

DR. DAVID SINGER'S HEALTH REPORTS

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~ DISCLAIMER ~

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HEALTH REPORT

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LEGISLATION TARGETS NEEDS OF VETERANS

Two pieces of legislation, very important to veterans and to chiropractors alike, are now making their way through the U.S. House of Representatives. Introduced in March 2007, by the chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, Rep. Bob Filner (D-CA), the legislation would not only direct the federal government to expand Chiropractic benefits in the Veterans Administration but would also mandate that veterans have direct access to Chiropractic care at all VA hospitals and clinics.

Advances have been made during recent years in providing benefits to servicemen. In 2000, then President Clinton signed a bill to make Chiropractic services available to all active duty service personnel over a 5 year period. However, statistics show that the amount of Chiropractic services available and being delivered is still far short of what was needed.

Currently, only about one-sixth of the 230 U.S. military treatment facilities worldwide now offer Chiropractic healthcare services. Additionally, less than one-third of the nation's 154 major VA medical centers have a chiropractor on staff. The VA is the single largest provider of medical services in the U.S.

Now more than ever, Chiropractic is needed in the nation's VA facilities. A recent Veterans Health Administration, Office of Public Health and Occupational Hazards report cited musculoskeletal injuries as the number one complaint among U.S. veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan.

The deficiencies in Chiropractic services in the VA were recently noted at a high level by John Falardeau, Army Medical Center Vice President of Government Relations. Excerpted from a report sent to the House and Senate Armed Services and Veterans Affairs Committee: "At present, Doctors of Chiropractic have been located at only 30 of the more than 150 major VA treatment facilities. As a practical matter, this means that the vast majority of veterans who would benefit from access to Chiropractic care do not have this form of treatment available to them."

The House Bills to watch with keen interest are the following: H.R.1470, which would "amend the Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care Programs Enhancement Act of 2001 to require the provision of Chiropractic care and services to veterans at all Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers." H.R.1471 would amend Title 38 of the United States Code "to permit eligible veterans to receive direct access to Chiropractic care."

To read these bills in their entirety and track the status of these important pieces of legislation, visit the Library of Congress at www.thomas.gov.

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CHIROPRACTIC HELPS INJURED PATIENT FOLLOWING “NO RELIEF” BACK SURGERY

Persons who are considering spinal surgery aimed at eliminating a painful or traumatic condition would certainly be well advised to consult a chiropractor before submitting to the knife. But what about someone who has already undergone surgery and the painful condition persists? Would they be wise to seek Chiropractic help in the aftermath?

Recently, such a case came to light of a young man whose back pain persisted following an extensive laminectomy procedure in his lower back area. (A “laminectomy” is an invasive surgical procedure to remove or widen the back portion of a vertebra.)

The 37-year-old man had been involved in a work-related accident that caused continuous severe lower back pain and numbness in his leg. Five months after the incident he was told by an orthopedic surgeon that he had herniated discs in the lumbar region of his back. (“Herniated” means protruding beyond its normal area and “lumbar” refers to the five large vertebrae in the lower back.)

Surgery was extensive, addressing the problems to two of his vertebrae. Following the surgery, he was given pain medication that he was told to take twice daily.

Unfortunately for the patient, the surgery was not successful in eliminating his pain. Finally, 11 months after the initial accident, he visited a Chiropractor for an examination and x-rays. The findings showed no pathologies except those created by the surgery.

Chiropractic care was started and continued on a regular schedule for several months. Minor changes in the patient’s condition were regularly monitored by re-examinations. Ultimately, although the patient had undergone an extensive and invasive surgical procedure, he now showed regular improvements both structurally and in his quality of life.

Researchers in this case noted that the patient improved, “achieving a significant reduction in symptoms not obtained following recent surgery.” A follow-up performed 9 months later showed that the patient had maintained his structural corrections as well as improvements to his initial pain symptoms.

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POSTURE PROBLEMS FACE YOUTH OF TODAY!

Latest research shows that an alarming number of young people are suffering from back pain problems. Even more astounding is that a great number of them don't even care!

According to the latest numbers collected by the British Chiropractic Association (BCA), 50% of those surveyed in the 16 to 24 year-old age group are currently suffering from back pain. Only three years ago, the number with back pain in a similar survey totaled only 18%.

