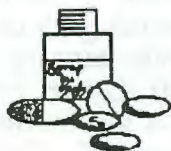


Pills-a-go-go

Journal of Pills
Equinox 1992



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Money Money Money

First class pills continue to be the pride of American invention and manufacturing capabilities with all the pharmaceutical companies showing profits. Eli Lilly, for instance, just concluded its 30 consecutive year of financial success with \$1.1 billion in profits. The erst-while maker of LSD says it has pumped \$2.6 billion into the Indiana economy since 1987 while employing some 12,300 people in a state from which all other Fortune 500 companies have fled. But not Lilly, which has continued its gigantic expansion of its Indianapolis headquarters and started in on another \$500,000 expansion project at a manufacturing plant in Clinton, IN.

Antibiotic Extavaganza

Lilly also unveiled its latest pill, Lora-bid, which they hope will replace Ceclor as its kick-ass antibiotic ... Ceclor goes off patent this year. Ceclor was the money-making replacement for Keflex.

Abbot, too, released its latest antibio, Omniflax (temafloxacin) another one of those powerful quinolones like Cipro. Abbot just released Biaxin (clarithromycin) on Oct 31 last year.

Antibiotic pills in general accounted for \$2.2 billion in sales for 1990 and the figure keeps on rising. Most are prescribed for respiratory and genitourinary tract infections. Abbot posted profits of \$1.1 billion on \$6.9 billion in sales in

Pills of the Angels

By Chet Antonini, editor and publisher

Ahh, this is a pretty comfortable format, no? For a while now I've been meaning to push PaGG toward more in-depth discussions of pills and pill culture rather than serving as purely a digest of the latest pill news. Then something happened that made the decision even easier — I managed to lose almost all the news clippings I'd saved since last ish.

Too bad, there were a couple of good ones, chiefly a story about a Florida pharmacist who was busted for supplying herself, friends & family with all the pills they wanted (especially Valium) filing fake prescriptions with creative pseudonyms including "Dr. Hot Mama". There was also the revelation in Parade magazine that President Bush takes a "pain pill" each night before sleep to ease the ache in his knees caused by his constant jogging, which he insists is good for him even if it does destroy his legs.

When Bush barfed, a lot of the press instinctively tried to pin it on Halcion but the drug nobody mentioned was the anti-nausea medication, Tigan, he was also taking. No word on whether the prez took it in pill form or suppository.

Please note the address change. If it changes again I'll be sure to let you know. Anything sent to the Bloomington address will still get to me but it might take a bit longer. So, don't fret if you lose this ish.

Found an interesting concept in a book called No More Heroes by Richard A. Gabriel. It's about the psychiatry of war and is fascinating for its analysis of the mental effects of combat (drives you crazy if you must know). Anyway, at the end of the book Gabriel gets to speculating about ways to overcome the destructive effects of fear on soldiers. According to Gabriel only about 2% of soldiers can withstand any amount of combat without breaking down. Unfortunately these soldiers

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Naming Names

by Heck Gnow, RSG

The most important thing about a pill is not its color or its shape. It's not whether it's a capsule or a tablet. And it's certainly not the formula of the drug itself.

The most important thing about a pill is its name. Recently a group of pharmaceutical companies admitted exactly this at a symposium at Harvard business school. If forced to choose between owning the patent or the trade name of a particular pill they said they'd prefer to keep the name.

Indeed, pharmaceutical companies, like other large industries, will pay as much as a half million dollars for a name. If that investment gives their pill only a few percentage points over any competitor, then the investment will be worth it. Once a formula goes generic, it can mean all the difference, it's hard to compete with something one tenth your price and it's too unseemly to drop the price too much.

Consider a pill like Darvocet. Darvocet costs twice as much as generic propoxyphene yet Darvocet continues to claim a large chunk of the pain killer market. Why? Because for 20 years the doc's been scribbling out *Dum* *100* and he's not going to start writing out propoxyphene napsylate now. This not only takes more time and effort, it can result in prescribing errors, malpractice suits and, oh my, need I go on?

Plus, Eli Lilly just showed up at his office again and dropped off a load of doughnuts, a whole bunch more of those little flashlights, paperweights and other trinkets and the rep said he'd be back with more loot. Please don't stop writing Darvocet. Have some Prozac.

And there's nothing wrong with that. Patients have ample opportunity to request generics from their doctors and most states provide for automatic substitution unless the doctor specifically forbids it.

