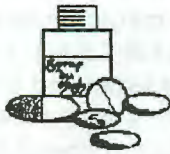


Pills-a-go-go

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Pills for Pregnants

Normally women are subjected to all kinds of scolding if they so much as look at a pill during pregnancy, but two recent studies underscore the value of pill-popping with one in the oven.

An article in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* reports that aspirin can reduce a woman's risk of developing pregnancy-induced hypertension by 65%. Even better, aspirin has been shown to reduce the risk of delivering severely low-birthweight babies by 44%.

So far it is not understood how aspirin appears to lower blood pressure in pregnant women since it does not have that effect in non-pregnant people.

The optimal dose has not yet been determined but it is something less than one pill per day.

Folic acid, too can sharply decrease the risk of birth defects. A British study of 1,817 women in seven countries who were at high risk for giving birth to babies with spinal bifida were 72% less likely to have a baby with that malformation.

Versed versus Valium

Some doctors have been complaining that Hoffman-La Roche's new sedative is a little too powerful and would like the formula changed. Versed, which is used to sedate patients during minor surgery is four to six times stronger than liquid Valium, also made by La Roche and also used for such operations. Since its introduction in 1986 Versed has been used on some 15 million patients but now it seems the FDA knows of at least 46 deaths linked to the drug. Docs say the tiny dosage — just a 0.056 cubic centimeters per minute drip — is virtually impossible to calculate and they end up overdosing patients. Rep. Ted Weiss of NY is grandstanding with a vow to seek criminal prosecution of Roche.

Britain approves RU486

The British government has approved the use of the French "abortion pill" (mifepristone) for use in terminating pregnancies of up to nine weeks. The pill, to be marketed under the name Mifegene is also being tested in 20 other countries. Just two hits produces an abortion within 6 hours but must be done under a doctor's supervision.

Pills without Names

by Steven A. Dore, SPP

Time and again pill buffs are frustrated by the media's refusal to get into detail about the pills that shape our lives — indeed history. Jeffrey Dahmer, the Milwaukee serial killer used "pills" to drug his victims before killing, dismembering and eating them. While the stories go into much detail about the stench of his apartment, etc. the reader is left shouting at the newspaper, "WHAT pills!?"

Same thing with president Bush. It is not enough to say he's got a thyroid and heart condition but "medication has stabilized it", especially not when at least one of the drugs he's taking can "slow down mental processes".

Unless there is a specific pill being touted or lambasted (Prozac, for instance) pills are relegated to an ethereal and secretive world — which leads to much misunderstanding with potentially horrific consequences.

Consider how often one reads of a person who has committed suicide by an overdose of "sleeping pills" or "tranquilizers"? Does this mean you can kill yourself with Sominex®? Is this what duped Robert McFarlane into thinking he could kill himself with Valium? And what about Liz Taylor? How come she and all her other Hollywood buddies don't ever

California OTC troubles

Paternalistic California legislators tried and failed to pass AB 343, which would require minors to obtain a prescription for diet pills now sold over the counter. The measure would have also required warning labels.

Sacramento lawmakers are also abuzz about the sale of so-called "tanning-pills" containing the chemical canthaxanthin, approved only for use as a food coloring. Sold over the counter in tanning salons the pills go by the names French Bronze Tables, Oro-bronze, Darker Tan, BronzGlo, and Carotinoid-25. A German pill containing the chemical was taken off the market there when it was discovered that it caused damage to the retina. The pills can also harm kidneys and bone marrow and have caused at least one death in Mississippi.

De facto life sentence

Even though Mario Miscio, 70, bawled to the judge "I don't want to die in prison!" the court gave him a standard five years and three months for conspiring to rip off drug formulas from Merck Sharp Dohme and Schering-Plough. Miscio will likely leave prison feet first since being diagnosed with lung cancer that has already spread throughout his body. He says he's got just six months to live. His buddy and co-conspirator, Bernard Mayles got nine years. The two were selling the formulas for Merck's Ivermectin (anti-parasitic) and SP's interferon.

Desert Drugstorm II

Another guy blubbering in court was 30-year-old Roger Mansfield, the Air Force pharmacist facing 41 years in irons for his use and distribution of pharmaceutical drugs in Saudi Arabia. Blaming boredom and lack of beer, Mansfield said he and a lot of other guys were getting high on an anesthetic called Flu-rane. After weeping in court he told the judge he was deeply remorseful for his actions and would be a better man. Then he plea-bargained a sentence of three years, \$36,000, and a dishonorable discharge.

Mansfield was caught after the January 20 death of 22 year-old senior airman Ramono Poole who had a heart attack while sniffing this powerful anesthetic, which has a rapid onset and a profound effect on the heart and lungs. Mansfield was not implicated.

Ammo against Alzheimers

Parke-Davis has come up with a new drug they call Cognex (also known as tacrine) which they say can help reverse Alzheimer's disease. Currently the FDA has asked PD to expand its phase three trials to get a larger group of test subjects. This means that you might be able to get it free if your doctor agrees to try it out on you. The drug seems to work by inhibiting an enzyme that breaks down acetylcholine in the brain, thus preserving and raising its level and presumably aiding memory. 1986 studies showed spec-

tacular results but since then the data has not been as exciting. Cognex may also cause liver damage.

Notes

•Since February the U.S. has shipped some \$8 billion in medicine and medical supplies to the Soviet republics of Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, the Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. •New studies indicate OTC pain killers like Tylenol do as good a job relieving arthritis pain as prescription strength doses of Ibuprofen. •The FDA rejected a Church of Scientology's demand to withdraw Prozac from the market and later this year will probably approve a new fluoxetine product — Lovan — to treat obesity. • One way to get antibiotics over the counter is to buy them in a pet store. Penicillin, erythromycin, and tetracycline are available in capsules meant to be dissolved in an aquarium or in a bird's water dish. The amounts are not the same as the human form so calibrate accordingly. Consult physician.

continued from front

say which pills they're popping?

To help remove the shroud that surrounds pills today, Pills-a-go-go will publish the names of the pills behind the news whenever possible. Call it "pill-outing" if you will but we have waited too long. Readers are urged to help PAGG in this effort.

For the Record: President Bush seems to be on at least three different medications, among them a "baby aspirin" every other day, synthroid to replace hormones from his totally destroyed thyroid gland, and procainamide (affects thinking). He also is believed to be taking a "blood thinner" as well as a "hormone". It's difficult to speculate on what these last two might be, but "hormone" can be a synonym for "steroid" and perhaps there would be an image problem for the prez were he to be a known steroid user.

Yvonne Culmsee of North Dallas, known as a leading "Mickey Finn artist" went on a robbery spree of some 24 people and seems to have used the sleeping aid Halcion mixed with drinks to knock her victims out.

So far it's only been reported that Dahmer used "sedatives" prescribed to him or perhaps another drug prescribed to his grandmother. A bottle of chloroform was found in his lair.

And here's exactly what was in Elvis Presley's body the day he died: Valmid, Qaalude, codeine and unspecified barbiturates in therapeutic concentrations and trace levels of chlorpheniramine, Demerol, Valium and morphine (possibly metabolized from the codeine). Also found were Placidyl, and three barbiturates: pentobarbital, butabarbital and phenobarbital.