The British, much like their American counterparts, have a lifestyle that is increasingly sedentary. Add to that the problem of slouching in a position of bad posture, often while spending large amounts of time in front of computer screens, and the possibility of trouble with the back is greatly compounded.

Interestingly, many of these very same young people have already been warned of their bad posture, but this has had little effect on many of them in making a change to their lifestyles. Of those told of their problem in this survey, 22% were not bothered and another 29% haven't done anything about it.

While choosing not to worry, young people should really have a reason to be concerned for their future. Figures released by the BCA show that back pain causes 40% of the people in the country to struggle to get a good night's rest. Some 14% miss social events because of back pain. For 15%, it has a negative impact on their sex life. As these young people age, there are even more reasons to be concerned with good posture: For example, 60% of job interviewers are put off by bad posture.

When questioned about the cause of their poor posture, 62% of respondents blamed slouching or being tired, 44% blamed seating, 38% chose to slouch when they relax, while 8% retreat to a bad posture when they are feeling shy or embarrassed.

In response to this problem of increasing proportions, the BCA is promoting a new campaign to help everyone to strengthen their spines and improve their posture. A three minute exercise program entitled "Straighten Up UK" comes in video form over the Internet. It is easy to follow and easy to do. The program is available for viewing and doing at: www.chiropractic-uk.co.uk.

If it's good for the British youth, it could have a very positive effect on American youth as well. Proper posture is definitely a good thing to promote and practice on both sides of the Atlantic.

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TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE, ACUPUNCTURE SOLVE FERTILITY PROBLEMS

Women who've been unsuccessful at becoming pregnant may find the long-awaited solution through Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and Acupuncture. This is the message of author and doctor of medicine Randine Lewis, Ph.D. from her book *The Infertility Cure*. Dr. Lewis found personal success in becoming a mother through the practices of TCM. Following her own delivery, she started on a 4-year study quest that has helped numerous Western women through her discoveries and practice of Eastern medicine.

"For years I have used Acupuncture in my clinic to treat many different fertility problems. Almost every stage of a woman's cycle and pregnancy can benefit from the balancing effects of working with the meridians (pathways) to promote the flow of Qi (life energy) through the body and to bring the organs up to the highest level of health," she says in her book.

The western focus on drugs and a reliance on science to achieve pregnancy caused Dr. Lewis to eschew such practices. "Western medicine relies on scientific measurements to determine the problem, and then it provides remedies that are supposed to overcome that particular effect," she says.

"Chinese medicine, on the other hand, looks at the whole patient, seeking imbalances in the system rather than focusing on disease." Maintaining and restoring balance is at the heart of diagnosis and treatment in Chinese medicine, and Acupuncture plays a key role in the entire process.

"Many hormonal problems occur because of slight imbalances in the endocrine system, altering the way the body produces hormones. Modern Western diagnostic techniques may not detect any abnormality, but even a slight aberration can throw the entire system off so it no longer functions smoothly. We need to get hormones and the other systems back into balance," she says.

Dr. Lewis has a basic four-step approach that she advocates and utilizes with her patients to balance energies and prepare a woman's body to nurture a child. The first step involves an examination from the point of view of diagnosing what's going on with a woman's system and harmonizing reproductive energies. Next would be a change in diet to eliminate any deficiencies. Third would be the introduction of Acupuncture to clear energy meridians and get the Qi properly flowing to the system. Finally, Chinese herbs are included as a final step in correcting any underlying deficiencies and clearing obstructions to pregnancy.

Through her experience, Dr. Lewis knows that some Western women will have a bit of an aversion to Acupuncture. Some of this is based on the fear of needles and a general misunderstanding of the effectiveness of Acupuncture. But she encourages them to include it in their programs. "All you really have to know is that Acupuncture works," she says. "There is scientific proof of its efficacy in treating a wide range of conditions, as well as millions of satisfied patients all over the world."

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MEDICAL ERRORS TAKE A TOLL ON DOCTORS

Did you ever wonder if the doctor you see has experienced stress brought on by the circumstances of his or her profession? If so, you might be interested in what 3,100 physicians in the US and Canada had to say regarding stress and life changes following a medical error situation that they had a hand in.

