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Paxil Blocks Tamoxifen, Lowers Survival Odds against Breast Cancer.

Canadian researchers report that women with breast cancer who take both the anti-cancer drug tamoxifen and the antidepressant *Paxil* (paroxetine) may increase their risk of dying because Paxil reduces tamoxifen's effectiveness. "Patients who are on tamoxifen and who require an antidepressant should probably be given something other than paroxetine" the researchers added. Paroxetine significantly inhibits an enzyme used by the body to convert tamoxifen into its active form, but this effect was not seen with other drugs in the same chemical class as paroxetine. Patients taking Paxil and tamoxifen should talk with their doctors about changing their antidepressant. Abruptly discontinuing paroxetine can cause a well documented withdrawal syndrome and risk of worsening depression. Transition to another antidepressant should be done gradually over several weeks time. (HealthDay Reporter)

FDA Orders Name Change for Maalox Total Relief.

There has been considerable confusion in the market place due to drug manufacturers using an old well-established brand name on a new product which may be totally different. Now, the maker of *Maalox* has agreed to change the name of its more potent medication, *Maalox Total Relief*, after federal health regulators said consumers have been mistaking it for the milder more gentle stomach reliever traditionally known as *Maalox*. The product formerly known as *Maalox Total Relief* contains potent drug ingredients that can cause internal bleeding, and is totally different than *Maalox*. The medication at issue contains an ingredient similar to aspirin which can exacerbate bleeding in patients with stomach ulcers and blood clotting problems. The manufacturer will also change the packaging (which is similar to *Maalox*) in order to avoid confusion. (pharmacistelink.com)

Many Patients May Never Fill New Prescriptions.

A new study suggests that many people whose doctors start them on new medications for conditions like diabetes and high blood pressure may never fill those prescriptions. Researchers found that among 75,000 patients prescribed new medications over a year, 22% were never filled. Such "non-adherence" was common even among patients given drugs for chronic conditions that can have serious health consequences. Though the exact reasons are not clear, one possibility is that, when health problems cause few or no symptoms—as with high blood pressure or high cholesterol—people may not feel the need for a medication. All the patients in the study had health insurance, but even then, there may be high co-payments or may be prescribed a drug not covered by their plan, so cost could be an issue especially when people are unsure of why a drug is being prescribed. (Reuters)

Soft Drink Consumption Linked to Pancreatic Cancer.

The regular consumption of sugar-laden soft drinks could boost a person's risk of developing pancreatic cancer. A new study found that people who drank 2 or more sugary soft drinks per week had an 87% increased risk for pancreatic cancer, compared with those who did not. Even after taking factors such as smoking, caloric intake, and type 2 diabetes into account, the study found that consuming soft drinks might play an independent role in the risk of pancreatic cancer. The study hypothesizes that the high levels of sugar can increase levels of insulin in the body, and this can contribute to pancreatic cancer cell growth. Fruit juice was not implicated because it is lower in sugar, includes many nutrients, and is served in smaller portion sizes. However, in an age-adjusted analysis, smoking was also a risk factor. After excluding former smokers, the study found that current smokers had a 49% increased risk for pancreatic cancer compared with never-smokers. (Medscape)

Is the US Swine Flu Epidemic Over?

If the U.S. swine flu epidemic isn't over, it certainly looks as if it's on its last legs. While federal health officials are not ready to declare the threat has passed and the outbreak has run its course, they did report last week that for the fourth week in a row, no states have widespread flu activity. U.S. cases have been declining since late October. The virus has shown no signs of mutating, the vaccine against it is effective and roughly half the people in the U.S. already have some immunity. (Associated Press)

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