

## Issue 8 Tuesday, 29 April 2008

Eclipse is a quarterly newsletter that provides informative articles documenting the development and advancement of the e-health industry in Australia, specifically focusing on the impact upon clinical pharmacists. Eclipse is a production of Healthcare Software, developers of PharmCare Clinical Pharmacy Database. For more information on PharmCare, or Healthcare Software, please visit our [website](#). Feel free to email us at [eclipse@healthcaresoftware.com.au](mailto:eclipse@healthcaresoftware.com.au) if you have any comments or feedback that may assist in developing a comprehensive clinical pharmacy newsletter.

### Harmful medicines a cause for concern



Legal medications have caused thousands of deaths in Australia over the last 10 years.

According to an article in the Sydney Morning Herald (13/04/2008), more than 5200 people were accidentally poisoned by such drugs as anti-depressants, sedatives, painkillers and blood pressure medication. 330 of these people died from medications specifically prescribed to them.

It is estimated that 2 million Australians experience an adverse drug reaction every year – resulting in over 140 000 hospital admissions. The problem has caused such a level of concern that the Federal Government has outlined it as one of four key priority areas for patient safety.

CEO of the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care, Chris Baggoley, highlighted that systems need to be put in place to ensure the right dose of the right drug is given to the right patient.

"It can be giving the wrong medication, or giving it to the wrong patient, or a breakdown in communication when a patient leaves hospital to go home and the GP doesn't know what drugs they're on," Professor Baggoley said.

Statistics such as these have been largely hidden from public scrutiny in the past; however, more and more studies are uncovering a very concerning reality. This is an issue that will be focused on heavily in the imminent transformation of the Australian health system.

[View the 'Sydney Morning Herald' story](#)



### Medications are harming children as estimations rise

A recent study conducted in Chicago, USA, has determined that roughly one out of 15 hospitalized children is subject to medicine mix-ups, accidental overdoses and bad drug reactions.

According to the Associated Press, new detection methods were used in studying randomly selected medical charts for 960 children treated at 12 freestanding children's hospitals. These new methods uncovered a significantly greater number of occurrences than the traditional method of



simply relying on hospital staff to report adverse events. In fact, less than four percent of the problems detected in the new study were reported.

Researchers found a rate of 11 drug-related harmful events for every 100 hospitalised children. This translates to about 540 000 children experiencing a medication related issue in the US each year. This is much greater than the estimate achieved through traditional detection methods which was approximately two per 100 hospitalised children.

Dr. Charles Homer of the National Initiative for Children's Healthcare Quality believes the public have been unaware of these issues for too long.

"These kinds of errors and experiencing harm as a result of your health care are much more common than people believe. It's very concerning."

The new detection method outlines 15 triggers on young patients' charts that suggest possible drug-related harm. It includes use of specific antidotes for drug overdoses, suspicious side effects and certain lab tests.

[View the 'Associated Press' story](#)

## Resources

[The Cancer Council](#)

[The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia](#)

[NeHTA](#)

[Auspharm](#)

[HealthConnect Tasmania](#)

[Australian IT](#)

[The Pharmacy Guild of Australia](#)

[HL7 Australia](#)

[Health Informatics Society of Australia \(HISA\)](#)

[MIMS Australia](#)

[CHIK Services](#)

[National Institute of Clinical Studies](#)

[E-Health Insider](#)

[Department of Health and Ageing](#)

## Improved access to information will reduce prescribing errors



Training programs for hospital staff are needed to increase awareness of prescribing errors and the importance of safe prescribing practices, according to a study conducted between March and August 2005 by clinicians at the Fremantle Hospital which featured in the latest Medical Journal of Australia.

The study returned the following results:

- Most errors were due to slips in attention that occurred during routine prescribing, dispensing or drug administration;
- Errors were more likely to occur during tasks being carried out after hours by busy distracted staff, often in relation to unfamiliar patient;
- Communication problems with senior staff and difficulty assessing appropriate drug dosing information contributed to knowledge-based prescribing errors;
- Several medical staff were unaware they had committed an error until their involvement in the study.

