

POLICY & PRACTICE

FTC Alleges Price Gouging

The Federal Trade Commission has alleged that a pharmaceutical company acted illegally in buying the only two medicines approved to treat a deadly congenital heart defect in premature babies and then raising the prices for the drugs by nearly 1,300%. Ovation Pharmaceuticals Inc. bought the drug NeoProfen (ibuprofen lysine) in early 2006, when it already held the rights to Indocin IV (indomethacin). Both drugs are used to treat patent ductus arteriosus in lieu of surgical repair. After acquiring NeoProfen, Ovation raised the price of Indocin from \$36 to nearly \$500 a vial, and set a similar price when it launched NeoProfen in July 2006, according to the FTC, which has filed a civil lawsuit to force Ovation to divest itself of one of the drugs and forfeit some of the profits. Ovation said in a statement that NeoProfen and Indocin are not interchangeable and that it would fight the allegations.

CDC Increasing Hib Surveillance

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said it will solicit *Haemophilus influenzae* type b (Hib) serotype information and vaccination histories for children younger than 5 years old from state health departments that report Hib infections during the next several months. The increased surveillance is important because of the extended vaccine shortage of Merck & Co.'s Hib conjugate vaccines, according to the agency. Merck said last year that the shortage of PedvaxHIB and Comvax will continue until mid-2009. Hib surveillance has been hampered in the United States by incomplete serotype reporting: Serotype data are missing for nearly 40% of *H. influenzae* cases in young children reported to the CDC.

Reform Urged in Adolescent Health

Current health services for adolescents are fragmented and poorly designed to meet the needs of the nation's adolescents, according to a report from the National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine. Although most U.S. adolescents are healthy, many engage in risky behavior, develop unhealthy habits, and have physical and mental conditions that can jeopardize their immediate and future health, the report said. The U.S. health care system should foster better coordination between primary and specialty care and should include opportunities for adolescents to receive primary care services in "safety-net settings" such as schools, hospitals, and community health centers, the report said. "The distinct problems faced by adolescents—such as risky behavior—deserve particular attention," said Dr. Robert Lawrence, the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health professor who chaired the committee that wrote the report.

Secondhand Smoke Exposure High

Smoking may be declining (see story, p. 1), but 42% of all children in the United States still are exposed to secondhand smoke each week, according to a survey from the American Legacy Foundation,

the American Academy of Pediatrics Julius B. Richmond Center of Excellence, and researchers from Mississippi State University, Starkville. The survey found that 25% of American households permit smoking at home and in cars, and more than one-quarter of smokers reported that their children had been exposed to secondhand smoke in their home. "Children especially deserve smoke-free environments, and all public places where children eat and play should be protected from secondhand smoke," Dr.

Jonathan Klein, director of the AAP center, said in a statement. "Adults have the power to make healthier decisions for their children."

Children Use Alternative Medicine

Nearly 12% of children in the United States used some type of complementary or alternative medicine (CAM) therapy in 2007, and the most common reason for that use was back or neck pain, according to survey data from the CDC and the National Institutes of Health. Children also used CAM for head and chest colds, anxiety and stress, insomnia,

attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, and musculoskeletal complaints, the survey found. The data came from the 2007 National Health Interview Survey and included information on the use of CAM from 9,400 children and more than 23,000 adults. Children were five times as likely to turn to an alternative medical therapy if a parent or another relative also used one. For both adults and children, natural products, including herbal medicines and dietary supplements, were the most commonly used CAM therapies, the survey found.

—Jane Anderson



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