According to the study, many physicians experience significant emotional distress and job-related stress following medical errors and “near misses.” The study is published in the August issue of The Joint Commission on Quality and Patient Safety. The findings point to a greater need to provide help and support to doctors following an error.

“The Emotional Impact of Medical Errors on Practicing Physicians in the United States and Canada” is the first large study of its kind to demonstrate the negative effects of medical errors on physicians. Ninety-two percent of the surveyed doctors indicated they had been involved with a major medical error, a minor error or a “near miss” situation.

Approximately one-half of the physicians surveyed reported that their involvement in medical errors increased their job-related stress. One-third of the group who were involved only with a “near miss” also reported that their lives were negatively affected, indicating that physician distress is not limited only to the occurrence of serious errors. It was noted, however, that the greater the severity of the error, the more likely it was that the physician would be affected.

Here are some of the additional notable results of the findings:

- 61% of doctors reported increased anxiety about future errors. 44% experienced a loss of self-confidence. 42% reported sleeping difficulties. 42% had reduced job satisfaction. 13% feared harm to their reputation.
- Physicians were more likely to be distressed after serious errors when they were dissatisfied with how the error disclosure meetings went with their patient. Only 18% had received any training in handling error disclosure and 86% were interested in more education.
- Although more than 80% of physicians expressed interest in counseling after serious errors, many indicated that a variety of barriers might prevent them from seeking it out.
- 43% said taking time away from work for counseling would be difficult. 35% did not think counseling would be helpful. 35% were concerned that counseling would not be kept confidential and would be placed in their permanent records. 23% were concerned that receiving counseling could affect their malpractice insurance. 18% feared they would be negatively judged by their peers for receiving counseling.

Source: The Joint Commission Press Release July 2007:

<http://www.prnewswire.com/cgi-bin/stories.pl?ACCT=104&STORY=/www/story/07-18-2007/0004627756&EDATE=>

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ADHD SYMPTOMS IMPROVE WITH OMEGA FATTY ACID SUPPLEMENTS

A study appearing in the *Journal of Developmental and Behavioural Pediatrics* indicates that omega-3 fish oil might alleviate the symptoms of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

The study by researchers at the University of South Australia involved 132 children suffering from ADHD and lasted for 30 weeks. All the children were aged between 7 and 12 years.

During the first 15 weeks, researchers split the children into three groups and assigned them to receive either an omega-3 supplement, omega-3 plus a multivitamin, or a placebo in the form of palm oil capsules. After this, each child was given omega-3 and the multivitamins for the remaining 15 weeks.

Researchers said over 50 percent of the children taking omega-3 for the entire 30 weeks had considerable improvements in symptoms like hyperactivity, impulsivity and inattention. However, multivitamins showed no benefits in ADHD, the researchers said.

When the placebo group was switched over to omega-3, all children showed improvements in ADHD symptoms, the researchers added.

Reacting to the study, Philip Calder, professor of nutritional immunology at the University of Southampton said it was further evidence that omega-3 fatty acids were important in ADHD.

“The results of this latest trial add to the growing body of evidence showing that children with attention problems can benefit from increased intake of certain fatty acids,” he added.

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ASTHMA DRUGS MAY CAUSE 80% OF ALL ASTHMA-RELATED DEATHS

A recent study published in *Annals of Internal Medicine* has found that bronchodilators of the “beta-agonist” class, the inhalers used by asthma patients, may be responsible for 4,000 of the 5,000 asthma-related deaths that occur in the United States each year.

The 2006 study analyzed two of the main drugs used in asthma inhalers in children and adults, salmeterol and formoterol. The study reviewed the results of 19 different trials performed between 1966 and 2005 covering 33,826 participants, and found an increased risk of hospitalization for life-threatening asthma attacks and asthma-related deaths among both adults and children.

Another study, the Multi-center Asthma Research Trial (SMART), followed more than 26,000 participants for 6 months and found a four-fold increased risk for asthma-related deaths with the use of these drugs.

