

POLICY & PRACTICE



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Bogus Botox Bust

An entire plastic surgery practice in Albany, N.Y., has pleaded guilty to administering a Botox substitute to some 150 patients. The U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of New York announced the plea, which covered five physicians, the practice administrator, and the supervisory nurse. They admitted that, for most of 2004, they injected patients with botulinum toxin type A [which is now known as onabotulinumtoxinA] that was manufactured by Toxin Research International Inc. of Arizona but labeled as Botox Cosmetic, which is made by Allergan. The Toxin Research product was never approved by the Food and Drug Administration. The physicians and practice employees told patients they were receiving the real Botox and charged them the same price, about \$100,000 in total. The practice may have to pay \$500,000 in restitution. Each defendant also could face up to a year in prison. Sentencing is scheduled for Dec. 14. The inquiry that led to the guilty pleas was conducted by the FDA's Office of Criminal Investigations.

More Warnings on Injections

The Physicians Coalition for Injectable Safety is warning that mesotherapy and carboxytherapy injections have not been proven safe or effective. The coalition is an alliance of several specialty societies, including a few that have previously warned against the therapies. Practitioners doing mesotherapy and carboxytherapy claim that both procedures can sculpt and contour the body and reduce cellulite. Neither has been approved by the FDA. The Aesthetic Surgery Education and Research Foundation, however, has received the FDA's blessing to conduct a study of mesotherapy. That nonprofit organization is supported by the professional societies and is open to donations from those who want to support research in the field.

Skin Sanitizers Seized

U.S. Marshals have seized skin sanitizers produced by Clarcon Biological Chemistry Laboratory. The seizure had been requested by the FDA, which said that the products were contaminated with bacteria, after Clarcon refused to quickly destroy the various sanitizers and skin protectants that were manufactured at its plant in Roy, Utah. No case of illnesses has been linked to the contamination, the FDA reported. The products, sold under brands such as Dermasentials, Iron Fist, Skin Shield Restaurant, and Skin Shield Industrial, are promoted as antimicrobial agents. More than 800,000 bottles of Clarcon products have been sold since 2007, the FDA said. The agency ad-

vised consumers to throw out all Clarcon products in their possession.

Fragrance Ingredient List Coming

The International Fragrance Association announced that it will soon publish on its Web site a list of ingredients used in the fragrance industry. "To support our goal of increased transparency, we have determined that publishing an alphabetized list of fragrance ingredients would be helpful when communicating the industry's extensive safety program," said IFRA Director General Jean-Pierre Hourri. All materials—natural and synthetic—will be listed alphabetically by chemical name and by the Chemical Abstracts Service number. The IFRA is thus joining manufacturers of products for cleaning, air care, automotive care, polishing, and floor maintenance, all of which have agreed to voluntarily disclose ingredients by Jan. 10, 2010.

Biosimilars Market: \$45 Million

A research firm pegs the U.S. market for generic versions of biotechnology products, called biosimilars or bio-generics, at \$45 million by 2015, if the federal government clears a regulatory path for such products. The major health reform bills now making their way through Congress would do so. Kalorama Information said that biosimilars of human growth hormone, insulin, and some protein and recombinant DNA-based therapies would probably be the first generics available. Early sales aren't likely to be robust, partly because the brand name manufacturers will defend their turf, the Kalorama report predicted. Nevertheless, a few capable generic makers "will hit the ground running in the U.S. once approval [of biosimilars] is granted," Kalorama's Bruce Carlson said in a statement.

Lilly Payment Data Now Public

Eli Lilly & Co. has made good on its promise to publish how much it pays physicians and other health care professionals in consulting fees, honoraria, and the like. The drugmaker detailed the payments for the first quarter of 2009 at www.lillyfacultyregistry.com. The company said that it listed 3,400 people. The average payment per service was \$1,000, and each professional conducted an average of six activities, according to Lilly. The company's "faculty" members provide a wide variety of services, including patient and professional education and advising Lilly on clinical trials. In September 2008, Lilly said it would voluntarily make physician payments public, but by February of this year, the company was required to do so as part of a Corporate Integrity Agreement with the federal government.

