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July, edition of M.D. Pharmacy's monthly newsletter. Articles regarding your medications, their safety, and the politics behind the price you pay for them. Please share this with your neighbors.

Latest Update on H1N1 (Swine) Flu

It is now reported that the new H1N1 swine flu vaccine will not be included in next season's flu vaccine, as it is already too late to add it to the current formula already in production. It will have to be a separate vaccine when it is ready. The new H1N1 vaccine may not be ready by the fall vaccination period because the virus needed to make the vaccine is not growing fast enough in labs. The new vaccine might require two shots, since most people have never been exposed and don't have any immunity. The first shot is a "priming" dose, and the second, several weeks later, is to boost antibody levels. Experts are watching for mutations as flu season begins in the southern hemisphere. If it becomes more virulent, the treatment recommendations using oral anti-virals for treatment may become more aggressive. As of now, oral anti-virals are not recommended for treatment, except for patients with severe symptoms, or who are at a high risk for complications, children under 5, seniors, pregnant women. People who are at high risk for exposure (ongoing occupational exposure risk) may benefit from oral anti-virals before exposure. As usual, remember hand washing, covering coughs and sneezes, and staying home while sick is the first line of defense. Facemasks, while not foolproof, may offer some protection. We will announce further developments as they occur.

Propylthiouracil Linked With Risk for Serious Liver Damage, Death

After being on the market, and widely used for several decades, propylthiouracil (PTU, used for hyperthyroidism and Graves' disease) is the subject of a safety alert by the FDA about its risk for serious liver damage, including liver failure or death. Patients on PTU therapy should be closely monitored for symptoms and signs of liver injury, especially during the first six months of therapy. Physicians should promptly discontinue PTU therapy when liver damage is suspected, and such patients should be evaluated and supportive care provided if needed. (Medscape, LLC)

Drug Combinations May Raise Breast Cancer Risk

Breast cancer survivors risk having their disease return if they use certain antidepressants while also taking the cancer prevention drug tamoxifen, worrisome new research shows. About 500,000 women in the United States take tamoxifen, which cuts the chance of breast cancer recurrence in half. Many of these women also take antidepressants for hot flashes, because hormone pills

aren't considered safe after breast cancer. The new study -representing the largest of its kind- found that using these interfering drugs Ð including Prozac, Paxil or Zoloft Ð can virtually wipe out the benefit provided by tamoxifen. Not all antidepressants pose this problem, and patients are advised to talk to their doctors about which ones are best. No greater breast cancer risk was seen in women taking the antidepressants Celexa, Lexapro, or Luvox. (YellowBrix, Inc.)

Certain Alzheimer's Drugs Linked to Serious Adverse Events in Older Adults with Dementia

A class of drugs widely used for treating Alzheimer's disease and dementia known as cholinesterase inhibitors have been found to cause serious adverse side-effects. "These drugs can provoke symptomatic bradycardia (slow heartbeat) and syncope (fainting) and permanent pacemaker insertion. Drug induced syncope may also precipitate fall-related hip fractures. "The risk of these potentially serious adverse events must be weighed carefully against the drugs' generally modest benefits" said the study authors. Common cholinesterase inhibiting drugs in use are Aricept (donepezil), Exelon (rivastigmine), Reminyl (galantamine), and Cognex (tacrine). Namenda (memantine) is not a cholinesterase inhibitor. (Medscape)

Addiction Drug May Relieve Fibromyalgia Symptoms

A low dose of naltrexone, a drug commonly used to treat alcoholism and drug addiction, is effective in relieving pain and fatigue in some patients with fibromyalgia researchers at Stanford University School of Medicine have found. Fibromyalgia is manifested by chronic pain, fatigue and insomnia, and has no clear-cut cause or treatment. (Reuters Health)

The pharmacists and staff at M.D. Pharmacy, your neighborhood pharmacy.