Controversy has surrounded the use of beta-agonists ever since their introduction more than 50 years ago. Beta-agonists are medicines that open the airways by relaxing the muscles around them that tend to tighten during an asthma attack. Numerous studies have consistently shown that regular use of these drugs carries an increased risk of life threatening and fatal asthma attacks. In May 2005, the FDA requested manufacturers of these medications (Advair Diskus, Foradil Aerolizer, and Serevent Diskus) to update their product warning labels that these products “increase the chance of severe asthma episodes, and death when those episodes occur.”

Yet prescriptions and sales of brochodilators has remained a multi-billion dollar industry.

Doubles the Death Rate for COPD Patients

Beta-agonists are also widely used to treat Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, or COPD. A recent analysis of 22 randomized trials, which followed more that 15,000 COPD patients, found that beta-agonists doubled the respiratory failure death rate.

Regular use of beta-agonists has been shown to increase bronchial hyperactivity regardless of some degree of bronchodilation. This effect, along with the reduction in response to later rescue beta-agonist use “may worsen asthma control without giving any warning of increased symptoms.”

Asthma deaths increased worldwide in the 1960s when beta-agonists were introduced onto the market. In New Zealand, asthma-related deaths increased when the beta-agonist drug fenoterol was introduced. Asthma-related deaths rapidly decreased when use of the drug was severely cut back. “If long-acting beta-agonists were removed from the market in the United States, we might witness a reduction in asthma mortality rates here.”

Asthma sufferers would do well to investigate drug-free, alternate approaches to therapy, such as Chiropractic or Acupuncture, both of which have been proven effective in relieving the symptoms of asthma.

COLD REMEDIES PUT CHILDREN AT RISK, LEADING PEDIATRICIANS SAY

A group of leading pediatricians have petitioned the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to stop drug makers from marketing over-the-counter cough and cold remedies to children.

In some children, unintentional overdoses have caused heart rhythm changes, cardiopulmonary arrest, hallucinations, psychoses, hypertension and seizures, according to research cited in the petition.

“Over-the-counter cough and cold preparations are neither safe nor effective for use in young children,” the petitioners argue. “The FDA has never conducted an appropriate analysis to support their widespread use, and expert organizations agree that they are ineffective and pose a risk to health.”

The petitioners urged the FDA to tell drugmakers the continued marketing of such products for infants and young children is not supported by scientific evidence and should lead to enforcement actions against the makers.

Dr. Joshua Sharfstein, Baltimore’s commissioner of health, led the group of 15 petitioners who include such pediatric luminaries as Dr. Janet Serwint, professor of pediatrics at the Johns Hopkins University; Dr. Steven J. Czinn, chairman of pediatrics at the University of Maryland School of Medicine; and Dr. Michael Shannon, professor of pediatrics at Harvard Medical School.

“These are very senior pediatricians,” Sharfstein said. “That kind of expertise is not something the FDA gets petitions from every day.

“I think this is something that should be wrapped up fairly quickly because the evidence on this is clear. They don’t work, and they’re not safe,” he said.

FDA Says No Need for Immediate Action

FDA officials have replied that the agency plans to review the matter over the next several months. One official told reporters at a Washington briefing that there is no need for immediate action.

Dr. Charles Ganley, director of the Office of Nonprescription Products said the review will include an assessment of the safety and efficacy of cold and cough medications for children, as well as how dosage levels for them are drawn up. In the meantime, he said, parents should be careful to follow directions on the products.

“If we thought there was a need to come out with an immediate statement, we would do so,” Ganley said. “Parents need to adhere to those dosing directions. If the directions are to consult a physician, parents need to adhere to that.”

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CONGRESS AND FDA CRACK DOWN ON OVER-PRESCRIBED ANEMIA DRUGS

The manufacturers of three widely-prescribed drugs for treating anemia have received letters from Congress asking them to stop advertising the drugs to consumers, and to report back to Congress about how the drugs are marketed and if kickbacks are being paid to physicians to prescribe them.

The letters from Congress were sent to Amgen, which markets Aranesp® and Epogen®, and to Johnson & Johnson, which makes Procrit®, requesting them to stop advertising their potentially life-threatening products until the FDA further assesses the safety of the drugs.

