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January, 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.

Music, Like Laughter, Benefits Heart Health.

Listening to enjoyable music may be good for cardiovascular health, a new study suggests. High blood pressure and high cholesterol are very important in vascular health, but some individuals lacking these risk factors develop significant heart disease, and that may be partly related to their response to stress. If music can evoke positive emotions to counteract negative stresses of everyday life, it could have an important impact on vascular health. It has been known for some time that mental stress can cause vasoconstriction resulting in elevated blood pressure, but this study is the first to show that music, like laughter has a beneficial effect on endothelial function. The magnitude of vasodilation (blood pressure lowering) resulting from listening to self-selected enjoyable music increased 26%, while listening to anxiety producing music resulted in a decrease of 6%, and a "relaxation" tape showed only an 11% increase. The observed improvement from listening to enjoyable music was the same as that previously observed with aerobic activity or statin therapy. (American Heart Association)

Drugmaker Ads to Target Obama Idea.

The nation's largest pharmaceutical lobbying group is preparing a multimillion-dollar public relations campaign to tout the importance of free-market health care and undercut an expected push by the Obama administration for price controls of prescription drugs. The effort, which will include a national television commercial already being aired, is the first salvo in what likely will be a huge battle over health care reform during the Obama presidency. Mr. Obama has said he will hold drug and insurance companies "accountable for the prices they charge and the harm they cause." He has promised to give Medicare the authority to negotiate for cheaper prices—a provision they currently do not have. (The Washington Times)

Expert or Shill?

Earlier this year, Congressional investigators discovered that a world-renowned child psychiatrist at Harvard Medical School and Mass. General Hospital had received in excess of \$1 million from a pharmaceutical manufacturer for generating and disseminating data that would support use of the company's powerful, expensive and risky antipsychotic drug in children. The drug company also drafted a scientific abstract on the drug for the doctor to sign as if he were

the author, before it was presented at a professional meeting. It also sought his advice on how to handle the uncomfortable fact (not mentioned in the abstract) that children receiving placebos also improved significantly. Another psychiatrist, who had been host of a popular public radio program received at least \$1.3 million for giving marketing lectures touting use of the drugs. These appalling conflicts of interest have helped fuel a huge increase in the use of unnecessarily risky and expensive drugs in young people, and makes it hard for us to know whether these doctors are independent experts, or paid shills for Big Pharma. (New York Times)

In-Patient Hallway Boarding Lowers Mortality in Emergency Department Patients.

Patients in the emergency department who are admitted to the hospital and wait for an available bed in an in-patient hallway instead of being "boarded" in the emergency department have no medical complications. While the number one problem in hospital emergency departments is overcrowding, leading to medical complications, errors, and increased mortality, a four year study at a major hospital showed that physician-identified patients who were deemed appropriate for in-patient hallway boarding suffered no medical complications. In fact, Dr. Adam Singer, M.D. told the American College of Emergency Physicians that patients placed in the hallway while waiting for a room had a mortality rate less than half of those in a standard bed, while the practice (which had been considered potentially unsafe previously) was in fact not, and greatly helped in alleviating the overcrowded conditions in the hospital's emergency department. (ACEP 2008 Scientific Assembly)

Wishing a healthy and happy new year to all!

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