But I digress.

Since pill companies aim their pharmaceutical sales toward doctors it stands to reason they care a lot about what a doctor thinks of the name. That's why prescription drugs have such serious-sounding names it's why for instance (as one professional namer put it) a drug for life threatening kidney problems won't be called "Renal-Rite". But it is why over-the-counter pills get names like "One-A-Day." Doctors seem to like names with an aura of mystery and sophistication and don't care too

much if a drug names means much to a patient. That's why you've got Xanax.

Xanax is a great example of a modern pill name. It is very distinctive — especially when written — it also contains two "z" sounds, which connote power and are very hot these days in pill names (Xanax, Zovirax, Zolof, Zocor, Prozac, Zestril etc.). And, once you say or hear it a few times, it's easy to remember. That's the key — name recall.

The more people hear a pill's name a few times, the more likely they are to recognize and use it. Even if publicity is "bad" it can be good. Each time some maniac went around poisoning Tylenol, sales dipped for a short time, then rose again to record levels. The fact is, Tylenol is such a good name, it is perhaps the only way regular folks know how to say, "acetaminophen".

In the good old days, pillmakers, like car makers, didn't put a lot of thought into names for their pills and usually came up with something on a whim. Milltown is named after a town in New Jersey. Streptomycin is chemically descriptive of its activity. Both heroin and aspirin are trade names for headache remedies made by Bayer. These trademarks are no longer enforced.

A couple of years ago, Stewart ICI came up with the name Zestril. At the time they didn't even have a drug to go with the name but they knew their next pill would have that name. It has a Z in it after all.

This storing up names in advance is a necessity. Drug companies employ teams of creative people to sit around boardrooms drinking coffee and barking out names they think sound good. They come up with thousands and thousands and almost all of them are no good for a variety of reasons. They are unpronounceable, they are already in use, or else they are too close to another drug's name. Two years ago Merck Sharp & Dohme paid good money for the name Losec (for a pill that

Lowered acid SECRETions in the stomach), they loved it. Unfortunately doctors' handwriting resulted in too many pharmacists handing out bottles of a diuretic called Lasix. Now MSD calls the pill Prilosec.



Magical Midrin

If you suffer from migraine headaches, you already may have tried Midrin, an attractive bright red pill with a hot pink band made by Carrick Laboratories Inc. Carrick touts its crimson capsule as "The Headache Capsule" and that's what Midrin does best. It combines acetaminophin, isometheptene Mucate (a vasoconstrictor), with a mild sedative into a pleasing little cocktail that chases away those horrid throbbing headaches that can poison an entire day or two.

But Mid is also the perfect party pill. I take two whenever I head out for a beer with the boys. Why? Well, since I'm susceptible to migraines — which are caused in part by dilated blood vessels in the brain — even a small amount of alcohol can give me a whopper of a headache. Alcohol expands those tender brain veins, but Mid's vasoconstrictor is the perfect antidote. If I get a real bad throbber I wash it down with a double latté and let the caffeine booster shrink those blood vessels even more. In fact, two Mids and a latté are a great way to start the day, headache or not!

Midrin is great for hangovers, too. Its sedative (not found in any other pill) won't make you drowsy, so close work or heavy machinery is no problem while you're under Mid's influence.

In short, Midrin is a little-known workhorse of a pill that deserves a wider following than it has. Ask your doctor for some today!

MIDRIN®

COWBOY IN A CAGE

The pill world grieves at the January 3 arrest of James Fogle whose novel *Drugstore Cowboy* inspired the epic movie, which defined the pill experience.

Fogle was busted in a south Tacoma motel room with some \$38,000 in pharmaceutical apparently taken in a series of "crash & dash" robberies of drugstores. Acting on a hot tip that a guy named Jim was in the room with drugs cops burst in and caught Fogle along with his wife, Janet and her 26-year-old son Tracy Rosi. After gawking at the pills for awhile the lawmen dragged the family down to the Pierce County jail and threw them in cells.

Bond for Fogle was set at a whopping \$100,000 and \$50,000 each for his loving wife and stepson.

Genius author Fogle has served at least nine prison and jail sentences in his 55 years, logging more than three and a half decades behind bars — often for exactly the type of crime committed by the four youthful protagonists of his benchmark book — the famed crash & dash.