Called “erythropoiesis stimulating agents (ESAs)”, the drugs were approved by the FDA to treat anemia in patients with chronic kidney failure and in patients with cancer whose anemia is caused by chemotherapy. Anemia is a blood disorder caused by a shortage of healthy red blood cells. Erythropoiesis is the process by which red blood cells (erythrocytes) are produced; in adults, most red blood cells are produced in the bone marrow.

FDA Orders “Black Box” Label Warnings

Earlier in the month, the FDA announced “black box” warning labels for the drugs, citing an increased risk of blood clots, heart attacks and even death in kidney patients when the drugs are taken at higher than recommended doses. When used in cancer patients with anemia not caused by chemotherapy — a use not approved by FDA — studies showed increased risk of death even when the drugs were prescribed at normal levels.

Johnson & Johnson said that it stopped marketing Procrit directly to consumers in 2005. It did, however, claim that they provide “discounts that comply with federal regulations.” As for Amgen, a spokesperson said the company has never used direct-to-consumer marketing to promote its drugs, nor has it given money to physicians to prescribe Aranesp and Epogen.

According to IMS Health, an international, \$2-billion-a-year pharmaceutical marketing company, the three products combined had U.S. sales of \$10 billion in 2006. From those sales, \$700 million in annual sales of the drugs are estimated to come from “off label” (not FDA approved) uses.

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PATIENT RESPONSIBILITY ENHANCES HEALING!

In 1964, journalist and publisher Norman Cousins suffered a bout with a life-threatening illness that caused considerable diagnosis and treatment problems for his physicians. He experienced numerous tests that tried his own patience and sensibilities, declared hospital food deprived of nutritional value and began to notice that his prescribed regiment of drugs did more to poison his system than aid in his recovery.

In addition, doctors were unable to positively identify just what was attacking his connective tissues, particularly in his back, that was causing his spine to disintegrate. One cause was attributed to heavy metal poisoning possibly heightened by stress and immune system dysfunction following a particularly taxing travel schedule.

A turning point came for Cousins when he received some particularly bad news. He'd asked his doctor to level with him about his prognosis and chances for recovery. The doctor quoted a specialist saying that his possibilities for recovery were about 1 in 500, but the specialist had yet to see the one person who had recovered.

To this point, Cousins had put his care and treatment totally in the hands of his physicians. Now, he decided he'd better get into the act of helping himself if he was indeed going to be the 1 in 500 who survived. Though bedridden, he sprung into action.

As a publisher of the Saturday Review magazine, he had access to research personnel who came to his aid with information that helped him to take charge of his own healing. First, he learned that his daily aspirin intake could be interfering with the production of collagen (the fibrous protein of bone and connective tissue). Even though his condition was painful, he stopped taking the 24 tablets a day he was prescribed.

He learned that inflammation in joints might be reduced through large amounts of Vitamin C. He decided he wanted 3 grams of Vitamin C intravenously and his doctor said OK. His body responded positively to this and doses were gradually upped to 25 grams daily via intravenous drip. (Remember, this was 1964. Linus Pauling came out with healthful information that's now well known on Vitamin C several years later.)

Next, he decided to interject only positive emotions and particularly humor into his life. As this was 1964, he watched humorous films via a projector with remarkable results. "I made the joyous discovery that ten minutes of genuine belly laughter had an anesthetic effect and would give me at least two hours of pain-free sleep."

All of this put Cousins on a positive road to recovery and he was eventually able to return to work full-time work at the magazine. He was also able to return to tennis, golf and travel. His life continued until the age of 75 in 1990. His thoughts on all aspects of his recovery make an excellent read in his book, *The Anatomy of an Illness*.

Following his recovery, Cousins looked back at two items. First, he wondered if the Vitamin C really did provide the necessary nutrients to restore his body to health or if the intravenous drip acted as the necessary placebo to give him hope and allow him to engage his own mental and physical attributes to aid in his own recovery. Second, he was most appreciative of his doctor who allowed him full participation in his own healing.

He had this to say about the miracle of his recovery. "I have learned never to underestimate the capacity of the human mind and body to regenerate – even when the prospects seem most wretched. The life-force may be the least understood force on earth. William James said that human beings tend to live too far within self-imposed limits. It is possible that these limits will recede when we respect more fully the natural drive of the human mind and body toward perfectibility and regeneration. Protecting and cherishing that natural drive may well represent the finest exercise of human freedom."

