

[IMAGE]

Medication Gone Bad: The Story of Pradaxa

By Shawn Steel, JD

Despite daily stories about glaring misfortunes of pharmacology, most Americans in their 60s are on drugs. This is not merely a result of the laid-back 1960s; each succeeding generation is taking and depending on greater drug usage for a combination of perceived ailments. The question is, do you know what you're taking and why?

Looking at those long lines at the local pharmacy, you have to wonder how many people are aware that taking medications can be very risky. Merely mixing the wrong drugs can create a nightmare. Of course, many drugs are potentially lifesaving, but even a "good" drug still can have catastrophic results.

Most compelling is the clear contradiction within the pharmaceutical industry. Thousands of scientists work around the clock to find solutions toward saving lives; yet "Big Pharma," as the pharmaceutical industry is called, is also among the most successful *businesses* worldwide. Health care consumes more than 15 percent of our nation's Gross National Product. That makes Big Pharma one of the world's largest and most profitable businesses. Its power is felt in all state legislatures and in Washington.

Big Pharma will play both sides. It produces drugs that save lives, but also calculates the cost of side effects when considering the bottom line. Big Pharma knows it produces a lot of drugs that hurt people. It knows it will get sued and prepares litigation strategies for the release of each new drug.

An interesting tale begins with Pradaxa, a newcomer drug introduced in October 2010 as a blood thinner for patients with a high risk of stroke and/or blood clots. The company that produces Pradaxa is Austria-based Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals. Presently, Boehringer Pharma does disclose a number of side effects on its Web site, and apparently for good reason: In a short period of time, side effects from Pradaxa use has led to a large number of lawsuits.

Attorneys for victims argue that Pradaxa carries a significant risk for poor side effects than Pradaxa advertises. Plaintiffs claim that the main risk is internal bleeding problems; and that Boehringer Pharma did not properly test and research or provide fair notice of serious side effects before marketing its product.

In January 2012, the *Journal of Neurosurgery* reported that Pradaxa side effects can lead to death. The article cited the case of an 83-year-old man who used Pradaxa for four weeks and got sick. At the hospital, he fell into a coma and subsequently died due to a brain hemorrhage. The article stated that "as use of this drug becomes more widespread, more intracranial hemorrhage resulting from even minor trauma may occur with increased frequency."

Clearly this is a major alarm coming from a leading publication. Medical doctors are now warned that continued use of Pradaxa has significant risks for patients who are 75 years old or older, who may have kidney or stomach problems, and/or who are taking aspirin- like products.

According to the Institute for Safe Medication Practices, of approximately 900 reported cases of Pradaxa-related side effects, 500 were serious enough to require hospitalization. From that group, 120 people died and 25 suffered permanent disabilities.

Doctors of chiropractic have known since the inception of the profession that taking drugs can be risky. That's one of the reasons why they promote natural healing. If you're currently on prescription or over-the-counter medication, make sure your chiropractor knows. And next time your medical doctor prescribes a drug, ask them what it does, how it works, what the potential side effects are, and if there are nondrug alternatives that could be just as effective. Your health is worth it.

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