This lightening attack on a pharmacy's shelves and drawers full of luscious pills while stunned pharmacists and shoppers stand there with their mouths open is practically an art form for Fogle. Such an operation cannot be performed by just any pill head as it requires the ability to instantly assess the location and value of hundreds of different pills in just the few seconds a drugstore cowboy has. Bad judgement can not only lead to the pokey but to a "haul" of useless diuretics, beta blockers and antihistamines.

Judging by what the sheriffs found in Fogle's pad, the old guy hasn't lost his touch. Among the pounds of pills recovered were Demerol, phenobarbitol, codeine, methadone, Ritalin and morphine. The state also took the opportunity to get their mitts on Fogle's '78 Mercedes and a little less than a grand in cash.



Coming Next Issue (Maybe):

- A biography of Speedy Alka-Seltzer
- All the pills Sally Jessy Raphael's kid took.
- And some surprises

1991. Abbot also got a new claim for its old drug Hytrin (terazosin) for use in treatment of benign prostatic hyperplasia. Perhaps Abbot is running scared from Merck, Sharp & Dohme's new pill Proscar — the first pill to get this claim.

Upjohn punches back

Pissed off at all the bad publicity their sleeping pill, Halcion, has gotten lately, Upjohn has filed three libel suits in England, one of them against the BBC for its October 14th airing of the show "Halcion



Nightmare". Another is against Brit reporter Tom Nangold for a story of his that appeared in the New York Times (Upjohn has yet to sue the NYT).

"We are taking this very seriously," said an Upjohn spokesman, "We are not going to allow allegations that attack Upjohn's integrity to be broadcast or published go unchallenged." Britain banned the pill while other countries are restricting its use. The sleeping pill represents 8% of Upjohn's sales (\$2.5 billion for the first nine months of 1991).

Smart Drug News

January saw the first issue of the newsletter of the cognitive enhancement research institute (CERI) — Smart Drug News. In the debut edition the anti-aging and aphrodisiac properties (among others) of the drug L-Deprenyl (Eldepryl), an article on B vitamins and mental performance, and a helpful Q & A section debunking some of the bullshit being spread around about the whole smart drug phenomenon.

Subscriptions \$40 per year (10 issues) by CERI, PO Box 4029 Menlo Park, CA 94026. Single issue is five bucks.

are also extreme sociopaths and not really the type of person folks at peace want to have around. Still, the idea gets him to thinking about drugs that might reproduce the sociopath's fearless (or stupid) behavior. He suggests a theoretical compound called a "non-depleting neurotrop" that would simply prevent the fight or flight response without reducing alertness. He also informs us that the US military has been looking for just such a drug since about 1981, but the research remains classified.

Interesting — a pill that induces all the "benefits" of psychosis with none of the drawbacks, like being unfit for duty. Gabriel spent 22 years as an Army spook and is against the idea. "Battles once joined will proceed until one side has been entirely killed or wounded," he writes, noting that whatever humanity there might still be on today's battlefield will be erased, "without fear there is no basis for empathy ... and the killing will go on."

CARTWHEELS

Great pill references came up in Hunter Thompson's Hell's Angels. It seems the Hell's Angel's culture — at least at that time and place — was laced with pills. Thompson tells of an Angel who, rummaging through a guy's medicine cabinet, found a bottle of orange pills and, assuming they were Dexedrine, swallowed all of them. They turned out to be cortisone. The biker was ill for ten days during which time he couldn't even get out of bed. When he recovered he said he'd learned a valuable lesson — that he no longer needed to fear any pill since his body could obviously handle anything.

Another passage in the same book struck me as cool. Here Thompson describes one of the Angel's annual retreats in the woods of Bass Lake, CA.

"At Bass Lake it was pills ... I was standing by the bonfire ... when somebody appeared with a plastic bag and began passing out handfuls of whatever it contained. When my turn came I held out my hand and received about thirty small white pills. For a moment the talk ceased while the outlaws gulped down their rations, chasing the pills with beer. I asked what they were and somebody beside me said, 'Cartwheels, man. Bennies. Eat some, they'll keep you going... just take about ten,' he advised. 'And if that don't work, take more'

"I nodded and ate two."

ONE LAST THING

Tryptophan has already been banned by the FDA because of the manufacturing error in the Japanese plant which caused some people to develop a reaction. It was not tryptophan that caused it but it's gone now. Watch them go after other "smart" nutrients next.