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FDA Bendy on BPA, Scientific Standard, Saturated Fact, Flu Few, Bio-logic

By ACSH Staff — January 19, 2010

FDA on BPA

The FDA released its long-awaited reassessment of the safety of BPA [1] last Friday.

“They pulled the oldest trick in the book,” says ACSH's Dr. Elizabeth Whelan. “If you want to minimize publicity for a statement, you release it on a Friday afternoon before a long weekend.”

“Another trick is to pledge more money to 'ongoing studies,'” says ACSH's Dr. Gilbert Ross. “The FDA decided to tout its reaction to activist pressure by throwing $30 million down the drain to keep them quieter.”

The statement said that the FDA has concerns about the chemical's safety, especially for young children, but they will not ban it or require manufacturers to label products containing it. ACSH staffers are disappointed that the FDA was so easily influenced by activist proponents of junk science, but the news isn't as bad as it could be.

ACSH's press release in response to the announcement quotes Jeff Stier, who points out, “This finding should put the matter to rest. The current FDA is very cautionary. After taking all this extra time to re-study the issue, the fact that they are keeping BPA on the market speaks volumes about the safety of the product. If BPA were endangering children, they'd have never left it on the market.”

Our press release also mentions one important issue that the media coverage of the BPA ruling has overlooked: “[S]ince BPA became commonplace in the lining of canned goods, foodborne illness from canned foods -- including botulism -- has virtually disappeared. Any possible new replacement could not have the same record of testing and safety as has been shown for BPA.”

“We should point out that the FDA's statement specifically mentions the safety of infants and young children,” says Dr. Ross, “and the activists often target BPA in baby food and infant formula containers. Is it okay with them, though, if we allow our infants to once again become victims of foodborne illnesses?”

Denialism

Jeff Stier wrote a review of *Denialism* by Michael Specter for the *Weekly Standard*, which you can read here [2] if you have are a subscriber.

Stier writes, “[Specter] goes after low-hanging fruit in chapters as entertainingly titled as 'Vaccines and the Great Denial,' 'The Organic Fetish,' and 'The Era of Echinacea.' That's good, as far as it goes. He fails, though, to take on equally groundless but more sacrosanct examples of junk science...At a time when activists claim misleadingly that 'there is no safe level' of lead, or that the

plastic additives bisphenol-A and phthalates are the most dangerous chemicals known to ban, Specter doesn't quite finish the job."

Fatty Heresy

A study published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* by researchers with Harvard and the Children's Hospital Oakland Research Institute concludes that consumption of dietary saturated fat is unrelated to heart disease and stroke [3].

"This is heretical," says Dr. Whelan. "If it's true, another major pillar of popular wisdom has fallen, and the fact that a major journal published this study is quite interesting."

"No one is saying this should be the last word on this issue," says Stier. "More research is needed."

Dr. Ross adds, "If this is the case, imagine how remote the 'threat' of dietary trans-fats really is."

1 in 5 Americans Does Not Want the Flu

The CDC estimates that only 20% of Americans have been vaccinated against the H1N1 flu [4].

"We predicted this a long time ago," says Dr. Whelan. "There's been so much publicity about H1N1, thousands of deaths, and babies and pregnant women being so vulnerable. Now that there is plenty of vaccine available, people are ignoring it. We know it's waning now, but that doesn't mean it won't be back."

PhRMA Takes a Stand

Last Friday, Billy Tauzin, president of the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA), sent an e-mail to the CEOs of leading pharmaceutical companies saying the group would withdraw its support for healthcare reform legislation [5] if the White House and Congress reduce the proposed twelve-year intellectual property protection for biologic drugs.

According to a *New York Times* blog entry, "The change under consideration would reduce the length of time that makers of biologic drugs, which can cost a patient tens of thousands of dollars annually, have exclusive marketing rights and would allow cheaper versions of the drugs to be produced more quickly."

"Henry Waxman is planning on reducing the time period to ten years or less," says Stier. "We applaud PhRMA because as consumers, we need innovation in biologics, and a shorter waiting period for marketing generics will decrease incentives for research, thus discouraging the innovation that benefits patients."

Curtis Porter is a research intern at the American Council on Science and Health (ACSH.org [6]).

Links

[1] http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/01/15/AR2010011504070.html?hpid=topnews
[2] http://www.weeklystandard.com/articles/junk-medicine-0
[3] http://blog.nutritiondata.com/heart_health_blog/2010/01/heart-disease-not-related-to-saturated-fat.html
[4] http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/01/15/AR2010011503927.html
[5] http://prescriptions.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/01/15/drug-industry-group-threatens-to-withdraw-support/?hp%22
[6] https://www.acsh.org/../../..