

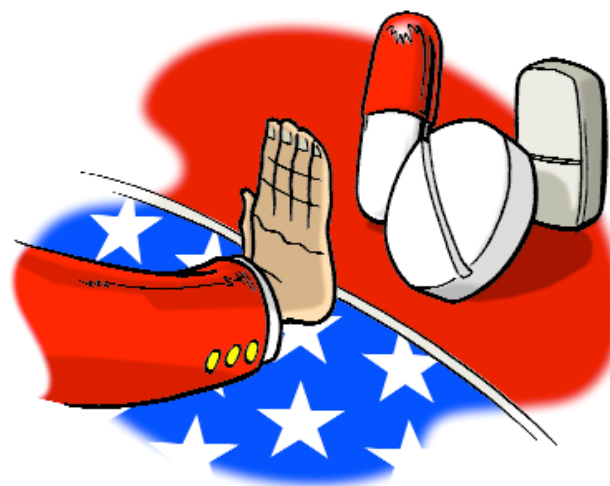
**OPINIONS**

# Crossing the border

**P**harmaceutical companies are beginning to limit sales to Canadian pharmacies. Eli Lilly says it is making this move to protect the integrity of its products and the safety of patients. In October 2003, Lilly told 24 Canadian drug wholesalers in a letter that it will limit sales of its drugs to amounts that Lilly estimates are sufficient to supply the Canadian market only.

Also in 2003, Pfizer and GlaxoSmithKline took similar steps to prevent Canadian drug sales to U.S. customers. Because of Canadian price controls, the cheaper Canadian dollar, and other factors brand-name prescription drugs in Canada sell for 35% to 40% less than in the United States.

PharmaVoice asked what impact will this have on the industry.



## Lost in rhetoric

The issues of assuring the integrity of the U.S. drug supply and patient safety are getting lost in the rhetoric. There needs to be a clear and credible message that the primary concern is that we can not assure the safety of imported drug products. But the economics, public distrust, and lack of credible information overshadow the true facts. The focus needs to shift from the emotional to the credible. Maybe the industry, together with government, should consider funding an independent group charged with improving and assuring the quality of the drug supply within and from outside the United States and provide recommendations for rapid implementation. Such an effort should be aimed toward making practical recommendations that will make a difference. Counterfeit drugs are indeed an increasingly important issue and one that the average American is probably not aware of.

*Harold H. Sblevin, Ph.D.*  
PRESIDENT & CEO  
SOLVAY PHARMACEUTICALS INC.

## The right move

The pharmaceutical companies, as is the Food and Drug Administration, are right to limit the drugs to Canada and other countries that ship into the United States. Price controls in those countries that hold prices at artificially low levels is not a sustainable solution. Instead, those countries need to increase funding for their healthcare programs so that patients can buy the drugs they need at the fair market price. Only then can the R&D needed to sustain advances in medicine continue.

*Bud Bromley*  
VP, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT  
VIALOGY CORP.

## A liability factor

I think the problem is on its way to becoming moot, not because the pharmaceutical companies are restricting sales, but because Canadian physicians who are counter-signing the U.S. prescriptions have been

warned they may not be covered by their liability insurance if the patient sues.

The rationale is that the Canadian physicians (who are being paid about \$15/prescription) never see the patient and do not know the complete patient record.

*Dorothy L. Smith, Pharm.D.*  
PRESIDENT AND CEO  
CONSUMER HEALTH INFORMATION  
CORPORATION

## Court of public opinion

The reaction to stop Canadian pharmacies from selling to U.S. customers is understandable but shows that there is really very little that pharmaceutical manufacturers can do to directly influence and/or stop the practice. If the Canadian pharmaceutical market was at all comparable in size with that of the United States, this action would be considered suicidal and would never be taken. The fact that Pfizer, Lilly, and GlaxoSmithKline would take such action shows the level of frustration and lack of direct control that the industry is facing.

As it stands, such action may appear fiscally sound but will most likely backfire in the court of public opinion. Let's hope that the industry as a whole has some other creative and constructive ideas up its sleeve to deal with this issue.

*George Laszlo*  
DIRECTOR, LIFE SCIENCES  
CSC GLOBAL HEALTH SOLUTIONS

## What's Your Opinion?

### PLANES, TRAINS, AND AUTOMOBILES ... PDAS, LAPTOPS, AND CELL PHONES

There's no question that travel is a component of everyone's job. While on the road, portable tools that replace brick-and-mortar systems are a necessity. According to one statistic, there are more than 130 million handhelds and notebooks in use today, and by 2005 there will be 250 million. And the available options are almost as numerous.

PharmaVOICE wants to know what portable technologies have provided you with the best business solutions while on the go?

#### WHAT'S YOUR OPINION?

Please e-mail your comments to [feedback@pharmavoiced.com](mailto:feedback@pharmavoiced.com).



#### Pardon Us ...

In the December 2003 issue of PharmaVOICE, Jeffrey White, Pharm.D., of Prescription Solutions, Costa Mesa, Calif., was listed as director of research solutions. Dr. White's correct title is director of research services, Prescription Solutions. PharmaVOICE apologizes for the error.