NATIONAL DECREASE IN BREAST CANCER TIED TO FEWER WOMEN USING HORMONE REPLACEMENT THERAPY

A new study provides strong evidence that the dramatic decline in breast cancer cases in women over 50 since 2002 can be attributed to the decline in hormone replacement prescriptions for menopausal women.

Statistics analyzed by a large team of researchers and just published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* show that the frequency of breast cancer diagnoses began falling after prescriptions for hormone replacement were curtailed following studies that showed cancer risks. The decrease in cases persisted into 2003 and up to the present, confirming that the trends are related.

The study says an estimated 16,000 fewer cases of breast cancer are being diagnosed each year because of the drop in hormone use, a complete reversal of a decades-long increase in cases.

The findings also explain another mystery about breast cancer — why the number of cases rose steadily for decades beyond what could simply be attributed to better detection methods. Increasing hormone use likely played a key role, researchers said.

Underscores the Dangers of Widely Using Untested Drugs

Two of the drugs studied were Premarin® and Prempro™, both of which have been targeted in numerous lawsuits against their pharmaceutical company maker. Premarin is a combined estrogen-progestin preparation, and Prempro is a conjugated equine (derived from a horse) estrogen drug.

Reaction to the study has been widespread. Some scientists are saying the findings underscore the danger of drug therapies becoming widely used before they have been thoroughly tested. Others said the findings should encourage more women to stop hormone use altogether or to continue at the lowest dose and for the shortest time necessary.

“We believe that the data are most consistent with a direct effect of hormone-replacement therapy on preclinical disease,” the study concluded, “but this conclusion does not rule out some contribution from changes in screening mammography. In any case, attempts to understand the rapid reduction in incidence using theoretical models of breast-cancer evolution and the effects of screening and treatment — such as those of the National Cancer Institute’s Cancer Intervention and Surveillance Modeling Network — may lead to new insights into the development and prevention of breast cancer.”

These findings come on the heels of the UK’s Million Women Study, which has found that hormone replacement therapy increases the risk of ovarian cancer and endometrial (the lining of the womb) cancer. That study also supports the US study showing an increase in breast cancer.

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CONSTIPATION DRUG CAUSES HEART ATTACKS, FDA HALTS SALES

The pharmaceutical company Novartis has agreed to halt sales of Zelnorm® at the FDA's request, after it was linked to a higher chance of heart attack, stroke and worsening chest pain that can become a heart attack.

Zelnorm, also called tegaserod maleate, is a prescription medication approved for short-term treatment of women with irritable bowel syndrome with constipation and for patients younger than 65 with chronic constipation, the agency said. Zelnorm is marketed in 55 countries.

The FDA is advising patients using Zelnorm to discuss treatment alternatives with their doctors. The agency advised patients taking Zelnorm to seek emergency medical care if they experience severe chest pain, shortness of breath, dizziness, sudden onset of weakness or difficulty walking or talking, or other symptoms of a heart attack or stroke.

Throughout February and March 2007, Novartis reported to the FDA the results of a new analysis of 29 short-term clinical trials of Zelnorm. Based on the data for most patients, the benefits of this drug no longer outweigh the risks, the agency said.

The analysis included more than 11,600 patients treated with Zelnorm and over 7,000 patients treated with placebo. The data showed that the risk of serious cardiovascular adverse events (e.g., angina, heart attacks, and strokes) associated with use of Zelnorm are higher than with placebo treatment.

Public Citizen, a consumer advocacy group, said that there were 2.13 million prescriptions issued for Zelnorm in 2005 alone, making it one of the top 200 drugs in the country. The organization also said that it had warned the FDA in 2001 not to approve the drug for safety reasons.

“Once again, the FDA has approved a drug with marginal effectiveness in the face of serious questions about its safety – putting at risk the millions of people who have already used it,” said Dr. Sidney Wolfe, director of Public Citizen's health research group.

There are other medicines available by prescription, and alternative therapies such as Chiropractic adjustments and Acupuncture; both have proven effective for some patients.