Through the above findings, the researchers were able to conclude that slips, lapses and knowledge-based mistakes are likely to be widespread in many Australian hospitals, and their impact on medication error may be substantial.

The authors recommended a range of measures to reduce the risk of prescribing errors,

including:

- staff training in how to recognise and deal with error-prone situations;
- an emphasis on safe-prescribing practices;
- improved access to drug information at the point of prescribing.

[View the 'Medical Journal of Australia' abstract](#)

[Visit a 'Medical News Today' article](#)

## Pharmacists to lead Australian healthcare into the future



The pharmacy profession in Australia is likely to play a key role in the implementation of policies outlined by the Federal Government in the 2020 summit. The summit revealed strong support for more action in the area of preventative health and the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia President, Brian Grogan, believes the country's most accessible health providers will be pivotal in these initiatives.

"The stress on better access for individuals to their health data, and better and more transparent data flows between health-care players is something Australia's pharmacy profession has been pushing for some time. Better access to health data - for example the reason medicines are being prescribed - would allow pharmacists to step up their involvement as part of the health care team and better serve the community."

According to 'Medical News Today' (21/04/08) the 2020 Summit's Health Stream released five "ambitions". Two of these were to:

- have a health system structured around the person rather than the provider - in which every Australian has access to their own health data, and there are better and transparent data flows across all health players.
- have health policy focused on prevention - across not just health, but across Government and the whole community, with "zero tolerance" of unhealthy actions.

The focus towards healthy lifestyles, health promotion and disease prevention, are 'Priority Themes' Australian pharmacists are already active in promoting, further outlining the importance of the profession in the forthcoming transformation of Australian healthcare processes.

[View the 'Medical News Today' article](#)

## PharmCare News

### Tasmanian and South Australian Governments choose PharmCare

Healthcare Software has secured contracts for the state-wide implementations of Pharmacy Information Systems in Tasmania and South Australia. Through an integrated solution with iSoft's iPharmacy, a complementary agreement will see PharmCare providing all clinical decision support tools such as adverse reaction alerts, full MIMS drug information and documentation, including discharge summaries; while iPharmacy performs all administrative actions, from drug dispensing to inventory control. Both announcements were made within two months, following formal tender processes.

Details of the contracts are as follows:

- The Tasmanian contract, valued at \$2.2 million, involves the rollout into three major public hospitals and is estimated to be fully operational within 12 months;
- The South Australian contract, valued at \$4.4 million, involves the rollout into 11 major hospitals with the estimated completion being the end of 2009.

South Australia Health's Pharmacy Consultant for Medication Safety and Pharmaceutical Reforms, Naomi Burgess, is pleased with the outcome of the tender;

"Safe and effective use of medicines and timely communication between the health care team are important issues and therefore, the decision regarding Pharmacy Information Systems was an important one. We are confident the systems will deliver a solution supporting better care."

While the focus of Healthcare Software remains ultimately on the Australian market, activity is being ramped up in international markets such as New Zealand, Hong Kong and Singapore, with a number of forthcoming site visits and conferences. The company will also be undertaking a small amount of rebranding in the coming months which will be launched in conjunction with Tasmanian and South Australian implementations.

[View the South Australian Government home page](#)

[View the IBA Health Group South Australian press release](#)

Healthcare Software will be attending the [HIMSS AsiaPac08 Conference](#) in Hong Kong on May 20-23, [CHIK's Health-e-Nation](#) in Melbourne on September 3 and the [34th SHPA National Conference](#) in Adelaide on September 4-7. We look forward to seeing you there.



**PharmCare**  
Clinical Pharmacy Database



To unsubscribe to Eclipse, please email us at [eclipse@healthcaresoftware.com.au](mailto:eclipse@healthcaresoftware.com.au) and we will remove you from our mailing list. There are details on how to subscribe on our [website](#) for anyone who is interested.