



Public Deserves Better Protections From Pharmaceutical Industry

An article appeared in the July 11 Fresno Bee questioning the value of the Food and Drug Administrations safety net against dangerous drugs being approved for public consumption. I wasn't aware that there was a net. Is its chief function the catching of dead bodies as they fall?

According to a study conducted by Bruce Pomeranz, M. D., Ph.D. and colleagues from the University of Toronto (as recently reported in the journal of the American Medical Association), **adverse drug reactions (ADRs) in United States hospitals are responsible for approximately 106,000 deaths nationwide each year.**

This accounted for 4.6% of all causes of recorded death in 1994, making prescription drugs the fourth leading cause of death behind heart disease, cancer and stroke. This was more than all deaths from homicide, suicide, traffic accidents and AIDS combined. Additionally, the study declared that more than 2 million patients experienced serious but nonfatal reactions.

With statistics like these accounting for at least 10 times as many deaths as attributed to illicit drugs, **where is that safety net hanging? In the vault of the banks housing the pharmaceutical industry's record profits?**

According to an article in Fortune magazine in 1991, "No American industry has ever defied the laws of economic gravity like pharmaceuticals. For the past 30 years, the Fortune 500 drug makers have enjoyed the fattest profits in big business."

At whose expense? This report follows a 1996 American Medical News release declaring that **problems resulting from medication annually cost as much as \$182 billion, kill as many as 198,000 people, put 8.8 million people in the hospital and account for up to 38% of all hospital admissions.**

Just testing

This last 10 months its been the pain killer Duract causing liver failure and death, the blood pressure drug Posicor injuring 400 and killing 24, diet drugs Fenfluramine and Redux damaging hearts and antihistamine Seldane causing lethal drug interactions. **All have been pulled from the market.**

Which of the drugs you are currently a test subject for will be banned in the next year? Will you be one of the growing statistical indictments of our love affair with crisis-care, symptom-manipulating pharmaceuticals? **Will you trust the FDA and the drug companies with your family's life and health?**

The Bee article quoted a 13-year veteran FDA drug-safety monitoring pharmacologist who recently left the agency due to pressure to skim over safety concerns. She stated that **the message from superiors was that "One should be approving things, not questioning problems that arise, and. ...give the drug company the benefit of the doubt."** Do we really want to extend such trusting latitude to the drug makers?

A 1998 press release in the FDA Consumer magazine bragged about the organization's "record-breaking" speed in approving new drugs. As discussed in Health Watch magazine, **"the agency whose goal is supposed to be protecting the public from unsafe drugs, boasted that it gave the OK to 121 original drugs and 35 biological products in 1997 – a new "speed" record."** The need for speed is clear. Drug makers want to get their products on the market as quickly as possible. Sales can soar after the first announcements of a new miracle drug – and will drop after the truth about the risks are revealed.

Wrong question

Quite possible we're asking the wrong question. According to Dr. Terry Rondberg in Health Watch magazine, instead of asking, "what medication do I need to relieve my headaches? or "what type of doctor should I visit if I get an ulcer?", **the real question we should be asking is "what can I do to make my body healthy enough so I don't get headaches, ulcers, arthritis or allergies? We all need to stop thinking in terms of treating illnesses, and start thinking in terms of creating wellness."**

As a doctor of chiropractic for over 15 years, I live and work by the "chiropractic wellness paradigm" based upon the principle that the human body is a self-healing and self-regulating organism, as opposed to a disease and crisis-care model.

Don't misunderstand me. Crisis and disease care are necessary on occasion but are not to be confused with health care and can never be the cornerstone in an individual's quest for an optimally healthy life.

There will never be a "magic bullet" which allows us to live as irresponsibly as we might wish and still attain or maintain peak health.

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