—Alicia Ault

MANAGING YOUR DERMATOLOGY PRACTICE

Invest in Yourself

You have a lot of money invested in your medical equipment, so you are careful to do whatever is necessary to keep it in good working order. Your cauteries, light boxes, and lasers get regular maintenance, and your currettes and scissors get resharpened as soon as they begin to dull. Your computer files get backed up, software gets upgraded, and new applications get installed whenever necessary.

Interesting, isn't it, how we devote so much time and attention to maintaining tools—and so little to maintaining ourselves. I have written about this issue before, and I certainly will again, because it is critical to overall well-being.

Most physicians are compulsive. We feel obligated to work strenuously and unceasingly. We become enmeshed in our daily routine. We are reluctant to take vacations because we fall behind, and patients might go elsewhere while we are gone; every day the office is idle we "lose money."

Sooner or later, no matter how dedicated we are, the grind gets to us, leading to fatigue, irritability, and a progressive decline in motivation. We are too busy to sit down, look at the big picture, and think about what we might do to break that vicious cycle. This is detrimental to our own well-being, as well as that of our patients.

You need to maintain your intellectual and emotional health as carefully as you maintain your equipment by scheduling "mental rejuvenation days." Once a month, take a day off to relax, think, and challenge your mind.

Stephen R. Covey, author of "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People," calls this "sharpening the saw," and applying it regularly can be a life-changing experience.

I'm not simply talking about catching up on journals or taking a CME course, although that's how I spend some of my rejuvenation days. Once in awhile, try something new, something you've been thinking about doing "someday, when there is time."

Take a piano lesson. Learn to sail. Finally read "War and Peace." Take your spouse someplace for a long weekend. Get out of your comfort zone. Challenge yourself.

I know how some of you feel about "wasting" a day: You consider it lost money. Vacations are even worse, because overhead money continues to go out and no revenue is coming in.

That whole paradigm is wrong. Stop thinking day to day. Think year to year instead. You bring in a given amount of revenue per year—more on some days, less on other days,

none on weekends and vacation days. It all averages out in the end. Besides, this is much more important than money. This is breaking the routine, clearing the cobwebs, living your life.

Last month my wife and I drove to New Hampshire, checked into a bed-and-breakfast, and climbed Mount Monadnock, the most-climbed mountain in North America. It was her idea (she is much more fit than I), but as I huffed and puffed up the trail, I didn't have the time—or the slightest inclination—to worry about the office. We were only gone 3 days, but it felt like a week, and I came back ready to take on the world and my practice.

And I came back with some great ideas—practical, medical, and literary. Original thoughts are hard to come by during the daily grind, but they often appear, unannounced, in a new and refreshing environment.

Creative people have long recognized the value of rejuvenation days. A classic example is the oft-told story of Swiss research scientists K. Alex Müller and J. Georg Bednorz. In 1986 they reached a major impasse in their superconductivity research; it appeared 2 decades of work might be for naught. Spending a day in the library to clear his head, Müller decided to put aside his troubles and look up a subject that had always interested him: ceramics.

Nothing could have been further from his research field, of course, since ceramics are among the poorest conductors known. Yet as he relaxed and read, it occurred to Müller that a unique property of ceramics might apply to their project. Back in the lab, the team created a ceramic compound that became the first successful "high-temperature" superconductor.

The rest, as they say, is history; Mr. Müller and Mr. Bednorz won the 1987 Nobel Prize in Physics and triggered an explosion of research leading to breakthroughs in computing, electricity transmission, magnetically elevated trains, and many other applications.

Your rejuvenation days may not change the world, but they will change you. They will give you fresh ideas, and help you look at the same old problems in completely new ways.

And to those who still can't bear the thought of taking time off, remember Eastern's Second Law: Your last words will NOT be, "I wish I had spent more time in the office!"



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