

Califf, director of Duke University's Clinical Research Center, estimated at a recent Food and Drug Administration advisory committee meeting.

In less than two years, three widely prescribed drugs have been pulled from the market in part, at least, because doctors ignored the package inserts. A fourth will disappear from drugstore shelves this summer for the same reason.

FDA critics say the agency, which regulates package inserts, expects too much of the leaflets. Instead of withholding approval of potentially dangerous drugs, critics say, the agency sends them to market with inserts jam-packed with warnings.

"Should we have relatively dangerous drugs and simply warn people that they might kill or seriously injure them?" asks Thomas Moore, a health policy fellow at George Washington University in Washington, D.C. "My perception is that the top management of the FDA seems to have a more permissive view than we have historically had."

He and like-minded FDA-watchers are quick to tick off Propulsid, Rezulin, Posicor and Duract, four drugs whose inserts underwent multiple revisions as new safety concerns came to light. In each case, the manufacturer also mailed "Dear Doctor" letters to alert physicians of label changes.

Apparently, though, some doctors never saw the warnings, and patients died. The last three drugs are now off the market, and Propulsid, which is used to treat severe heartburn, will follow them by mid-August.

"FDA has an almost ritualistic belief in labeling changes, as if they have some magical property to change behavior," says Jerry Avorn, chief of the division that tracks adverse medication events at the Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston. "There is very little data to support that belief."

The FDA's own research backs Avorn.

In a "talk paper" in January, the FDA noted that 85% of the 270 Propulsid-related adverse side effects reported to the agency—including 70 deaths—occurred in patients with risk factors already listed on the drug's label, such as congestive heart failure or use of antibiotics or antidepressants.

And after Rezulin's label was changed in late 1997 to recommend monthly liver function tests, the FDA found that far fewer than 10% of patients had the tests.

Apparently, even the agency's expert advisers don't always follow the package insert instructions.

At the recent advisory committee meeting, an FDA staff member had to remind urologists on the panel about how to treat patients with Muse, an injectable impotence treatment. Instead of sending men home with a prescription, doctors are supposed to administer the first dose in their office so they can watch for possible side effects.

FLAWED SYSTEM

In many cases, package inserts "are far from perfect," acknowledges Rachel Behrman of the FDA's medical policy office. "We are working hard to improve that."

Recognizing that patients as well as doctors need to read package inserts, the FDA hopes to make them "more user-friendly, more informative, more consistent," she says.

"If you flip through the PDR, the Physicians Desk Reference, the medication bible that reprints package inserts for nearly all prescription drugs today, some of our labels are very good, and some are not."

The older the drug, the more likely its package insert is to fall in the latter cat-

egory, she says; until recent years, comprehensiveness superceded clarity.

Still, "the best available science is often not communicated adequately to practicing doctors to shape their prescribing decisions," says Avorn, who lectures Harvard Medical School students on the subject.

Rezulin, a diabetes drug, looked so dangerous that Avorn and his colleagues advised diabetes doctors at their hospital to stop prescribing it a year before Parke-Davis, at the FDA's urging, pulled it from the market.

"I'm astonished that the additional year of product life even existed," Avorn says.

Why does the FDA approve such medications and allow them to stay on the market? "There are very strong economic and political pressures when a company has spent hundreds of millions of dollars to develop a drug," Avorn says.

Wyeth-Ayerst Laboratories yanked Duract, a painkiller in the same class of drugs as ibuprofen, naproxen and others, from the market in June 1998 after reports of four deaths and eight transplants resulting from severe liver failure. According to the company, all but one of the cases occurred among patients who took the drug for more than 10 days, against the label's advice.

Just two weeks before Duract came off the market, Roche Laboratories pulled Posicor, which is used to treat high blood pressure and chest pain.

Taking Posicor with any of a number of commonly used drugs, including some heart disease treatments, could lead to potentially fatal heartbeat irregularities, the same problem that led to Propulsid's impending withdrawal.

As with Propulsid, changes to Posicor's label were designed to minimize the drug interaction risk.

"In principle, drug interactions can be addressed by appropriate labeling; however, with respect to Posicor, Roche Laboratories believes that the complexity of such prescribing information would make it too difficult to implement," the company wrote in a "Dear Doctor" letter announcing Posicor's withdrawal.

At least one drug, sorivudine for shingles, never made it to the U.S. market because of concerns about the effectiveness of label warnings. The pill was withdrawn in Japan after 15 users died in just its first month on the market. They had developed aplastic anemia, a blood disorder, after taking sorivudine with a common anti-cancer drug.

