

April, 2009

April, 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.

FDA Slaps Warning on Heartburn Drug Tied to Spasms.

Federal officials are adding their sternest warning to a heartburn drug that has been linked to muscle spasms. The drug, metoclopramide (brand-name Reglan) has been found to cause spasms and tics when used for long periods of time or at high doses. The problems include uncontrollable movement of the limbs, face and tongue, and are usually irreversible, even after discontinuing use of the drug. More than 2 million U.S. patients use the drug, which is available in oral tablets and syrups, and injectable form. The drug's current labeling already mentions risk of developing the spasms, called dyskinesia, but the recent FDA action elevates the warning to a "black box", the sternest possible warning. Patients who face the greatest risk are the elderly, especially women, and those who have been taking the drug for more than three months. (Associated Press/AP online)

Lower Sedation, Frequent Wakening of ICU Patients Lessens Long-Term Cognitive Impairment.

Recent testing shows that cognitive function is better if the patient is wakened early and frequently during a stay in the intensive care unit (ICU). Past thinking has been that if the patient is heavily sedated, then he (or she) won't remember the experience, and will be less traumatized. In fact, it appears that the opposite is true. The "Awakening and Breathing Control" (ABC) trial was associated with improved cognitive function at all time points compared with controls, and the difference was statistically significant in those patients even after one year. "The culture of the ICU should change" added Dr. James C. Jackson, PsyD. of the Vanderbilt Center for Health Services Research. "The concept of keeping the patient down should be considered an antiquated concept". (Society of Critical Care Medicine [SCCM] 38th Critical Care Congress)

Issues of Patient Safety: The Dangers of Counterfeit Drugs.

- In 2003, FDA blitz inspections of foreign drug imports found 88% were unapproved or fake drugs with safety issues;
- In 2005, FDA issued warnings on fake Lipitor, fake Viagra, and a fake unapproved osteoporosis drug from Mexico;
- In 2007, FDA discovered fake diet drugs being sold over the internet from 24 web sellers;
- In 2008, FDA investigated tainted heparin sold from China that has so far killed more than 250 people worldwide.

In this potentially dangerous environment, it is more important than ever that you trust your local independent pharmacist to insure your health and safety by maintaining the integrity of the supply line of your prescription medications. (U.S. Pharmacist)

Possible FDA ban coming on Darvon, Darvocet.

Darvon (propoxyphene) and Darvocet (propoxyphene with acetaminophen) have already been banned in the U.K., and is only rarely used in Canada, but is among the top 25 drugs prescribed in the United States. Many prescribers assume that it's a benign drug... but it's NOT. It is converted by the body to a chemical that can cause cardiac toxicity at doses which are not much higher than the usually prescribed therapeutic dose. As few as 6 to 15 tablets can be lethal, especially when combined with alcohol or other central nervous system depressants, and there is NO good antidote. Consider using acetaminophen (Tylenol) or an NSAID (ibuprofen, naproxyn, or aspirin) for mild to moderate pain. Darvocet hasn't been shown to work any better than acetaminophen alone, and if more pain relief is needed use an opioid such as Vicodin. The FDA has the drug under close scrutiny at this time, and it may lead to a possible ban from the market. (Pharmacist's Letter)

We happily join with you in welcoming the return of spring to St. Louis, and heartily congratulate you on surviving a nasty winter.

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