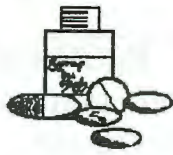


Pills-a-go-go

Journal of Pills
Oct.-Nov. 1991



In this issue:

- Smart Drug Review
- Cheap Final Exit
- Supreme Pill

#6

pills capsules syrups powders extracts tinctures elixers tablets effervescent tablets time released enteric coat

Prozac Corner

• Eli Lilly won a victory when the FDA vindicated its star pill, Prozac, as not being linked with suicide or any other kind of violent, destructive behavior and recommended it saw no need to require any warnings. The Church of Scientology fought a good fight, even taking out full page ads in USA TODAY to build support.

• Macy's department store used Prozac as an excuse to fire an HIV positive man from his job as Santa Claus in their prestigious store on 34th street. They claimed that his gayness or AIDSness didn't bother them — it was the threat of what the Prozac-crazed man might do to the kiddies.

• A Kentucky lawyer got three clients to file million dollar lawsuits against Lilly. One of his customers is a GA psychiatrist who says he used Prozac to help him with depression and a spastic colon, then attempted suicide. A woman from CT who said she tried to use Prozac to kill herself is suing ... she did 94 hits and had a seizure. It is unclear just what she's suing about, perhaps the Prozac's failure to kill her?

• A Ft. Lauderdale sheriff's wife who is accused of being a prostitute has blamed Prozac for causing her to become a nymphomaniac, requiring her to have sex with as many as eight men per day.

Supreme Court Pill

One of the most venerable pills in the US pharmacopoeia will be featured at the Supreme Court this coming year — Mellaril. At issue is whether or not the state has the right to drug a defendant to such an extent that they substantially alter his or her behavior and/or mental competence to stand trial.

Petitioning the court is whacko murderer David Riggins who was sentenced to death in Nevada for robbing a man and stabbing him to death. Riggins, who has been hearing voices since age four says the drug made him seem more sane than he is. It also made him appear unrepentant and unemotional about the trial, leading him to get the death sentence.

No Bad Pills

By Steven A. Dore, SPP

Many people believe that doctors routinely shove pills down their patients' throats, thus forcing us into a destructive pill culture, but this is a simplistic view. Doctors are reacting to a variety of influences when they write out a prescription — not the least among them being that a patient expects one. A prescription is the tangible proof of an office visit, of medical care.

Doctors are also asked by their patients to provide results and drugs do this more quickly and efficiently than anything else.

A mistake is made only when the patient and/or the doctor pretend that's the end of the therapy even though, in many cases, drugs will prove to be the only therapy available.

The root of the "pill problem" is really a failure of both doctors & patients. Doctors are naturally defensive since they've set themselves up as the mini-gods of our society — so they end up practicing defensive medicine. Prescriptions mollify patients that "something has been done" and since medication is indicated for damn near anything — malpractice suits can also be avoided.

The patient, too, more than we want to admit, demands that a medicine be provided to cure a problem as quickly as possible and is not realistic about what drugs can and cannot do. Prozac as an example was erroneously touted as a "miracle drug" for a long time. Well, who wouldn't want that? Now it is just as wrongly being accused of being a killer. The truth is it is a new type of anti-depressant that works about as well as any other but with fewer unpleasant side effects. It is unreasonable to expect so much (positive or neg-



continued on next page

ative) from a drug.

Pharmaceutical manufacturers have been in the news lately because of their very high profits this last year. Now comes the implication that they are gouging and maybe even responsible for the "crisis in medicine" we have now. But the truth is that just 7% of U.S. healthcare costs are from pills. Yet pills do the lion's share of the "work". Pills such as H2 antagonists have practically eliminated ulcer surgery. New antibiotics can cost \$5 per pill but obviate the need for hospitalization and IV antibiotics. Yes, each pill is expensive but as compared to what? To the disease? To an idealized world where everything is free?

Pharmaceutical companies also make a very persuasive argument about the amount of money that is tied up in the research of a single drug (the average is something like \$230 million) for this they find that only one in 10,000 compounds ever makes it to the pharmacy and the normal course of FDA testing required eats up nearly a decade of the 17 years a company can retain exclusivity on a drug patent. After that, the price drops dramatically as other companies begin to manufacture and sell the compound.

There is plenty wrong with our pill-taking society, it's just not the fault of pills. It's the fault of all the humans involved in the process, the doctor, the patient, the insurer, the manufacturer, the legislatures, the special interests, the media, etc. Nor do the answers lie in controlling a drug (banning it, giving people more, making it more difficult to prescribe, requiring exhaustive paperwork, etc.) This simply makes a drug less available to people for its true purpose. A blame-the-pill mentality presupposes that both the doctor and the patient are such jerks when it comes to medical treatment that lawmakers need to step in and exert their authority. As it stands, it is the government and not the doctor or patient that decides whether a drug will be on the market. For people dependent on gov't money it will also decide dosages and prices.

Better answers to real drug problems (ineffective drugs and dosages, the inappropriate drug or the absence of a drug when one could be used for example) require self-education and a good rapport with the doctor who's climbed off his pedestal. Other problems such as price, too, need to be solved as close to their source as possible (a consumer's union?). Last but not least our love/hate attitude towards "drugs" (the one that withholds morphine from cancer patients for fear they may become "addicted") could stand some revamping.