Three years later, Bristol Myers Squibb representatives argued before an FDA advisory committee that a "black box warning"—like the ones on cigarette packages—would adequately minimize sorivudine's risks.

"No one was convinced that it would work," says Raymond Woosley, chairman of pharmacology at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., and a member of that committee, which recommended not approving sorivudine.

Because a drug already on the market, acyclovir, provided a similar benefit with far less risk, the agency followed the advisory committee's recommendation, the FDA's Behrman says. "We believed zero deaths was the only acceptable number."

RISK VS. BENEFITS

Rezulin, on the other hand, was the first drug of its class. FDA officials have said the agency sought to remove that drug from the market only after similar, safer medications became available.

"I've heard that line, but I don't buy it," Avorn says. "It's as if we don't have other medications to treat diabetes."

The risk/benefit issue arose at the FDA advisory committee meeting, where panelists recommended approval of Uprima, which would be the second impotence pill on the market.

Pre-market studies showed that the drug can trigger fainting, especially when taken with alcohol, so committee members suggested a black box warning against drinking on Uprima's label.

But panel member Thomas Graboys, who had to leave the meeting early, says he would have voted against Uprima, partly because of concerns about the label's ability to protect patients.

When the condition a drug treats isn't life-threatening, only the lowest level of risk is acceptable says Graboys, director of the Lown Cardiovascular Center at Brigham and Women's Hospital.

Much inappropriate prescribing could be eliminated if doctors actually read package inserts or looked up the drugs in their PDRs before prescribing them, Woosley says.

Instead, they rely on memory, a Herculean task when one considers that one doctor might prescribe scores of drugs. But that's what they're taught to do in medical school, Woosley says. Doctors wrote nearly 3 billion prescriptions last year; the number is expected to reach 4 billion annually by 2004.

"We've got to start by changing the way we teach people," he says. Among his students, "the kid who gets the 'A' is the one who says 'I don't know, but I'll look that up and get back to you.'"

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2001

SPEECH OF

HON. CHRIS CANNON

OF UTAH

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 14, 2000

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 4578) making appropriations for the Department of the Interior and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2001, and for other purposes:

Mr. CANNON. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of Mr. SUNUNU's Amendment increasing funding for the Payment in Lieu of Taxes program for the FY2001 Interior Appropriations Bill. The government has an unpaid obligation to the towns and counties containing lands owned by the federal government, since these are areas that counties do not own and cannot tax. Without PILT, local governments would be forced to eliminate essential public services that benefit residents and visitors in their respective counties.

The federal government owns large portions of lands in many of the counties that I represent in Utah. For example, 93% of Garfield County is owned by the federal government. Our state uses a vast majority of the PILT reimbursements to support education. For FY2001, Utah plans to spend 49.5% of the state budget on K-12 education, among the highest in the nation. But even with this huge commitment, Utah ranks dead last in per student spending with an average of \$4,008 per year compared to the national average of

\$6,407. With this much of the state owned by the federal government, Utah relies heavily on this PILT funding.

I understand that it is difficult to reconcile the many needs in the Interior budget with the limited funds available, but the PILT program has not been sufficiently funded in the past. I urge you to consider the federal responsibility and the needs of Utah's students as you cast your vote on this amendment.

HONORING SACRED HEART ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH OF PHOENIXVILLE, PA

HON. CURT WELDON

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 15, 2000

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure and enthusiasm that I rise to congratulate Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church in Phoenixville, Pennsylvania on the momentous occasion of its Centennial Jubilee. This year, Rev. Msgr. John Galyo and the parishioners of the Church celebrate the 100th anniversary of their parish.

Founded by Slovak immigrants in 1900 as a place to worship in their native tongue, Sacred Heart Church quickly developed into a cohesive faith community. However, the growth of the parish, both spiritually and physically, did not come without hard work, determination, and the pride of its people.

The original wooden church was destroyed by fire in the 1920s. Through the tremendous sacrifices of its selfless parishioners, a new brick building was constructed and opened for services by 1929. It remains a house of worship to this day, giving testimony to the undying spirit of the Sacred Heart community.

Although Slovak is no longer the main language spoken by the parishioners, their pride in the Slovak heritage lives on. In fact, Sacred Heart is one of only a few remaining Slovak parishes in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. Over the course of the century, Sacred Heart has been both a blessing and an inspiration to Southeast Pennsylvania. It emerged from humble beginnings and has clearly prevailed through the often turbulent tests of time to become a thriving and enduring spiritual family.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you and my other distinguished colleagues to join me in congratulating Msgr. Galyo and the parishioners of Sacred Heart Church as they celebrate a century of tremendous achievements. May they enjoy bountiful blessings and good fortune for many more years to come.

