News Briefs

- Parke-Davis is revising the vial and carton labels for fosphenytoin sodium injection (Cerebyx) after receiving reports of healthcare workers misinterpreting the current label and administering massive overdoses of the drug. The dosage is still expressed as phenytoin equivalents. The change is intended to clear up any confusion over whether the labeled amount is the amount of drug per milliliter or the amount in the vial.

- FDA has warned consumers not to use products that contain γ-butyrolactone, or GBL. Sometimes marketed as a dietary supplement, GBL has been associated with serious adverse events, including seizures, vomiting, and unconsciousness. Several persons required assisted ventilation, and one died. FDA has begun the process of getting these products off the market by asking the manufacturers to voluntarily recall their products.

- Recent inspections of Abbott Laboratories and Abbott’s supplier of human neonatal kidney cells used in the manufacture of urokinase (Abbokinase) revealed deficiencies in some procedures that guard against transmission of infectious agents. In a letter to health care providers, FDA stated that the actual risk to patients is unknown and encouraged health care providers to “consider the appropriate-ness of other treatment options.” FDA recommended that Abbokinase be reserved for situations where other options have been considered and the use of Abbokinase is considered “critical” to the care of the patient. The deviations from Good Manufacturing Practice regulations are outlined in the letter (http://fda.gov/cber/ltr/abb012599.htm).

- The package insert for alatrofloxac in mesylate injection (Trivan, Pfizer) has been changed to indicate that the product should not be diluted with 0.9% sodium chloride solution injection or lactated Ringer’s injection because of potential incompatibility.

- The California board of pharmacy’s education and communication committee organized a “summit” in April 1998 to educate health care providers about the importance of medication compliance—and pharmacists’ role therein—as a way of containing health care costs and improving patient outcomes. A “template” that describes the planning and implementation of the summit can be used by other groups to focus public attention on the importance of proper medication use; for further information call Marilyn Standifer Shreve at the California State Board of Pharmacy, 916-445-5014. Other public information efforts by the state board include English and Spanish news releases on pain management and questions to ask about prescription medicines and a series of “Health Notes” monographs. The California Society of Health-System Pharmacists helped develop Health Notes on pain management and women’s health.

- Continuing education for pharmacists and physicians about Helicobacter pylori and gastrointestinal disease is available on the Cleveland Clinic Foundation Website (www.ccf.org/education/cme/hpylori). Case studies, graphics, resource materials, and an online examination are provided at no charge.

- Warner-Lambert Company, Morris Plains, New Jersey, announced January 26 that it plans to acquire Agouron Pharmaceuticals, Inc., Lajolla, California, subject to approval of Agouron shareholders and customary regulatory approvals. Warner-Lambert said the acquisition will augment its new product pipeline and expand its presence in therapeutic areas such as antivirals and oncology.

- Marlin D. Rose, M.S., who was Director of Pharmacy Services at Harris Methodist Fort Worth hospital, died October 6, 1998, at age 51.