



HEALTH CONSUMER NETWORK

NETWORK NEWS BRIEF - March 2008

WELCOME & Happy New Year

Welcome to the March 2008 Network News Brief. Network News Brief is sent out via email approximately 3 or 4 times a year (and in hard copy to those members who request it this way).

NEWS FROM THE DIVISION

Health Consumers Forum December 2007

The pros and cons of searching for quality patient health information on the information superhighway were discussed and debated at the December Health Consumers Forum.

Twenty-five HCN Members together with a panel of Division staff and GPs identified key quality web health sites, and also strategies to assess if a web site provides up-to date evidence based health information.

The forum also identified access barriers to web-based health information, and how patients and GPs can better utilise web sourced patient health information during a GP consultation.

Key websites profiled at the Forum:

HealthInsite is a Commonwealth Government portal of assessed quality websites –
<http://www.healthinsite.gov.au/>

HON Code – Not for Profit site that accredits reliable health sites <http://hon.ch>

MyDr – Australian primary health care web site <http://www.mydr.com.au>

National Prescribing Service – Comprehensive service for consumers supporting Quality Use of Medicines
<http://nps.org.au>

Message from GP South Medical Director Dr Geoff Chapman

Osteoporosis treatment – what is the risk?

Some people with osteoporosis receive treatment with bisphosphonates – either as tablets or by intravenous therapy (some common brands are Fosamax, Actonel & Zometa).

Recent publicity has highlighted the potential risk of a condition called osteonecrosis of the jaw (ONJ) in people receiving these medications who undergo dental surgery.

The risk is small but significant, and is increased with certain factors – for example intravenous therapy, coexistent malignancy and advancing age.

The National Prescribing Service (NPS) recommends that a dental assessment should be undertaken before therapy is started.

The NPS advises that people already receiving a bisphosphonate should not undergo dental surgery until their risk of osteonecrosis of the jaw has been assessed.

If you need further information speak to your GP.

NEWS FROM OTHER AREAS

Medicare extends online service to consumers

You can now view and update some of your information with Medicare via the Internet with the launch of the Medicare Australia secure online service for consumers.

Consumers can view their Medicare Safety Net balance, Medicare benefit tax statement, organ donor registration details and children's immunisation history.

Plus, you can view and update your Medicare personal details and request a duplicate or replacement Medicare Card.

To register for the online service go to <http://medicareaustralia.gov.au/online> or phone 132011

Hearlink Tasmania – new name and logo

The Tasdeaf Service for Hard of Hearing has a new name and logo – *Hearlink Tasmania*.

Hearlink Tasmania, (which comes under the umbrella of The Tasmanian Deaf Society) provides industrial and school screening services, individual assessment and prevention through education measures.

Hearlink Tasmania Phone – 62 495144

Website helps consumers seek information on health insurance products

The decision to choose the right health insurance product can be confusing and time consuming.

But, the Private Health Insurance Ombudsmen website can assist health consumers by browsing and reviewing information from more than 18,000 health insurance products from all 43 health insurance companies.

Go to www.privatehealth.gov.au

National Prescribing Service (NPS) – latest info

What do you need to consider if changing to a new medicine?

Medicine Update is published three times a year and provides consumers with an independent assessment of current information and research on new medicine.

Three new medicines are profiled in the January edition – Champix (for quitting smoking), Seretide (for chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases), and Posamax (for osteoporosis).

Go to the NPS web site to find *Medicine Update* www.nps.org

Are the pills too much to swallow?

For some people swallowing ordinary tablets and capsules can be a difficult and unpleasant experience.

The summer edition of the NPS consumer publication *Medicines Talk* provides some relief with hints for consumers.

The edition also looks at how to keep your medicines cool whilst travelling in the warmer season, advice on getting what you want out of medical appointments, plus an insight into medicine availability and use in Indigenous communities.

Go to the NPS web site to find *Medicines Talk* www.nps.org

And, for more information support on medicines

Consumers can access independent, accurate and current information on medicines by calling the *NPS Medicines Line*.

Medicines Line gives you confidential information on prescription, generic brand and over the counter medicines plus herbal and natural therapies.

The service is staffed by pharmacists and is available Monday – Friday, 9am – 6pm for the cost of a local call (calls from mobiles might cost more) **1300 888 763**.

OVER TO YOU...

Don't forget that General Practice South is keen to receive comments or questions relating to general practice from members of the Health Consumer Network at any time (you don't have to wait for us to ask specific questions).

If you have any news from your organisation that is likely to be of interest to GPs or their staff, the deadline for the next edition of the *Division News* is March 7 2008. The deadline for the next *Network News Brief* is May 1 2008.

We look forward to hearing from you.

If you need to discuss any issues in this newsletter, please contact Stacey van Dongen – Program Officer for the Health Consumers Network – at the Division ph: 62344230 or email svandongen@gpsouth.com.au.