Key Inforbits

- Menactra® and Guillain Barré Syndrome
- Leading causes of death in the U.S.
- OTCs in pregnancy
- Compounding pharmacists
- Breast Cancer Awareness Month
- National Medical Librarians Month

NEW DRUGS, and other related stuff …

MedWatch … The FDA and CDC notified consumers and health care providers of five reports of Guillain Barré Syndrome following administration of Meningococcal Conjugate Vaccine A, C, Y, and W135 (Menactra®, by Sanofi Pasteur). It is not known yet whether these cases were caused by the vaccine or are coincidental. Guillain Barré Syndrome (GBS) is a serious neurological disorder that can occur, often in healthy individuals, either spontaneously or after certain infections. GBS typically causes increasing weakness in the legs and arms that can be severe and require hospitalization. The FDA and CDC are asking any persons with knowledge of any possible cases of GBS occurring after Menactra® to report them to the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System https://secure.vaers.org/VaersDataEntryintro.htm (VAERS) to help the agencies further evaluate the matter.

Read the complete MedWatch 2005 Safety Summary, including a link to the FDA News Release, at:
http://www.fda.gov/medwatch/safety/2005/safety05.htm#Menactra

FROM THE MEDICAL LITERATURE …

Leading causes of death in the U.S. … The Good, the Bad, and the Oldie … Review of 32 years of mortality data (1970-2002) showed some interesting trends. Investigators looked at the six leading causes of death; heart disease, stroke, cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, accidents and diabetes mellitus. The good news is that the age-standardized death rate from all causes decreased, with heart disease and accidents showing the best improvements. However, deaths from COPD and diabetes increased dramatically over the time period, although these deaths occur at older ages.


Big bucks for research … Overall funding for biomedical research has nearly doubled over the last 10 years, to $94.3 billion. The pharmaceutical industry accounts for the largest percentage at 57% and this has remained constant over the last 10 years (56 to 61%). Government (federal, state, local) funding is next at 36% with the NIH being the single largest contributor at 28%. One thing that has changed over the last 10 years is the portion from
industry that goes to basic vs. clinical science with the portion going to clinical trials increasing from 28% to 41%.


**Folic acid, still** … According to a recent survey from the CDC, only about 1/3 of child-bearing age women consume adequate amounts of folic acid (>400µg daily), which has been shown to dramatically decrease neural tube defects in newborns. The vitamin supplement recommendation was first made by the Public Health Service in 1992 and foods have been fortified since 1998. However, there has actually been a drop in consumption from 2004 to 2005, of 40% to 33% of women taking folic acid daily. As health professionals, we must do our part in this public service message!

http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5438a4.htm

**OTCs and Pregnancy** … Hey pharmacists, listen up! A recent survey found that 2/3 of pregnant women take an over-the-counter drug during pregnancy. Acetaminophen is most common followed by ibuprofen, pseudoephedrine, aspirin, naproxen, diphenhydramine, and guaifenesin. The study also found that medication-taking actually increased in pregnancy, compared to prior to pregnancy. This is a great place for pharmacists to be involved, eg, how many combination products are out there?!?


**Reviews of Note** …

  [Note: In these guidelines the PHS makes the bold statement that, under the section of Toxicity and Drug Interactions of Antiretroviral Agents, “Consultation with a pharmacist might be considered.” p. 5.]

FROM THE LAY LITERATURE about medicine …

**Clinics at Wal-Mart** … It’s been reported earlier, but its growing. Large retail chain pharmacies are exploring setting up health clinics in their stores. Wal-Mart, Rite-Aid, Target and Walgreen’s are some that have been mentioned. Generally staffed by nurse practitioners, these clinics are catering to those with acute sickness. Insurance companies love them because they are far cheaper than an emergency room or physician office visit. Physician’s in general, don’t like them. Profit is always the motive, but the stores don’t profit from the clinic itself, as it is contracted with another company, but the prescriptions generated and front-end merchandise sold are the targets. For pharmacy, this could be a boon or bane, depending on how it is approached.

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB112847351020560194.html?mod=djemHL
Psychiatric drug use down in children … according to a recent article psychiatric drug use in U.S. children has dropped by 20%. This is attributed to the recent reports of increased suicidality in the pediatric population treated with antidepressants. These have already precipitated additional warnings on the package label, and has caused an outright ban in the U.K. Everyone agrees more data, particularly long-term, is necessary, but that’s where the agreement ends. The pharmaceutical industry feels this data should be funded by the taxpayers, and vice versa. A few more warts are exposed as to the sometimes numerous studies showing less-than-favorable outcomes that never see the light of day.
http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/10/07/AR2005100701795.html?referrer=email

Same old, same old … More or less a plug for compounding pharmacists. This article touts the abilities of the compounding pharmacist to make an “old remedy” like new, primarily with different flavorings, or with different deliveries, eg, as a lollipop. They also can create “old favorites” that are no longer manufactured (providing the ingredients are still approved).

Flu stories … A review of recent events, trying to put some perspective on the real danger of a “bird flu epidemic” this year. Our government is putting together a worst-case scenario plan for the event of a pandemic while some experts argue against such a disaster actually happening. It appears unlikely such a pandemic could happen this year, but on the other hand, based on history of flu pandemics, “we’re due.”

Medicare Part D … Scams … Few, if any, have a good handle on what “Part D” is going to entail, so now you also have to worry about the scammers. Here are some of the things popping up: Trying to “sign you up” before November 15; charging an application fee; if you don’t sign up now, you will lose other benefits. Beware, for your patients!

National Breast Cancer Awareness Month … October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Breast cancer is the most common cancer and the second leading cause of cancer-related deaths among women in the U.S. According to United States Cancer Statistics: 2002 Incidence and Mortality, approximately 180,000 cases of breast cancer were diagnosed among women in 2002, and approximately 41,000 women died from the disease. Among men, approximately 1,600 cases of breast cancer were diagnosed, and 369 men died from the disease.
http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5439a1.htm

NEW RESOURCES in the DILRC …


**TIMELY TOP TECH TIP …**

A new electronic resource is available through the RBD Library, "Natural Standard was founded by clinicians and researchers to provide high quality, evidence-based information about complementary and alternative therapies. This international multidisciplinary collaboration now includes contributors from more than 100 eminent academic institutions." You can find this new resource at [http://www.naturalstandard.com/](http://www.naturalstandard.com/) or from the AU Library home page, go to "Find Articles and Databases" then "Databases by Title" then click on "N" and "Natural Standard" and take a look at this new database.

.imageView

The last “dose” …

**Ninth Annual National Medical Librarians Month, October**

October is the Medical Library Association's (MLA's) ninth annual *National Medical Librarians Month (NMLM)* celebration. MLA declared October as NMLM to applaud medical librarians for the many efforts and accomplishments they have made in the interest of quality health care. Go by and wish your medical librarian a “happy October.”