

POLICY & PRACTICE

AAD: iPledge Not Working

The vast majority of dermatologists are dissatisfied with the iPledge program governing prescription isotretinoin, according to a survey by the American Academy of Dermatology. Ninety percent of the 400 dermatologists who participated in the August telephone poll reported having difficulties with iPledge. The two biggest problems: getting help from the call center and difficulty with scheduling appointments because of the 30-day waiting period. Dermatologists also cited technical trouble with the online program and

difficulties registering patients. Eighty-one percent said their patients had trouble with the program, most commonly a disruption in care because the patients didn't pick up the prescription within 7 days of the office visit. Covance, the company administering the program, said in a statement that since March, call wait times have declined to less than 3 minutes. Call volume is down, too—from 126,000 in March to 45,300 in August. Overall, 185,000 patients, 26,000 physicians, and 51,000 pharmacies have registered, according to Covance.

Parents Can Influence Sun Safety

Researchers at Pennsylvania State University have determined that children have better sun safety habits when "the quality of the parent-child relationship is high, the child exhibits high levels of compliance, and there are low levels of negative communication in the home." If the parent is warm, trusting, and a good listener, the child is more likely to listen to parents about skin cancer risks, said the authors, whose study appeared in the August Archives of Dermatology. In the study, parents of 340 children aged 9-12 were given a handbook on sun safety at the start of summer and then were given interven-

tions for their children. A control group of parents of 129 children the same age was given handbooks but no suggested interventions. Each parent was offered \$40 and each child \$45. July assessments found that children in the intervention group had significantly fewer and less severe sunburns, engaged in less frequent intentional sunbathing, had more positive attitudes about sunscreen, and showed less positive attitudes about tanning.

Wound Healing Grants From NIH

The National Institute of Health's National Institute of General Medical Sciences is offering \$13 million over the next 4 years to establish four centers that will develop wound therapies. According to the NIGMS, the goal is to bring together microbiologists, engineers, cell biologists, dermatologists, and other physicians. The centers and their lead principal investigators include Andrew Baird, Ph.D., at the La Jolla Institute for Molecular Medicine; Luisa DiPietro, Ph.D., at the University of Illinois at Chicago; Dr. Gregg Semenza at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore; and Philip Stewart, Ph.D., at Montana State University, Bozeman.

U.S. Cancer Deaths Decrease

The rate of new cancers was stable from 1992 to 2003, but deaths from malignancies continued to decline, according to the "Annual Report to the Nation on the Status of Cancer" in the Oct. 15 issue of Cancer, published online in September. The cancer incidence for men was stable from 1995 to 2003, but incidence for women increased from 1979 to 2003. Death rates decreased for 11 of the 15 most common cancers for men and for 10 of the 15 most common cancers for women. Incidence rates for breast cancer stabilized from 2001 to 2003, but it's not clear if that is a true trend, according to the report. Women saw a decrease in new cancers of the colon, uterus, ovaries, stomach, and cervix and an increase in non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, melanoma, leukemia, and lung, bladder, and kidney cancers. Men saw a decrease in colon, stomach, oral, and lung cancers but an increase in prostate, liver, kidney, and esophageal cancers, and in leukemia and myeloma. The report also has a special section on the U.S. Hispanic population.

NDC Directory Incomplete, Says IG

The Food and Drug Administration's National Drug Code Directory is incomplete and inaccurate, largely due to drug companies' failure to submit required data, according to a report from the Health and Human Services Department's Office of Inspector General. The NDC Directory is supposed to be a current compendium of marketed drug products. As of February 2005, there were 123,856 products with unique codes in the directory, but 9,000 drug products were missing, said the IG. For 16% of missing listings, the drug maker had not submitted required FDA forms, but in some cases, the agency had not appropriately processed the forms. Some 5,100 products were pending and 34,000 were listed that were no longer marketed, because the companies had failed to provide needed information. In August, the FDA proposed a rule to require drug makers to submit data electronically.

—Alicia Ault

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