

# RGH Pharmacy E-Bulletin

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A joint initiative of the Patient Services Section and the Drug and Therapeutics Information Service of the Pharmacy Department, Repatriation General Hospital, Daw Park, South Australia. The RGH Pharmacy E-Bulletin is distributed in electronic format on a weekly basis, and aims to present concise, factual information on issues of current interest in therapeutics, drug safety and cost-effective use of medications.

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## Christmas Edition – Best wishes for the festive season

A little levity at Christmas time is a welcome change from the serious business that goes on in hospitals, dispensaries and surgeries that provide care for the sick and promote wellness:

### *Fishy business*

Researchers at Baylor University in the USA tested fish from various American river systems for the presence of human medications. Results revealed that seven pharmaceuticals & two personal care products were present, including the antipalaemic drug gemfibrozil, diphenhydramine (an OTC antihistamine commonly used in non-prescription sleep aids and motion sickness products); diltiazem (for high BP) the antiepileptic and psychotropic drug carbamazepine, and metabolites of fluoxetine and sertraline (both antidepressants).

### *Online games and medications?*

In an twist on the use of the internet for “education” or “information” about drug therapies, an American generic producer has created an online game called *Biologicsland*. Participants play as a scientist, lobbyist, professor, politician or doctor, and move around the board answering multiple choice questions. It isn't terribly difficult to discern the messages that are delivered in the correct answers, but more bizarre is the reaction when a wrong answer is selected (ugly microbes invade the screen and the user is invited to “learn” why the answer was not correct). If this sounds bizarre, consider that this is not the first online game of this type. Other examples include *Captain Novolin* (about insulin), and more recently *Silence Your Rooster* (about controlled release zolpidem) and the *Viva Cruiser* driving game (about sildenafil). Given recent reports of sleep driving with zolpidem, perhaps it would be more appropriate if the *Viva Cruiser* were to be used to raise awareness about the sleeping tablet, opening the way for the use of *Silence Your Rooster* in connection to Viagra.

### *Global warming explained?*

900 million women worldwide are in the early stages of menopause and experiencing what is commonly known as “hot flashes” according to a report by Professor of Meteorology Dr. Cyrill Sanders at a convention of environmental experts in Osaka, Japan. Dr Saunders suggests a correlation between the number of women entering menopause over the past 25 years and increasing global temperatures, but concedes the contribution from each individual woman is minuscule (less than 0.000000023 degrees F each year. Dr Saunders argued that when the Earth's population was small, the effect was barely noticeable, thus attributing part of the problem to the growth in the worldwide population of perimenopausal women. Not all at the conference were entirely convinced. Dr Brigitta Watson, a 49-year-old British scientist was quoted as saying "It's well-known that the burning of fossil fuels is the prime cause of global warning. To lay the blame at the doorstep of menopausal women is the act of a knuckle-dragging Neanderthal." Before anyone gets too hot under the collar, it's worth noting that the original source for this story was the US newspaper *Weekly World News*. Other stories covered by this prestigious tabloid include recent sighting of Elvis Presley, the discovery of a mutant “bat boy” living in a cave in New Mexico, and an incident involving an ice-skating circus bear that killed one person and injured another during rehearsals. Interpret with caution ...

On behalf of the Pharmacy Department of the Repatriation General Hospital, we wish all of our readers at RGH, around Australia and around the world a happy and safe Christmas and New Year. There will be a brief pause over the Christmas period, and the E-Bulletin will reappear on Monday January 25 2009.

Acknowledgment – The E-Bulletin is made possible by the hard work and diligent contributions of the staff and the Patients Services Section and the Drug and Therapeutics Information Service of the Pharmacy Department, Repatriation General Hospital, Daw Park, South Australia. Their efforts are much appreciated.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION – CONTACT THE PHARMACY DEPARTMENT ON 82751763 or email: [chris.alderman@rgh.sa.gov.au](mailto:chris.alderman@rgh.sa.gov.au)**

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