

# Pills-a-go-go

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## Formula Ripoff

A dude named Bernard Mayles, 57, got nine years for stealing trade secrets from a couple of pharmaceutical companies. Along with Mario Miscio the two scientists sold \$700 million worth of formulas to rivals of Merck and Co. and Schering Plough Corp.

## Drugstore Rape

As part of their "investigation" into the alleged rape at the Kennedy Palm Beach compound cops made alleged victim PATTY BOWMAN list every drug she'd ever taken in the last nine years. In addition they looked through the records of two pharmacies for every prescription she's gotten since at least July 1976.

## Marezine

As far as we can tell this is a new OTC anti-emetic called marezine HCL. We've road-tested it and found it to be better than Dramamine. It doesn't make you as drowsy and it lasts only about four hours instead of the twelve you get with Dramamine or the 24 you get with Bonine.

## Taxol Thieves

Some jerks went into the Oregon forests and literally ripped off 500 pounds of Pacific Yew Tree bark, presumably because they'd heard of its value in making a new anti-cancer drug, Taxol. Picking up aluminum cans would probably be more lucrative, though since the only company that buys the bark, Hauser NW Inc., pays just \$2.25/lb for the stuff and will not buy it from the thieves.

## Desert Drugstorm

Cut off from their usual source of mind-alteration — beer — the strapping young killers sent to play volleyball in the sands of Saudi turned to prescription drugs. Officers took large amounts of tranquilizers according to an air force captain who's being court-martialed for supposedly improperly handing out drugs to the bored soldiers. Captain Roger Mansfield, chief pharmacist of the 56th Medical Group described to US representative CW Bill Young (FL) how the officers were big consumers of Halcion and Dextroamphetamine while the grunts were forced to pilfer anything they could get their hands on.

As it turns out, the drug of choice was a liquid anas-

## Migraine Menaces

by Steven A. Dore, SPP

Once again Glaxo has grabbed the pill world by the tail with the impending introduction of its anti-migraine drug Sumatritan to be sold in the United States under the brand name Imitrex. Already approved for use in the Netherlands an FDA approval is expected.

And none to soon for the firm, which is certain to face marketplace hardships in the next few years. First hit will be its anti-ulcer drug Zantac when it goes off patent in 1995. But even before that Tagamet is expected to go generic by 1994 with an OTC version already in the wings. A generic version of Zantac in Canada (which has laws more favorable to generics) has already eaten up half of Zantac's sales there. Second is the recent introduction of Merck Sharp Dohme's Prilosec, which can heal ulcers twice as fast as Zantac. Currently Zantac is the life blood of Glaxo, bringing in half its money.

Don't expect Glaxo to go quietly into the H2 antagonist night, though. It has already resorted to some shady practices calling into question the safety of its competitors and its lawyers are working on a way to extend the Zantac patent until 2002.

But back to the headaches. The eight million Americans who endure the torture of migraine headaches ought to be able to make up more than enough of any lost Zantac revenues if Imitrex hits the market. Studies at Southern Illinois University and a more recent study published in the JAMA shows the stuff has a 70% success rate against the killer headaches. Half of those treated experienced complete relief. The only drawback is that Imitrex must be injected, though Glaxo says a pill version is on the way.

On the same front, Sandoz, fine purveyors of ergotamine anti-migraine pills is now developing a new treatment called DHE-45 (already available as an injectable). The new version will come in the form of a nasal spray.



thetic called Forane (isoflurane). Mansfield said it was "consumed in large quantities" much as marijuana was by soldiers in Vietnam. Mansfield says the military was well-aware of the drug use but is not prosecuting any of the soldiers to "maintain the euphoria ... Desert Storm has brought."

## Sudafed Dumping

In case you missed your chance to be poisoned by tainted Sudafed capsules there's still hope. Burrough's Wellcome has gotten the go-ahead from a federal judge to distribute 28 million of the possibly poisonous pills overseas. The 350,000 packages of suspect Sudafed will now be sold overseas in Canada and the third world.

