



POLICY & PRACTICE

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Plan Targets Osteoarthritis Burden

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has joined the Arthritis Foundation in an action plan to reduce the burden of osteoarthritis (OA) on the nation. Recommendations include expanding self-management education, improving work environments, and preventing the onset and progression of some OA cases through programs in all 50 states. The action plan also calls for more OA research, including using the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey to assess the prevalence and impact of OA, identify risk factors, and clarify the natural history of the condition. Officials at the CDC and the Arthritis Foundation worked for 18 months to develop the action plan, leading up to its February release. The effort included a summit meeting of 75 experts who discussed strategies for reducing the impact of osteoarthritis. "This important report will help the public health community speak with a unified voice and focus our collective efforts on actions that we know will make a difference in the lives of people suffering from osteoarthritis," Ursula Bauer, Ph.D., director of CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, said in a statement. The action plan is available online at

www.arthritis.org/media/Ad%20Council%20101/OA_Agenda_2010.pdf.

Ads, Web Site Will Follow Up

Following recommendations in the new OA action plan, the Arthritis Foundation, the American College of Rheumatology, and the Ad Council have launched a public awareness campaign called Fight Arthritis Pain. Aimed at both people with OA and those at risk, the message is that some simple steps can reduce pain, increase mobility, and prevent disability. The campaign will include ads on television and radio, in print, and online. The campaign's Web site, www.fightarthritis.org, offers a tool for assessing OA, a movement tracker, community forums, a live news feed, and event information.

'Extraordinary' Drug Price Hikes

The Government Accountability Office said that 416 brand-name pharmaceutical products had "extraordinary" price increases from 2000 to 2008. Although this represents only 0.5% of all brand-name products, most of the increases ranged from 100% to 499%, the GAO said in a report released in early January (GAO-10-201). More than half of those products were in three therapeutic classes: central nervous system,

anti-infective, and cardiovascular. One possible reason for the price inflation, said the agency, is that the drugs are bought from wholesalers, then repackaged and resold at higher prices to physicians or hospitals. But increases also were driven by a lack of generic or other therapeutic alternatives for various drugs, the GAO said. The Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA) industry group said that the report "focuses only on a small number of selected brand medicines rather than the entire prescription drug market." PhRMA Senior Vice President Ken Johnson said that national data show a decline in retail drug spending in 2008.

FDA Names New Device Chief

The Food and Drug Administration has named a new permanent head of the Center for Devices and Radiological Health. Dr. Jeffrey Shuren, who has been acting director since early September, will now direct the center. He replaces Dr. Daniel Schultz, who resigned last year after critics claimed he was too cozy with device makers. In a statement, the head of the device industry trade group Advanced Medical Technology Association (AdvaMed) applauded Dr. Shuren's appointment. "His more than 10 years experience at FDA, in various high-level policy and planning positions within the commissioner's office, will serve him well as he takes control of an organization that oversees such a wide range of life-saving and life-

enhancing products," said AdvaMed CEO Stephen J. Ubl. The center also unveiled its strategic plan for 2010, with four areas of priority: the effective regulation of products throughout their development and marketing; the enhancement of communications and transparency; the strengthening of the center's workforce and workplace; and efforts to spur innovation and address unmet public health needs. The strategic plan is available at www.fda.gov/medicaldevices.

—Mary Ellen Schneider

INDEX OF ADVERTISERS

Amgen Inc. and Pfizer Inc.	
Enbrel	62-64
Bayer HealthCare LLC	
Citracal	31
Centocor Ortho Biotech Inc.	
Simponi	24a-24h
Remicade	46-49
Covidien	
Pennsaid	29-30
Endo Pharmaceuticals	
Opana	9-12
Forest Laboratories, Inc.	
Savella	53-57
Genentech USA, Inc.	
Actemra	16-19
Genentech USA, Inc. and Biogen Idec Inc.	
Rituxan	3-6
King Pharmaceuticals, Inc.	
Flector	20-23
Pfizer Inc.	
Corporate	27
Revatio	33-37
Lyrca	40a-40d, 41-42

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