OPINION

Guest Editorial

How to buy your meds online – safely

Buying drugs online has never been easier.

Today, there are thousands of websites offering brand-name medications like Lipitor and Viagra at a fraction of what they cost at your local drugstore. Many even sell drugs without asking for a prescription.

Some offer "in-house" doctors that will both diagnose you and prescribe medications over the internet, saving you the hassle of going to your physician and then the drugstore.

If that sounds too good to be true, that's because it is.

Hunting online for bargains makes sense, but it can be incredibly dangerous. It is often difficult – if not outright impossible – to tell whether or not drugs purchased online are authentic. That's a risk that can be deadly.

According to the World Health Organization, about 10 percent of globally traded drugs are fakes. In some countries, according to the Food and Drug Administration, more than half of all drugs are fake.

Counterfeiting networks use high-tech graphics and fraudulent serial numbers to mimic brand-name drugs. Smugglers bribe officials to move drugs across borders and set up phony mailing addresses to ship products over the internet. Many open and close several websites each day to sell their stock of phony drugs, make a profit, and move on without a trace.

Most counterfeits originate in Asia and Latin America where regulations are poorly enforced. Penalties for counterfeiting in these regions are slight compared to the profits criminals can reap. Some experts have estimated that counterfeit sales will total $75 billion worldwide by 2010.

Purchasing drugs closer to home is hardly any safer.

Many Canadian pharmacies obtain their drugs from European wholesalers. And because pharmaceuticals move freely among the 27 EU members, drugs purchased from England or Germany could have easily originated in Romania or the Czech Republic, where safety regulations are poor.

Earlier this year, a Canadian named Marcia Bergeron purchased counterfeit Xanax and Ambien from what she thought was an online Canadian pharmacy.

After taking the pills, she died. Authorities discovered that Bergeron's pills contained aluminum, tin, and even arsenic – common "filler" in counterfeits. They traced the purchase to a website in the Czech Republic and the pills to a plant in Southeast Asia.

With more websites selling counterfeit medicines, it's more important than ever to follow a few simple guidelines when purchasing drugs online.

First, never purchase prescription medication from a website that does not require you to mail in a prescription. Moreover, legitimate e-pharmacies should always have an easy way for you to contact a certified pharmacist for medical consultation.

Avoid sites that do not display a physical U.S. street address and a toll-free phone number. Also, avoid websites selling only "lifestyle" medications for conditions like obesity and impotence.

Finally, you can search for "Verified Internet Pharmacy Practice Sites" by going to www.vipps.info. This website was created by the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy to identify online pharmacies that are safe and appropriately licensed.

The VIPPS team reviews the policies and practices of internet pharmacies and performs on-site inspections of each pharmacy's facilities. Those that are up to code display the blue VIPPS seal.

–Bryan A. Liang, MD, is the Vice President of the Partnership for Safe Medicines.

The Carlisle Mercury

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Bond's Broadcast

There are real rewards when you're a grandpa. I love my grandchildren and I believe they love me.

You know there are people out there who know exactly what I mean. Having grandchildren is especially rewarding for me. I'm sure for some it isn't that way but for the vast majority in my mind it's the same as for me.

On Saturday, Evan, who is our oldest grandchild, came to visit for a few minutes while his mom, cousin Sadie Jo and Aunt Beth made ready for a trip to Louisville.

What I have found so satisfying about my grandchildren is that their love is 100 percent unconditional.

They love me because I am me. There's no strings attached.

Sure, I slip my man five bucks for being good all week and an extra dollar if he gets all of his spelling words correct.

Heck I'd like to give him a dollar for every week for the rest of the school year. And if he keeps nailing those perfect scores I'll do just that.

I find discovery amusing that he takes going to school very seriously.

When he came to see me on Saturday he was able to sit down and tell me his spelling words. That's impressive to me.

When it comes to the fundamentals of math he is well on his way. He's only 5, and still in kindergarten. He can handle math using two numbers, understands the principles of subtraction and is always interested in working math problems.

He also loves to write and color. I find his desire for knowledge to be unique. Usually 5-year-olds are far more interested in playing but Evan likes the mental challenges of life.

When he climbs up on my lap and talks to "his papaw" there is no better feeling.

He likes to share what is going on in his life. School, shopping, trips out of town and all of the things that make being 5-years-old something special.

Evan also impresses me in another way. When it comes holiday time or birthday time he isn't selfish or unappreciative.