## Lilly v Scientology

The public relations firm that pumps up the image of the church of scientology has dumped its client because of a conflict of interest. The New York based WPP group which owns both the Walter Thompson and the Hill & Knowlton Agencies realized there was a problem. Hill & Knowlton (which also represents Kuwait) represents Lilly and Walter Thompson represents their sworn enemy the Scientologists. WPP big shot Martin Sorrell flew to Indianapolis last summer where he was told in no uncertain terms that Lilly wasn't at all pleased with the situation. In addition Lilly has decided to pull out all the stops in fighting the scientologists attacks on its star drug Prozac. Until now the company has had a policy of never commenting on anything — making Media Representative Ed West's job one of repeating "no comment" on everything. Now he's taking off the gloves, "we've never been attacked by a cult before" he says. Lilly has offered to pay all legal expenses of any physician sued for prescribing Prozac. In letters sent to several hundred physicians Lilly promised to "defend, indemnify and hold you harmless against claims, liabilities or expenses, arising from personal injury alleged to have been caused by Prozac." Moreover, Lilly has sworn to go to trial in every Prozac suit. There are at least 60 such cases pending. More to follow as Pills-a-Go-Go digs into this.

## The Spinal Solution

An experimental drug known as GM-1 is being studied by University of Maryland professor Dr. Fred Geisler. The drug holds a lot of promise for the 10,000 or so Americans who become paralyzed due to spinal cord injuries every year. The drug which is being developed by the Fidia Pharmaceutical Corp. will be known as Sygen and seems to improve the survivability of injured nerves or to enhance the effectiveness of those which are left after an accident. Unlike steroid treatment with methylprednisolone, which must be administered within eight hours of the injury to be effective, GM-1 can be used days later, although the treatment lasts much longer. Best of all the two therapies can be mixed with the steroid

treatment dramatically reducing inflammation and swelling in the injured area and GM-1 working in a completely different way. But there are still years to go before the FDA will approve the new treatment.

## Birth Control Pill for Men

Researchers at the Vanderbilt University Medical Center are testing an oral version of their highly successful birth control injection. The synthetic hormone blocks the release of gonadotropin (produced by the hypothalamus in the brain). When this is done, the body ceases to produce sperm and a couple of hormones, among them testosterone. While testosterone replacement took care of the loss of libido, men became sterile within 12 weeks. The process appears to be completely reversible and has no major side effects. Similar results were also reported by researchers at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center in Torrance, CA.

In a sort of related story Dr. Min-Chueh Chang who co-developed the birth control pill has died at age 82.

## Black Death Comeback?

Miles-Cutter Biological, the country's only manufacturer of anti bubonic-plague vaccine has announced a halt to the production of the drug "as soon as possible". The biggest customer for the stuff was the Department of Defense, which bought 2.6 million doses a year. Stock up now.

## Upjohn Busted

A record \$600,000 federal fine has been levied against Upjohn Co. for "bookkeeping violations" surrounding its free distribution of Xanax and Halcion pills. DEA investigators found irregularities in Oregon, Florida, Ohio, and Puerto Rico. Instead of risking prosecution and convictions on 171 counts of violating the law (and a maximum penalty of \$25,000 a pop) Upjohn went the nolo contendere route. Under the consent decrees signed by Upjohn they do not admit any wrongdoing but are now forbidden to pass out free samples of the drugs. Xanax sales trounced Valium about five years ago and ever since then the drug has been the number one anxiolytic. Halcion, a sleeping pill, is also number one in its field. Doctors who want samples of the popular drugs will now have to deal directly with the company in Kalamazoo, MI. An additional \$500,000 penalty hangs over Upjohn's head if they fail to abide by the decrees.

## Designer Drug Update

The Supreme Court has ruled that the Justice Department is allowed to declare a substance illegal within 30 days of the drug's appearance on the streets. Before this it took between six months to a year before a drug could be classified as schedule 1 controlled substance. This now gives the Justice Department the power to classify a substance as illegal without judicial or any other agency's review. From there the same department enforces the law it just made.