IN HONOR OF DIANA MARIE FALAT

HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 15, 2000

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, today I honor Diana Marie Falat upon her reception of the Gold Key Award at the National Scholastic Art Exhibition in Washington, DC.

Diana's ceramic pieces have won several awards in the Cleveland area, including three Gold Keys, a Silver Key, and an Honorable Mention, as well as various monetary awards. For her piece entitled "Petunia", Diana was named in the Top 25 at the Ohio Governor's art show. This weekend, Diana will be honored at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts National Scholastic Art Exhibition with a Gold Key award—the highest award ever achieved in art by a Berea School District student.

Diana's accomplishments are not limited to the field of art. Diana, age 18, is a recent graduate of Berea High School in Berea, Ohio where she was a member of the National Honor Society, RSVP, and the Big Sibs program. She earned a varsity letter in her senior year for girls' golf, and is an accomplished figure skater as well. For the past two years, she has also attended Cuyahoga Community College. In the fall, Diana will attend Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio, where she plans to continue her ceramics and figure skating. Diana's involvement in her school, her community, athletics, and the arts are a testament to her commitment to better herself and the world around her.

My fellow colleagues, please join me in honoring Diana Marie Falat for her many various achievements, and especially on her reception of the Gold Key award at the National Scholastic Art Exhibition at the Kennedy Center.

KOREAN SUMMITT

HON. TONY P. HALL

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 15, 2000

Mr. HALL of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I rise to mark the historic occasion of the summit between President Kim Dae Jung of the Republic of Korea, and Chairman Kim Jong Il of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Much has been written about this unprecedented meeting between the leaders of the two Koreas; what has happened has encouraged not only Korean people, but those of us who are concerned about human rights and humanitarian matters as well. And I hope the course these leaders chart in the months ahead will be a model for other former adversaries to follow.

A reconciliation like the one that has now begun in Pyongyang holds great promise for expanding freedom and prosperity for Korean people on both sides of their border. That is something that Koreans have longed for; it is also something that many Americans are eager to see—especially the hundreds of thousands of Korean-Americans who have enriched the communities of our Nation, and the tens of thousands of active-duty military men and women, and their families.

I first met President Kim when he was living in exile in the United States. Together with many of our colleagues and former colleagues, I tried to help him with the work he was doing to promote human rights for his people. While I have not met Chairman Kim, I have worked with his people on the humanitarian projects that have been an important

focus for the DPRK in recent years. So I have a special appreciation for Koreans' and Korean-Americans' sense that this moment is a moving one.

Still, I don't think any outsider can understand how Korean people feel this week. It's hard to imagine how much those in the north and the south have suffered—from food shortages in the north, human-rights concerns in the south, and for both the pain of being torn from their families and their countrymen.

I hope that President Kim will be generous in providing the tangible necessities— food, fertilizer, medicines—that will help so many people in the north. I hope that Chairman Kim will continue to demonstrate courage and confidence in helping separated families reunite. As an American, I also hope that Chairman Kim will take the military steps needed to reassure Koreans living in the south, and U.S. troops stationed along the border, that the years ahead will be peaceful ones.

As important as the specific steps that have come out of this summit are, though, the most important long-term result will be this first step toward healing this divided nation.

Mr. Speaker, the United States has an important role to play in supporting this extraordinary peace initiative. I strongly believe we should lift economic sanctions against North Korea, as President Clinton promised to do nine months ago. I think we should accept Koreans' leadership in the decisions we make together as long-time allies. And I hope the United States will continue to respond generously to the United Nations' relief efforts, and that we will expand our relationship with North Korea's people in other ways.

I have visited many places where people are hurting. One thing I have learned is that—no matter where they live—people who survive terrible hardships have one thing in common: they remember who helped them through their difficulties, and they cannot forget who found excuses to let their friends and families die.

I have been especially proud of our country in refusing to let the political differences we have with North Korea prevent us from upholding our humanitarian tradition of responding generously to the people in need there. Now, with this summit, Koreans in the south have demonstrated to their brothers that they are not going to stand by and let them suffer. I hope the past three days will create the goodwill the leaders of these nations need to improve the lives of their people over time—and to ease the serious suffering of Koreans in the north immediately.

Both North Korea and South Korea have made tremendous progress in a very short time. It is easy to forget the economic strides South Korea has made in the past 30 years, and the diplomatic achievements North Korea has made as it re-orientes its economy away from its longstanding alliances and toward a future that is marked by better relations with other nations.

The work ahead will not be easy, but Koreans I know are some of the toughest, hardest-working people I have ever met. I am confident that, if they set themselves to this work, they will accomplish it. And I hope that our country will contribute to their success.