He gets just as excited over a new pair of shoes or a new sweatshirt than he does over a new toy. I find that especially refreshing. He is almost always very appreciative, a trait I find most refreshing.

I also get to spend a great deal of time with Sadie Jo. She's around me everyday and even if I have to say so myself she is a papaw's girl.

I am not unlike many grandparents. I take great pleasure in disrupting the system.

When Beth is trying to feed Sadie Jo cereal one of my favorite things to do is walk by, get her attention and do my best to teach her how to buzz her food.

You know, a zerbert type of movement so cereal can be displaced into several directions.

I can't say that I don't go without a small amount of scolding from Beth, who also calls on her mother to stop the dastardly papaw, but that doesn't really stop me I just go right on.

Sadie Jo likes to cuddle. Some babies do and some babies don't but she is certainly one that does.

I like to sit her on my chest facing me and just watch her. Now that she has reached the magic age of 6 months she nearly attacks with kisses.

She likes to coo. She talks a great deal and as I have tried to explain I have made it a personal mission to get Sadie Jo to say papaw first – not momma or Anna nor mimi, but papaw. It will be interesting to see who wins the race.

The twins, now over nine months old were a constant source of fun.

I don't get to see them nearly as much but when I do I believe I have won favor from the dynamic duo.

I have been told over and over that Analise is a daddy's girl. I just want to point out that as far as I could tell during the last trip to visit in the desert papaw was the only one Analise would come to from her daddy. Consider this a warning Ben. I will try and steal her heart away.

Antonio and I went out and played with the dogs. Antonio loves the outside a great deal. We would go outside at least twice a day, if it was only a trip to the car to get something.

Antonio loves to look around. Once when we went out there was this large Jack-rabbit sitting along the side of the road. I guess we were out there maybe 15 minutes and he watched every move the rabbit made. I enjoyed watching him as much as he enjoyed watching the animal.

Both of the twins are not different than any others they like attention – and papaw is available to do that.

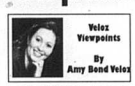
All four of my grandchildren like to be held and enjoy time with Mimi and papaw.

Although I want to tell you from my perspective they can't like being around me any more than I like being with them.

If I could just get Sadie Jo to buzz her cereal.

And so, for another week, thanks and thirty.

Veloz Viewpoints



Greetings from Nevada! I hope you are all having a great week.

What a busy week. This past Tuesday we had a pediatrician appointment. It always seems to feel like when we have something we have to do in the afternoon that I spend the entire day getting ready for it. Tuesday was no different.

The twins got up early which has unfortunately become the norm with them lately. I spent the morning playing with them and then fed them their cereal. After they ate their cereal they were ready for their morning nap.

I was able to get them to both nap at the same time which was a relief for me as I had to take a shower before the trip to the pediatrician and I hadn't had a chance on Monday night. So, I took advantage of their nap together and quickly jumped in the shower.

After my shower, I still had some time to do a few other things around the house so we wouldn't come home to the disastrous state the kitchen was in. They woke up from their nap ready to play! I spent the majority of the rest of the morning playing on the floor with them.

It was time for lunch and they were acting sleepy again. I gave them some snacks to hold them off so they could get a later lunch. I wanted them to eat lunch so they wouldn't be ready for dinner at the same time their appointment was scheduled for. They usually like to eat dinner around 5 or 5:30 so I figured if I was able to hold them off until one for lunch I would be fine. Their appointment was scheduled for 4:15. I figured we would easily be finished with their appointment by 5 and at the restaurant for dinner by 5:15 or 5:30...just in time for them to be hungry.

Well, as I like to say – especially lately – we plan and God laughs. We were all set at the pediatrician's office, on time for our appointment. Things were going great. That was until we ended up waiting about an hour before we were even taken back to see the doctor. He was running behind, as doctors sometimes do. He is a great pediatrician so I don't mind waiting, but as the minutes passed I knew the babies were going to become fussy soon.

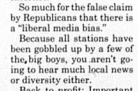
At the appointment we found out their latest "stats". Analise weighs 19 pounds and 10 ounces and is 28 inches long. Her head is also in the 97th percentile, measuring 46-½ cm in circumference. Antonio weighs 20 pounds and 1 ounce and is 28-½ inches long. They are both happy healthy babies that are growing like little weeds!

It is so fun playing with them these days. They both love playing on the floor. And, because Antonio is mobile I have to be so careful what I leave down. When he notices something on the floor that he isn't supposed to have, he makes a bee-line for it. For example, if I leave a remote lying on the floor or sit my cup of water down, as soon as it catches his eye he tries his hardest to get to it before I do. It really is rather cute.

