

## POLICY & PRACTICE

### Congress Eyes CPSC Overhaul

Safety concerns about imported Chinese toys have prompted the House and a Senate committee to approve legislation to overhaul the nation's consumer product safety system. The House-passed bill would increase annual funding for the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) over 4 years from \$63 million to \$100 million, and would quintuple—to \$10 million—the penalties for companies that don't report safety problems. The Senate legislation, which has cleared the Senate Commerce Committee, would increase the agency's funding even more, and would raise penalties to \$100 million. Both bills would require independent laboratory testing of toys; the CPSC employs just one full-time toy tester. While the commission supports parts of the Senate bill, other parts would strain the agency's resources, Acting CPSC Chairman Nancy Nord wrote in a letter to the Senate committee.

### 'Healthy Steps' Benefits Said to Last

Healthy Steps for Young Children, a practice-based intervention that aims to enhance relationships among parents, children, and pediatric practices, showed sustained benefits for children more than 2 years after participation in the program ended, according to a study published on-

line by Pediatrics. The program placed trained developmental specialists in pediatric practices to provide enhanced behavioral and developmental services during the first 3 years of a child's life. Several benefits were sustained more than 2 years after program involvement, including greater satisfaction among parents with their child's health care, greater likelihood that children were reading, and greater odds that parents report serious behavioral issues to pediatricians.

### More Katrina Mental Health Sequelae

Schools in Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas that received an estimated 196,000 students displaced by Katrina have not been able to meet students' ongoing mental health needs, according to a RAND Corp. survey. The researchers interviewed mental health professionals from 19 public and 11 private schools and school systems in 2006 (Psych. Services 2007;58:1339-43). The targeted schools had student population increases of more than 10%. Though they mobilized large and effective assistance efforts early on, most of the schools could not or did not continue services, according to the study. The schools cited pressure by administrators to focus again on academics, trouble reaching parents living in trailers or without reliable

phone service or transportation, not enough resources, and staff burnout.

### Dental Health in Hispanic Youth

Hispanic youth report better dental health habits than their non-Hispanic peers, according to a new study of low-income New York City adolescents. The study, which appeared in the November Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved, relied on questionnaires filled out by the adolescents and clinical exams performed during each child's visit to a school-based dental clinic. Researchers found cavities in 52% of the Hispanic participants and 54% of the black participants. But overall, the dental health and health-promoting habits of the Hispanic children were better than those of the other study participants: Many more Hispanic youths said they had had a dental visit sometime in their lifetime, and 94% reported that they brushed daily, compared with 83% of black adolescents and 85% of other children in the study.

### Hopkins Posts Autism-Genetics Data

Researchers at Johns Hopkins University's McKusick-Nathans Institute of Genetic Medicine have released genetic data they hope will help speed autism research. The data, coordinated with a similar data release from the Autism Consortium, aims to help uncover the underlying hereditary

factors and speed the understanding of autism by encouraging scientific collaboration, the researchers said. These data provide the most detailed look to date at the genetic variation patterns in families with autism, they said. The Hopkins research team analyzed whole genomes from 1,250 autistic individuals, along with their siblings and parents. "Autism is a difficult enough genetic mystery for which we need all of the best minds and approaches to help unravel the role of genes in this neuropsychiatric illness," said Aravinda Chakravarti, Ph.D., director of the Center for Complex Disease Genomics at Johns Hopkins, in a statement.

### Lawsuit Filed on Medicaid Drugs

The National Association of Chain Drug Stores and the National Community Pharmacists Association filed a federal lawsuit last month seeking to block Medicaid pharmacy reimbursement reductions scheduled to be implemented in January 2008. The two groups said the cuts, which result from a rule dealing with average manufacturer prices, violate the Social Security Act and will drastically cut payments to community pharmacies that serve Medicaid beneficiaries to levels well below the prices that retail pharmacies pay for drugs. Many pharmacies will be forced to stop serving Medicaid patients as a result, the groups said.

—Jane Anderson

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