

MEDIA ALERT**5 August 2009****CT scans, hepatitis B and the US health system:
all in the August *Australian Prescriber***

The August edition of *Australian Prescriber* is out now and examines topical issues, including:

Thoracic computed tomography: principles and practice

Doctors need a greater understanding of the indications for computerised tomography (CT) scanning and its different forms to stop inappropriate use, according to Associate Professor Graham Simpson, Director of Thoracic Medicine at Cairns Base Hospital.

The cost of CT scans to Medicare and the risk of inducing malignant disease due to radiation exposure should be considered before requesting these tests, Professor Simpson writes.

Medicines and markets: the US and Australia

Dr Ruth Lopert, Principal Medical Adviser, Therapeutic Goods Administration, spent a year in the US studying aspects of its new Medicare Part D benefit, which subsidises medicines for elderly and disabled Americans. She compares it with Australia's Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) and asks whether the imperative to rein in US healthcare expenditure will ever see Part D, or US Medicare, adopt a similar model to Australia.

Management of hepatitis B

Hepatitis B affects one per cent of Australians. Hepatitis B infection is usually asymptomatic and screening using hepatitis B surface antigen should be considered for all at-risk patients, write Drs Sally Bell and Tin Nguyen of St Vincent's Hospital in Melbourne.

Improved laboratory testing for viral DNA can help to identify patients who need treatment to try and prevent long-term liver damage. Long-term monitoring is recommended to detect reactivation of infection and liver cancer.

Abnormal laboratory results: screening for multiple myeloma

Multiple myeloma has a wide range of clinical presentations and patients with suspected multiple myeloma should be investigated with screening tests, writes Dr Frank Firkin, Clinical Haematologist at St Vincent's Hospital in Melbourne. Identifying the paraprotein isotype assists in the diagnosis of multiple myeloma, but bone marrow biopsy is needed to show the increased presence of plasma cells in the marrow.

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NPS News #64

The August edition of *NPS News* addresses considerations for the use of hormone replacement therapy with menopausal women.

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