

WHAT DOCTORS DON'T TELL YOU - E-NEWS BROADCAST No. 62 - 11 December 03

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**THE DRUGS DON'T WORK: And for once it's not us saying it, it's Glaxo**

In an extraordinary admission, a senior executive with UK drug giant GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) has 'confessed' that the vast majority of prescription drugs don't work.

Dr Allen Roses, worldwide vice-president of genetics at GSK, has told a conference that over 90 per cent of all drugs work for only between 30 per cent and 50 per cent of patients.

At the very bottom of the efficacy table are the cancer drugs, which work on only 25 per cent of patients. These are closely followed by Alzheimer's drugs that work on just 30 per cent of people. Drugs for rheumatoid arthritis, migraine, incontinence, hepatitis C, and diabetes work on only half the patients, at best. The most effective drugs are the analgesics, which work for to 80 per cent of those who take them.

This frank admission is also a very shocking one, and for several reasons. The pharmaceutical industry is about the most profitable in the world, and its profits are generated by drugs that everyone has implicitly believed would work (everyone apart from regular E-news readers, that is). Worse, in this scramble for profits, around 105,000 Americans and 40,000 Britons die every year from an adverse reaction to a drug, and many thousands more are permanently harmed from one.

Almost as astonishing has been the reaction from some of Roses's industry colleagues. "What he is saying will surprise the public but not his colleagues," said one industry scientist. Surprised may be a slight under-statement for the reaction of families who have lost a member to a drug-and one that the manufacturer probably knew would not work.

So it's no surprise to the drug companies. Is it a surprise, perhaps, to the drug regulators? Did they know that they were part of a scam? Or the government, maybe, that buys £7.2bn of drugs each year for the National Health Service? Are they also aware that at least two-thirds of that enormous expenditure is an utter waste?

How about the doctors? They are writing millions of prescriptions a year. Did they notice that their patients just weren't getting any better?

Some commentators have described Roses's admission as a Ratner-like gaffe. For non-UK readers and those too young to remember, Gerald Ratner ran the UK's largest jewelers - until the day he 'joked' that his products were 'crap'.

But this was no Ratner moment. Roses knew full well what he was doing, and he almost certainly had his statement cleared by the very top executives at Glaxo. Roses has been described as a highly intelligent man, and he's certainly too smart to commit corporate suicide.

Roses is staking a major claim for his own division, into which Glaxo has poured billions of dollars of research money. Our guess is that Glaxo has taken the lead in the market, and will soon be launching a new approach to therapy, based on the patient's genetic make-up.

In this new treatment model, patients will first be tested to discover the effectiveness of a drug, and if they are among the 20 per cent for whom the drug will work.

By allowing Roses to blow the whistle, Glaxo is playing a very high-risk game. Genetic profiling may be achievable, but it will cut drugs production by up to 80 per cent, so eating into profits.

It may also not be a workable option, especially for an already overstretched health service.

What then? We are just left with the information that most drugs don't work. Which is pretty much where we at WDDTY came in.

\* Following on from Dr Roses's admission, you really must read the WDDTY book *Secrets of the Drugs Industry*. It lifts the lid on the drugs that don't work, those that are dangerous, and how the drugs industry masks its aggressive sales drives with supposed science. To order your copy, click on this link:

<http://www.wddty.co.uk/shop/details.asp?product=341>

### **HEART DISEASE: Who's really at risk?**

Heart disease may be the number one killer in the West, but we still don't fully understand its causes. While we accept that obesity, high cholesterol and smoking have an important part to play, up to half of all heart attack patients don't have any of these symptoms.

And what about psychosomatic issues, such as stress and depression? Nearly 30 years ago a landmark study determined that 'type A' people-those who are anxious about timekeeping, high-achievers and hostile-were twice as likely to develop a heart condition as a 'type B', who is easy-going and passive.

The trouble with this theory is that it has never been supported by any other

trial since, even though it is one that has endured in popular culture.

So researchers from Northwestern University in Chicago decided to test the theory once again with a group of 3,308 young adults, aged from 18 to 30. They wanted to test if impatience, competitiveness, hostility, depression and anxiety in the group affected their chances of developing hypertension, or high blood pressure.

Interestingly, hostility was the only behavioural trait that could dramatically influence hypertension, the researchers found. Depression had a slight influence, while impatience had none at all.

(Source: Journal of the American Medical Association, 2003; 290: 2138-48).

### **FRIENDLY KENNELS: Where your unvaccinated pet can stay**

In announcing our new publication What Vets Don't Tell You a few E-news ago, we also asked readers to recommend kennels that are happy to accept unvaccinated pets.

The first few suggestions have now come in, but please help us compile a more definitive list if you know of any similar kennels.

We'll be publishing details of the kennels once we have their approval, and we've confirmed that they can, indeed, take pets that haven't had the toxic cocktail.

\* There's still time to order your copy of What Vets Don't Tell You for Christmas delivery (provided you live in the UK). To order your copy, click on this link: <http://www.wddty.co.uk/shop/details.asp?product=389>

### **READERS' CORNER**

**High-heel shoes:** We've been taken to task for last week's headline about high-heel shoes not causing osteoarthritis in the knee. While this may be the case, says our reader, high-heel shoes can cause low back problems. So, as you were-don't put on your high-heel sneakers after all.

**Hospitals:** An antenatal yoga teacher writes in after our article last week about the dangers of hospitals. She points out that birth and antenatal procedures seem to make hospitals dangerous places (although it's everything else too, of course) and so the last place a woman should give birth is in a hospital. "All western societies need to return to the basic requirements for birth-serious mental and physical preparation, reduced medical intervention, and a quiet, calm, pleasant environment to have the baby in. Then the incidence of damage would be reduced and perhaps many children would be calmer and healthier." We quote her in full because it's a sentiment that deserves to be heard.

**Herbals and profit:** A herbalist was concerned to read a comment from a reader in last week's E-news about the profit motive of the producers of alternative remedies. He points out that there is a world of difference between the OTC herbal remedies you can buy at health food stores and elsewhere and those prepared from prescriptions from herbal medicine practitioners. "I deserve to be paid for my work and that work often means dispensing the medicines I deem appropriate for my patient. Some of these medicines I will have made myself, many I will have bought in. So what? If made with the right level of integrity, having to pay for them is not an issue. Getting people access to real herbal medicine is", he writes.

**Taketh:** Our correspondent continues the debate about the correct use of 'taketh', but, frankly, we just don't have the strength.

\* To search the WDDTY database - where every word from the last 14 years of research can be found - click on <http://www.wddty.co.uk/search/infodatabase.asp>

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