

## Further reading

Joint HGSA/RANZCOG recommended 'Best practice' guidelines on antenatal screening for Down's syndrome and other fetal aneuploidy. 2004.

<http://www.ranzcog.edu.au/publications/collegestatements> [cited 2006 Mar 8]

*Conflict of interest: none declared*

## Self-test questions

*The following statements are either true or false (answers on page 55)*

7. Alpha fetoprotein is not found in maternal serum during the first trimester of a normal pregnancy.
8. Fetal growth retardation is best assessed by serial measurements of serum oestriol.

## Dental notes

*Prepared by Dr M. McCullough of the Australian Dental Association*

### Managing hepatitis C in the community (p.36)

The number of Australian adults living with hepatitis C is increasing and is not confined to any one section of the population. Dentists need to be aware that hepatitis C may be present in the saliva of infected patients. Our infection control practices therefore need to be exemplary to avoid spread of

this, and other blood-borne viruses. Dentists are in a position to support medical advice that infected patients undergo antiviral treatment where appropriate and address secondary factors associated with liver disease in these patients.

Any dentists who carry a blood-borne virus have a professional and ethical responsibility to review the way they practise so as to ensure that they minimise the likelihood of infecting their patients. The Australian Dental Association offers advice and co-operation that should be sought.

## Your questions to the PBAC

### Adrenaline: shelf-life

I was very interested in 'Your questions to the PBAC: Adrenaline' (Aust Prescr 2005;28:90). In particular I wish to comment about the short expiry date of EpiPens.

About six or seven years ago I contacted the distributor of the EpiPen in Australia. I complained that sometimes I would purchase an EpiPen for my son and often it only had seven or eight months left before it expired.

Their explanation was that it was actually transported from the USA and by the time it arrived here many months of its 12-month shelf-life were gone.

On hearing this I checked out an old Martindale (26th edition) and I read that adrenaline in solution was very stable for a number of years. I wrote to the manufacturer of EpiPens in the USA with a photocopy of the extract out of Martindale but never received a reply.

Being a sceptic I just wonder whether it suits the manufacturer to overlook these details as obviously it would affect their sales substantially. Also I think it would be unlikely that a company would actively pursue ways of extending the expiry date!

At the time I was thinking about having the adrenaline stability checked out in an expired EpiPen, but did not have time to pursue this further.

Perhaps if the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC) did it on a more authoritative basis one might receive a reply.

Kevin Dallimore  
Dermatologist  
Perth

*PBAC response:*

The PBAC is aware of the short expiry date of EpiPen. However, the sponsor, CSL Limited, has advised recently that the most recent data from the manufacturer's stability program do not support an extension of shelf-life.

CSL Limited is currently implementing a number of changes to the distribution process. These aim to improve the shelf-life in Australia of EpiPen which is produced with a 20-month shelf-life by the US supplier, Dey Laboratories. The company advises that the following changes have been introduced to minimise the time lost between manufacture and patient in the distribution chain:

- EpiPen will now be produced with Australian packaging by Dey Laboratories to save on repacking time in Australia
- CSL will work with wholesalers and pharmacies to minimise the time stock spends on shelves