

Summary points

Switching of prescription drugs to over the counter availability is increasingly common

The classes of drug available over the counter are expanding to include those used for prevention of serious illness

The main motives are pharmaceutical firms' desire to expand their market, attempts to reduce drug bills, and the self care movement

- Wellpoint. *Issue paper: FDA petition for prescription to over-the-counter switch for Claritin, Allegra, and Zyrtec*. www.fda.gov/ohrms/dockets/dockets/98p0610/cp00001.pdf (accessed 8 Mar 2004).
- US Food and Drug Administration, Center for Drug Evaluation and Research. *Public hearing on OTC part 15, June 28, 2000*. www.fda.gov/ohrms/dockets/dockets/00n1256/tr00001.rtf (accessed 8 Mar 2004).
- Nonprescription Medicines Academy. *Joint FDA advisory committee recommends approval of Prilosec (omeprazole) for OTC switch at full prescription strength*. www.nmafaculty.org/news/prilosec.htm (accessed 5 Feb 2004).
- US Food and Drug Administration. *FY 2004 FDA budget in brief: promoting public health through patient, food, and consumer safety*. www.fda.gov/oc/oms/ofm/budget/2004/BIB.htm (accessed 29 Jan 2004).
- Bristol Myers Squibb. *Advisory committee meeting briefing book: for the Rx-to-OTC switch of: NDA 21-198 Pravachol® (pravastatin sodium) 10mg tablets*. www.fda.gov/ohrms/dockets/ac/00/backgrd/3622b2a_part1.pdf (accessed 30 Jan 2004).

(Accepted 18 October 2004)

Corrections and clarifications

Supporting surgery for obstetric fistula

In this news article (*BMJ* 2004;329:1125, 13 Nov) we mistakenly said that Dr Shereen Bhutta was chief of obstetrics at the Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre, whereas in fact Professor Khurshid Jehan Noorani is the centre's head of the department of obstetrics and gynaecology; Dr Bhutta is associate professor in the department.

MMR: What they didn't tell you

In the review of this *Dispatches* television programme, the author, Abi Berger, stated that the results of a study conducted by Dr Nick Chadwick "were not made public" (*BMJ* 2004;329:1293, 27 Nov). She meant that the results were not presented at the press conference held in 1998 that effectively sparked off the health scare about the measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine—not that the results were not in the public domain at all. The results had been published in the *Journal of Medical Virology* (1998;55:305-11).

Contributors and sources: All authors conduct research into how drugs are developed. JPC's main area of interest is pharmaceutical reimbursement and he is senior research associate at Erasmus University, Rotterdam. JPC was responsible for article content, survey design, acquisition of sources and data, analysis and interpretation of sources and data, drafting of the manuscript, and critical revision of the manuscript. CP participated in writing the article, acquisition of sources and data, analysis and interpretation of sources and data, and critical revision of the manuscript. CPC participated in writing the article, analysis and interpretation of sources and data, and critical revision of the manuscript. JPC is guarantor.

Competing interests: None declared.

- OTC statins: a bad decision for public health. *Lancet* 2004;363:1659.
- Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency. *Consultation document: ARM 18 Request to reclassify a product from POM to P*. London: MHRA, 2003. www.mca.gov.uk/inforesources/publications/arm18.doc (accessed 13 Sep 2004).
- Cohen J. Switching omeprazole in Sweden and the US. *Am J Ther* 2003;10370-6.
- World Self Medication Industry. OTC ingredients table. www.wsmi.org/otc.htm (accessed 13 Sep 2004).
- Cohen J, DiMasi J. Modeling a switch of loratadine from prescription to over-the-counter status. *J Res Pharm Econ* 2001;11:43-54.

bmjlearning.com

Learning as a team

Since we launched BMJ Learning we have received a lot of feedback that members of primary care teams in Britain are starting to learn together. Traditionally, general practitioners have gone to meetings for doctors to do their learning, and similarly with practice nurses and practice managers. However, many of our users have told us that this has changed in the past year: now they close their practice for half a day a month, and all staff attend learning meetings together. Many of them have asked that BMJ Learning supports them in this practice.

To do so, BMJ Learning has become more interdisciplinary. We have added new features to the site to support practice nurses, receptionists, and practice managers in their learning. You can use the site as an individual, or you can use it as a team so you can learn together. For example, you could use our modules on audit and preventing complaints as a foundation for half a day's teaching on clinical governance. Learning together has many advantages, not least, the chance to share different insights and perspectives on clinical and ethical dilemmas.

Our latest interactive case history is on avoiding drug error in primary care. There are many causes of

drug error, but the most common one is breakdown in communication between doctors and patients and other members of the primary care team.¹ Our learning module explains why this happens and how to put in place procedures to stop it happening. It is not just about learning communication skills: the module also points out recent changes to prescribing information in Britain, such as the new advice that risperidone and olanzapine should be avoided in patients with dementia as they increase the risk of stroke in such patients.² To find out more about avoiding drug error in primary care, try our new learning module on bmjlearning.com.

Kieran Walsh *editorial registrar, BMJ Learning*
(bmjlearning@bmjgroup.com)

- Sanders J, Esmail A. *Threats to patient safety in primary care: a review of the research into the frequency and nature of error in primary care*. London: Department of Health, 2002.
- Committee on Safety of Medicines. Important safety messages issued in 2004. 9 March 2004: Atypical antipsychotic drugs and stroke. (search via www.mca.gov.uk/aboutagency/regframework/csm/csmhome.htm).