Agreement will cost \$1000 a year from 1 July.

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