END SCREED

Feed your Head

by P. Snick, SPP

PaGG Research Team reports on an informative new book, *Smart Drugs and Nutrients* — an introductory guide to therapeutic agents and developments in neuroscience by Ward Dean, M.D. and John Morgenthaler

\$12.95, published by B&J Publications, P.O. Box 483-903, Santa Cruz, CA 95061-0483.

PaGG readers will certainly enjoy this book for the comprehensive list of "smart" drugs, if not for the address list of retailers from which one can order these agents via post. For readers, who during this War on Drugs, are concerned with the legality of ordering these products through post, the book includes the FDA policy on mail importations and the FDA drug bulletin.

More importantly, readers will enjoy this book for its lucid descriptions of these agents and their biochemical mechanisms of action. Included in each chapter on specific agents are references to studies, dosage guidelines, precautions, and sources. Of particular interest to the Research Team is the chapter devoted to a new, or under-studied, group of mainly pyrrolidine derivatives known as nootropics. These agents are low in toxicity and improve learning, memory consolidation and memory retrieval without other CNS side effects. This new class of drugs is reported to hold great promise for patients suffering from Alzheimers. For the the rest of us, nootropics have some neuroprotective and neurotrophic properties which may retard, or even reverse the effects of aging by reducing the build-up of lipofuscin, (also the nasty culprit in "age spots"), fatty deposits in nerve cells associated with a reduction in cognitive powers. Some nootropics are reported to work by increasing information flow between the right and left hemispheres of the brain, which may explain why it is helpful for many dyslexics, alcoholics, and aphasic stroke victims.

Not all agents cited in the book, however, are products of sophisticated research or difficult to procure; many are naturally occurring or readily available substances. Wine, for instance, contains high levels of malic acid, which is thought to bind to the metal alumi-

num, the cross-linking of which is associated with Alzheimer's disease. Citric acid — not to be confused with ascorbic acid or vitamin C — also binds and removes aluminum.

An excellent chapter is devoted to the role of vitamins and vitamin derivatives and their respective roles in human biochemistry and neuroscience. In all, this book is an excellent read for those interested in cognition enhancement, Alzheimer treatment, neural rejuvenation,



improved memory and recall abilities. This book makes a fine addition to the library of anyone interested not only in improving his brain power but in the general improvement of body function and well-being.

Continued from P. 1

To keep the guy under control, prison psychiatrists had been feeding Riggins doses of 100 mgs of thioridazine, but for the trial upped the dosage to a whopping 800 mgs.

Although Mellaril has been described as a "low-potency" anti-psychotic it is anything but. If any of the justices wish to test the effects of 800 mgs of Mellaril, PaGG suggests he or she start out with a dose of less than 50 mgs. If they are still coherent, try another 50.

A court-appointed doctor said if Riggins were taken off Mellaril he could become psychotic and require months of medication before he could be returned to a competent state.

In PaGG's opinion any sane person under the influence of 800 mgs of Mellaril will appear to be at the very least a zombie. Any person who requires a dosage of 800 mgs to appear sane is out of his mind and therefore not to be sentenced to death.

Cheapo suicide pill

Peasants in impoverished villages in India have begun using an 8 cent pesticide tablet to kill themselves. Just one of the powerful pills contains enough aluminum phosphide (ALP) to protect 1,000 pounds of grain from insects, it is also strong enough to kill ten people. When

swallowed the chemical mixes with the hydrochloric acid or water in the stomach to produce deadly phosphine gas. The person almost immediately begins vomiting and then (hopefully) falls unconscious. Within two hours his blood vessels rupture, filling the body with blood in a massive hemorrhage. There is no antidote to the poison.

Drug Plant Explosion

Pill factories are bustin' out all over the country funded by the insatiable craze for pharmaceuticals in American medicine. First off the list is Proctor & Gamble, which is centralizing all of its research and development facilities in one massive \$280 million complex to be built on 253 acres of land outside of Cincinnati. To be finished in 1995, the facility will bring in some 1,000 employees.

In Indianapolis, Lilly continues its relentless growth as it won a ten-year tax abatement on its real estate and a five year abatement on personal property related to its expansion. The company is spending some \$540 million for new research buildings, parking, cafeteria, etc. As part of the deal the city has allowed Lilly to take possession of one of the main city streets and seal it off to the public for "security" reasons. In addition the city has agreed to issue \$36 million in bonds to pay for street widening and improved sewers on Lilly's behalf. The new complex should create 500 jobs, while at the same time, wiping out entire neighborhoods as well as a cement factory.

Dow Chemical is putting in a \$37 million plant in Midland, MI to produce terfenadone, its cool-o antihistamine that works without producing any drowsiness. The pills are currently made in a facility in Garesio, Italy but should be made in America by 1994. PaGG speculates the drug may go over the counter one of these days and eclipse the competition.

In Elkhart, IN Miles Laboratories are building a 90,000 square foot, \$60,000,000 factory to make nimodipine, its cerebrovascular medicine made now in Germany.