And, they have started fighting over me. Or at least it seems that way. If I am sitting on the floor with them, especially in the morning, they both do everything they can to get on my lap. Antonio will crawl over to me and use my shoulders to pull himself up. He gives me hugs and kisses and wants to be all over me. All the while, Analise is reaching and stretching and making a whining noise trying to get me to pick her up and sit her in my lap. It certainly makes me feel special, and like I am the most loved Mommy in the whole world.

Until next week, make it a great one!
Amy

Talkin' From The Mountains



What Has Happened To Journalism?

I'm a journalist. I moved some years ago from doing it to teaching it, but I still write this column plus do a little work in radio and television here and there.

Most journalists no longer tell us what we need to know. They only inform us about what they think we want to know. It's all about ratings and advertising dollars, with political bias thrown in on top of the greed.

The deregulation of radio and television, which allowed a handful of corporations to buy every media outlet in the nation, was the beginning of the dumbing down of media.

Want to visit the radio stations in Lexington? You won't have to drive far. Many of them are in the same building, owned by the same big corporation, and all of them have the same conservative Republican bias.

Want to hear a liberal radio station? Forget it. There's one liberal network, Air America Radio, but the five conservative corporations who own almost every radio station in America aren't going to affiliate with Air America. You have to listen to Air America on the Internet.

So much for the false claim by Republicans that there is a "liberal media bias."

Because all stations have been gobbled up by a few of the big boys, you aren't going to hear much local news or diversity either.

Back to profit: Important news, like City Hall, education, etc. are time consuming, take knowledge and background and are expensive to pursue so reporters just feed us stories about Paris Hilton and Brittany Spears.

Back when journalism was ethical, WAVE Radio and Television in Louisville was the largest and most powerful Republican media outlet in Kentucky.

WAVE was owned by the Norton and Morton families, wealthy, Republican and conservative. U.S. Senator Thruston Ballard Morton, Nixon cabinet member C. Rogers Morton and the prominent Morton brother's sister Jane Norton controlled WAVE after the death of George Norton and his son. Mrs. Norton was Chairperson Of the Board. Thruston Ballard Morton Junior was President.

Across town, there was a huge Democratic media operation, WHAS radio and television and The Courier Journal, owned by the Bingham family, another powerful and wealthy but Democrat and liberal--Louisville family.

I'm a Democrat, but when my job offer came from Louisville, it was not from the Democrat Bingham family. The Republican Norton family summoned me to the state's largest city.

It wasn't a mistake. No one at WAVE asked me about my political views when they offered me a job. It's against the law to ask an employee about their politics, and unlike today's biased media news (Fox is the worst offender) WAVE radio and television had integrity.

Ironically, Democrats outnumbered Republicans in the WAVE newsroom but Democrats working for a Republican television station was not a problem back then. Reporters, with the encouragement of management, tried to be fair and balanced.

When the Republican/conservative viewpoint of the owners was given, a gentleman named Rodney Ford presented it on the air and his airtime was clearly identified as editorial comment.

There was never any confusion over what was commentary and what was news. Today, you can't tell where the news story ends and the editorial comment starts, and I doubt there are many democrats working at Fox News—just a few token to try to give the impression that they really are "fair and balanced." They are not.

At WAVE, we found ourselves on occasion doing negative stories about Senator Morton. We never gave him a break just because his family owned the joint and he made no attempt to stop us, fire us, or even intimidate us when we reported

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OPINION

Fourth District Report

Supporting our Veterans

Last week, as our country was preparing to honor our nation's brave men and women in uniform on Veteran's Day, the Democratic House Leadership was once again playing politics with critical veterans funding legislation.

More than four months ago, the House passed H.R. 2642, the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs (MilCon/VA) Appropriations for 2008. At the beginning of September, the Senate followed suit and quickly appointed conferees to reconcile the differences in the two versions of the bill. However, the legislation stalled when the House Democratic Leadership refused to appoint conferees, putting billions of dollars in funding for our nation's veterans in political peril.

Finally, last week, the House Leadership decided to take action on the MilCon/VA Appropriations Act. But, instead of passing the bill, House Leadership used it as a political tool, attaching it to the massive conference report for the Labor, Health and Human Services Appropriations Act for 2008.

