

POLICY & PRACTICE

Reexamining Abstinence Information

Officials in the Department and Health and Human Services should review materials produced by federally funded abstinence education programs to ensure that they provide medically accurate information about condoms, according to the general counsel of the Government Accountability Office. In a legal opinion sent to HHS Secretary Mike Leavitt and members of Congress, GAO General Counsel Gary Keppinger wrote that materials produced by federal grantees containing information on sexually transmitted diseases must also include medically accurate information on the efficacy of condoms in preventing the STD described, as required by the Public Health Service Act. The GAO rejected arguments from HHS officials that the law does not apply to abstinence programs. GAO officials did not assess materials for compliance with the requirement.

UK Weighs Embryo-Transfer Limits

An expert panel in the United Kingdom has recommended elective single-embryo transfer for women at the greatest risk for having twins. By offering elective single-embryo transfer to about half of in vitro fertilization patients, the twin rate would drop to less than 10%, down from about 25%, according to the panel. Making elective single-embryo transfer "the norm" is the only way to reduce the high risk of twinning, the panel wrote. The expert panel was convened by the UK's Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority, which regulates fertility treatment and embryo research. The authority will consider the recommendations and could revise the policy in late 2007. The current policy calls for no more than two embryos to be implanted in women under age 40 years.

Group to Study Sex Differences

The Society for Women's Health Research has launched a new division tasked with evaluating the role of sex differences in health and medicine. One of the goals of the new division—the Organization for the Study of Sex Differences—is to spur interdisciplinary collaboration among scientists and clinicians from various fields. "OSSD will provide researchers and clinicians from a broad spectrum of disciplines the opportunity to gain new insights into their areas of respective interest through sharing information about the impact of sex chromosomes on basic biological processes and disease expression," Kathryn Sandberg, Ph.D., president of the new organization, said in a statement. Cook Women's Health, a division of the medical device company Cook, provided the initial funding for the launch of the organization.

Wal-Mart Expands \$4 Generic Access

Wal-Mart has expanded its \$4 generic drug program to an additional 14 states. The program, which was launched in September in Florida, covers 30-day supplies of generic drugs at commonly prescribed dosages and includes 314 generic drugs, including 143 compounds in 24 therapeutic categories. Wal-Mart had originally planned to pilot the program in Florida and roll it out to additional states some-

time next year, but accelerated expansion because of consumer demand. The move by Wal-Mart is likely to be good for the company's bottom line, according to the results of a Wall Street Journal Online/Harris Interactive poll. The poll of 2,493 adults found that currently only 13% of adults most often purchase drugs from a discount store such as Wal-Mart or Target. However, when told about the availability of discounted generic drugs, 50% of respondents said they would be likely, very likely, or absolutely certain to fill their prescriptions for generic drugs at discount re-

tailers. The program is now available at Wal-Mart stores in Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Texas, and Vermont.

Ex-FDA Chief Pleads Guilty

Former Food and Drug Administration Commissioner Lester M. Crawford, D.V.M., has pleaded guilty to lying about stock he held during his tenure, in violation of federal conflict-of-interest and stock ownership rules. Dr. Crawford was charged with two misdemeanors and is scheduled to be sentenced Jan. 22 in Fed-

eral District Court in Washington. He could receive a year in prison and could be fined \$200,000. According to the plea, Dr. Crawford failed to sell shares in Sysco, PepsiCo, and Kimberly-Clark, all of which have products that are regulated by the FDA. Federal rules require senior officials to divest shares in companies that their agency regulates. Dr. Crawford also did not disclose his wife's ownership of Wal-Mart stock. Dr. Crawford was charged with conflict of interest for owning the PepsiCo and Sysco shares while he was chairman of FDA's Obesity Working Group.

—Mary Ellen Schneider

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*Simopoulos, AP, Workshop on the essentiality of and recommended dietary intakes of omega-6 and omega-3 fatty acids. Ann Nutra Metab, 1999. 43 (2):127-30. ©2006 Martek Biosciences Corporation.