Over the Counter

Safeway grocery stores, along with other retail outlets have begun selling animal medications over the counter — including vaccines in syringes. There some squeaking about how this endangers pets or gives junkies access to dog rabies medicine, but people appreciate not having to go to their vet to get common medicines.

Also over the counter now is hydrocortisone cream in 1% strength, recently doubled by the Nonprescription Drug Management Agency.

Drug Dirt & Crime

•The FDA, fresh from whipping Upjohn for improper distribution of its products Xanax and Halcion is now breathing down Smith Kline Beecham's neck for promoting drugs for other than officially sanctioned purposes. They are charging that the company was "priming" doctors with information for their as-yet-unapproved drugs nabumetone (a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory) and their 'me-too' version of Prozac, paroxetine. Seems SKB invited doctors to a fancy dinner and gave them all \$100 gift certificates for medical books if they'd listen to the spiel. FDA's threatening heavy fines and millions of years in jail for these desperados.

•Syntex Co. now has to fork over \$2 million for an ad campaign to retract misleading statements about its drug naprosyn, used to relieve the symptoms of arthritis. Although there are ongoing studies, the drug has not been shown to stop joint degeneration as the company had insinuated in its promotional material.

•Vitarine's Steve Colton (see issue no. 2) got 27 months without parole for his role in submitting false test results to the FDA on behalf of his generic drug company. All told the government convicted five FDA employees, ten drug company executives, one consultant and four other firms in the switcheroo scam. Colton and his pals were substituting brand name chemicals for their cheaply processed antibiotics and hypertension medications to make sure they passed the test.

Nameless pills

More of those "sleeping pills" again as folks start looking into Jimi Hendrix's death again. The coroner reports that the dead superstar had alcohol in his body and — get this — there were nine sleeping pills missing from a bottle found near his body! Strong? You bet! The doc says that each tablet contained two doses.

In Tampa, FL Janet Paddock, 32, who was filmed screwing her boyfriend within view of at least part of her apartment complex and is facing charges of indecent exposure to a minor (or something like that) was taken to the hospital following some sort of drug overdose. The sheriff's department said she "apparently took a number of drugs we aren't going into right now" but her lawyer says she merely OD'd on Valium.

Women's pills

A group of 46,000 post-menopausal women studied for 10 years has shown that taking estrogen even part of the time can reduce the incidence of heart disease by 40%. Since women are already nine times more likely to die of a heart attack than breast cancer, it's worth thinking about. But studies are still being done to see whether it's true the stuff causes an increase in breast cancer.

And in a small study of 12 women in France, RU486 (the abortion pill) was shown to markedly reduce fibroid tumors in uteruses.

Eastern Wisdom

Newly unified Germans have turned up some of the secrets of East Germany's athletic success. The communist Krauts were using annual, but huge doses (855 mgs) of steroids, in particular one called Oral-Turbinol, and STS-646 (also known as Mestanolon), which is four times stronger than testosterone. However the scientists developed a method of concealing the steroid use by tailoring dosages and compounds to individual athletes, halting the use of certain drugs as competition drew near and substituting more quickly metabolized steroids (like testosterone) toward the end. They also screened all children for their ability to metabolize steroids, weeding out those who were likely to get caught. Athletes had to pass pee tests before being permitted to leave the country.

Notes

Halcion got banned in Britain. We told you last issue Halcion would be the new devil drug. Already people are cropping up claiming that Halcion made them shoplift or whatever. Luckily it's still sold in 90 other countries. • President Bush has been taken off procainamide and digoxin for his heart as well as coumadin as a blood-thinner. He still takes an unknown amount of Synthroid for his destroyed thyroid and a "baby" aspirin (presumably every other day as before). • Schering-Plough is conducting phase four studies of its IL-4 said to reduce solid tumors, leukemia and lymphoma. Tests are being conducted at labs in Dardilly, France and in Bloomfield, NJ. • Bristol-Meyers has announced it will withdraw its pill Enkaid within three months after the National Institutes of Health conducted a study of the drug's effectiveness and found the pill — used to treat mild irregular heartbeat — made users twice as likely to have a heart attack. • Yale doctors found that people who take pills after having a heart attack are twice as likely to avoid a second, fatal heart attack. It doesn't matter whether the people are taking heart medication or placebos. Pills just make good sense. • 3M recalled 24,000 units of aerosol inhaler ergotamine (used to treat migraines) after users became nauseated and vomited after use. • Researchers at Stanford University are testing an enteric-coated pill called metformin that — if successful — may allow diabetics to throw out their syringes and start popping pills instead. • Doctors at four hospitals have shown on studies of 92 people that injections of Ampigen (made by HEM pharmaceuticals, Rockville, MD) can relieve symptoms of chronic fatigue syndrome. • Merck Sharp, & Dohme has struck a deal with the government of Costa Rica. For \$1 million MSD has the right to screen plants and microbes in CR's 12,000 square kms. of protected forests. MSD has already had luck in this area, developing its breakthrough cholesterol medication, Mevacor, from a microbe dug up in Spain. MSD will pay CR royalties on any drugs they develop from the forest's bounty.