The controversial Labor, Health and Human Services conference report included massive spending increases and contained violations of the earmark reform rules. Those rules include a prohibition against adding earmarks during conference that were never a part of the House or Senate versions of the legislation. This conference report included nine "airdropped" earmarks that constitute violations of that rule. Additionally, the conference report was over budget by $10 billion. For these reasons, I was forced to vote against the bill.

After the conjoined bill passed the House, it headed to the Senate with a Presidential veto threat looming. In the Senate, an amendment was offered that successfully removed the MilCon/VA bill from the massive Labor, Health and Human Services conference report. Almost immediately, House Leadership brought the Labor, Health and Human Services conference report up for consideration and it passed the full House as a stand alone bill late last week. However, the Democratic Leadership failed to take action on necessary funding for our nation's veterans, leaving the MilCon/VA bill as yet another overdue and unfinished task.

We can, and we must, do better. I support our veterans and I am disappointed that they found themselves in the crossfire of this political stunt. I am hopeful that Congress will take immediate action and pass the MilCon/VA bill so that our nation's veterans will continue to have access to the programs and benefits to which they are entitled.

Recognizing the contributions of our servicemembers, I was pleased to sponsor an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act that will, for the first time, provide Hardship Duty Pay (HDP) to our service men and women based upon the cumulative time they have spent in combat zones during their careers. This HDP will be in addition to all pay to which they are currently entitled. It is high time that we provide additional compensation to the increasing number of our troops who are being required to make multiple combat deployments to Iraq or Afghanistan. I will continue to work to support fellow veterans and men and women in uniform. Our nation is deeply indebted to them for their sacrifices and service. Congress should remember their bravery and selflessness in service and pass the MilCon/VA Appropriations Act immediately.

Steve's Report

During my junior or senior year of high school – I don't remember which anymore – I decided to join the debate team. At the beginning of the season, the school district sent out the three subject areas we would be debating. My teammates and I went through newspapers and magazines, clipping out as many facts as we could and learning as much as we could about the topics.

I gathered my clippings together, glued them to 3x5 index cards and organized them so I could find them at a moment's notice. By the time the first debate rolled around I had memorized so many facts and figures, I knew there was no way my team was going to lose.

My team filed into a classroom and met the team from the other school. The judge announced the subject we would be debating: whether Health Management Organizations and Government-provided healthcare plans are a good idea for America. Then just like at a football game, the judge brought the team captains to the middle of the room for the coin toss to determine who would be Pro and who would be Con.

My team ended up with Con, so we would be presenting arguments against managed health care.

The other team was pretty good. They scored some points by presenting some viewpoints we hadn't considered and couldn't counter effectively. It was close, but in the end our hard work and preparation paid off and we won the first round.

The second round was in a different room against a different team with a new set of judges. We couldn't believe our luck when the judges told us we would be debating the same topic we had just won during the previous round. The only difference was that this time we would be Pro – arguing in favor of managed health care.

Still confident from winning our first round, changing sides of the debate didn't hurt us a bit. As a matter of fact, we did even better than we had in the first round and were the clear winners.

We ended up winning four of our five debates, only losing to a group of seniors who had placed second in state competition the previous year. We were pretty excited. We were a team of rookies and won second place during our very first debate meet. The way we were jumping around, high-fiving each other, you would have thought we had come in first.

On the way home, however, after the initial thrill of victory had worn off, my conscience started bothering me. I couldn't stop thinking about that second round when we had won by tearing apart the same arguments we had supported 30 minutes earlier during the first round. It felt dishonest. I decided to talk to the coach about it.

"In debates, the topic and the facts really aren't all that important," he explained, "It's how well you present what you say that determines whether you win or lose." To prove his point, he showed me his notes from the round we had lost.

"Look at some of the facts the other team used to beat you. They were made up. The other team beat you on a bluff. They knew you were an inexperienced team and probably wouldn't think of challenging their source, but if you had, you would have won."

"But that's dishonest!" I complained. He smiled at me, roughed up my hair, and told me maybe I wasn't cut out for debate team, after all. He was right. I quit after the very next meet. I just didn't have the stomach for it.

To borrow a phrase from tobacco farmers, I like things wet and dried. There's a right way and then there's a wrong way. Even when it isn't a choice between right and wrong, one of the choices still has to be better than the other. You compare the two choices and pick the better one. It's as easy as that.

Except life isn't black and white – there's all shades of gray mixed in. And there's all sorts of things that get in the way of how we look at the facts. Right or wrong, what we were taught to believe growing up still carries a lot of weight. And we all

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