

NONPRESCRIPTION MEDICINES DIGEST



July 15, 2003

Welcome to the September issue of the NMA Newsletter. In healthcare, we know that the start of the school season often signals lice outbreak season. This month's Newsletter presents a survey on pediculicide resistance published by one of our own NMA members. You will also find a reminder about the FDA Consumer Information page and the useful brochures posted there on OTC topics, and finally, this month brings a brief discussion regarding the evidence of a "hot" OTC item, coral calcium.

A report of the NMA Conference, Sept 25-27, will be included in the next NMA newsletter. Faculty from colleges in both the US and Canada will participate - attendance is limited to 40 attendees selected based on applications submitted.

Faculty Resources

Share ideas with colleagues on the faculty-only area of the website, which is designed to facilitate the exchange of course materials such as syllabi, cases, and exam questions. Become part of the online academy by [registering](#) to join this free service, and help foster the exchange of ideas.

Share the News about NMA

Please [tell a colleague](#) about the NMA newsletter and website.

Visit NMA

Be sure to visit the NMA [website](#) for updates, past articles, and other resources.

[Pediculicide Resistance in Head Lice: A Survey](#)

[New FDA Consumer Information](#)

[Coral Calcium - How to Sell a 5¢ Supplement for \\$1](#)

Pediculicide Resistance in Head Lice: A Survey

W. Steven Pray, Ph.D

Resistance of head lice to nonprescription pediculicides is becoming a concern. This survey sought information from pharmacists practicing in several states regarding the number of cases of treatment failure or resistant lice they had directly



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encountered in their practice and the frequency per week of these reports. The survey also attempted to determine if the frequency of cases was increasing over previous years and whether dangerous treatments such as using gasoline or kerosene were being reported by patients in efforts to eradicate resistant lice. Of the 131 pharmacists responding, 65.9% reported hearing of excessive use of nonprescription pediculicides and over 76% were aware of patients who had used gasoline, kerosene or other dangerous treatments in their attempts to eradicate resistant lice. Noncompliance with labeled directions has commonly been blamed for lack of product efficacy, but the author concludes that noncompliance accounted for only a minor amount of treatment failure cases. Over 100 of the 131 respondents reported counseling patients who remained lice infested after using synergized pyrethrins or permethrin. Of interest was the finding that almost 20% of pharmacists who recommended non-drug measures such as combing and vacuuming alone, reported favorable results. The author concludes with a reminder to health care professionals to be aware of the potential for use by patients of toxic methods when nonprescription products fail to eradicate lice and that nontoxic, non-drug options such as combing and vacuuming may be preferable as first-line therapy.

Hosp Pharm 2003;38:241-246. http://www.factsandcomparisons.com/assets/hospitalpharm/mar2003_peer3.pdf

New FDA Consumer Information

The FDA Consumer Information Web page contains a wealth of information for the public on a variety of health topics, including nonprescription medicines. Their most recent brochure is just in time for the start of cough and cold season. The brochure, *"Got a Sick Kid? Don't Guess. Read the Label. Make sure you're giving your children the right medicine and the right amount"*, can be downloaded in either a pdf or html format and is available in Spanish. Aside from being useful to patients, pharmacy students can benefit from studying these brochures to increase their own ability to discuss nonprescription medicines using patient language. Also of interest is another brochure titled, "Over-the-Counter Medicines: What's Right for You?" To view either of these documents and more, go to <http://www.fda.gov/cder/consumerinfo/DPAdefault.htm#OTC>, scroll down and click on "OTC Drug Products".

Coral Calcium - How to Sell a 5¢ Supplement for \$1

UC Berkeley Wellness Guide to Dietary Supplements

The Wellness Guide provides readers with sound information that is useful for debunking the wild claims made by manufacturers of some dietary supplements. Coral calcium is being widely promoted to the public as the best source of calcium and even as a cure for some diseases. The article gives an excellent rebuttal to the claim that this particular form of calcium is responsible for the long, healthy lives of inhabitants of the Japanese Island of Okinawa where drinking water contains large amounts of coral calcium. Claims that using coral calcium will make the water

alkaline and thus balance the body's acidity are labeled as "wild" by the author who goes to explain body acidity and other issues. The article is useful for pharmacists and students to remind consumers about the lack of research and manufacturing standards for dietary supplements. New practitioners and students may not remember or know about the concern that surfaced and was addressed several years ago regarding high levels of lead found in calcium derived from bone meal or oyster shells. The author concludes that there is no evidence that coral calcium is better than a basic, inexpensive calcium carbonate tablet.

For more information go to:

<http://www.berkeleywellness.com>