Guest Editorial

The Perils of Importation

By Joel White

Late last spring, Congress came close to legalizing the importation of prescription drugs from abroad. Although the legislation failed, lawmakers are expected to consider a similar measure soon.

But despite the assertions of some pro-importation lawmakers who claim that "the only thing endangered" by drug importation "is the incredibly large profits of the drug companies who overprice their medicines in our market," such a bill would actually expose Americans to grave health risks.

As the Food and Drug Administration has declared time and again, it simply can't guarantee the safety of imported drugs. Indeed, the agency doesn't even have the ability to thoroughly vet drug imports at their current levels.

On a typical day at the John F. Kennedy International Airport Mail Facility, for example, only 500-700 of the roughly 40,000 packages suspected of containing drugs are inspected.

And according to a 2004 study, many of the packages that are inspected contain drugs that violate the FDA's safety standards.4 This includes expired medicines, counterfeit drugs, and insecure packaging.

In other words, thousands of non-FDA-approved drugs are already making their way into the United States. If drug importation is legalized, many more unsafe foreign drugs will wind up in our medicine cabinets.

Meanwhile, even though the volume of imported drugs has more than tripled over the past several years, the number of drug inspectors has only grown by 10 percent, according to a study conducted by CongressDaily just last month.

So if Congress formally legalizes drug importation, the already vast gap between drug imports and inspectors would only widen.

Advocates of drug importation dismiss this fear by noting that the legislation under consideration by Congress would only permit Americans to buy drugs from "safe" countries like Canada, France, and the United Kingdom.

But the reality is not so simple.

First, because the FDA can only inspect a fraction of the foreign packages entering the U.S. each year, it wouldn't be able to guarantee that the drugs Americans import actually came from those countries. It is easy for drug-sellers, especially online pharmacies, to misrepresent where they are based and where the drugs they sell are made.

A few years ago, for instance, the FDA purchased several "FDA-approved" drugs from a website that claimed to be "located in and operated out of Canada." But after receiving the drugs, the agency concluded "that neither the dispensers of the drugs, nor the drugs themselves, were Canadian." Worse, they all "failed most of the [FDA's] purity, potency and dissolution tests."

Further, the World Health Organization estimates that 50 percent of medicines sold through rouge web sites are counterfeit. Counterfeit medicines range from those containing no active ingredients to those containing highly toxic substances that can harm patients by failing to treat serious conditions and in some cases kill.

Second, it would be nearly impossible to determine if a drug bought from London or Paris was actually manufactured there. This is because of the E.U.'s system of "par-

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The Carlisle Mercury

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Bond's Broadcast

For most of my life, I have looked at life through the eyes of a child.

The excitement of seeing something new or being somewhere different has always appealed to me.

This may be one of the reasons I have always enjoyed a job in the newspaper business as it has allowed me to see new things on almost a daily basis.

When my mother-in-law Lois said she wanted to go to Las Vegas to see the twins I knew exactly what to expect.

Lois has always been inquisitive no matter what the subject, place or time.

This occasion was absolutely no different. In fact the anticipation of the trip was worth everything else when it came to watching her.

From the time she bought the ticket she had tons of questions.

It's important to note that at 70 plus years she has never flown anywhere and had never been further west than Illinois, so this entire trip was nothing less than an adventure.

It took a while for us to help Lois understand that the ticket she had purchased was an e-ticket which of course is generated on the Internet.

She even called back another time to ask if we had her ticket. Marilyn tried to explain that the ticket would be generated by a boarding pass from the airline on the day before we made the trip and with that we finally got to the ticketing process.

We also had to explain to her the things we would normally take for granted like the things we are allowed to carry in the bag. The check-in process as well as the security gates and several other airport related facts.

Lois found out it's a long way through the airport to the appropriate gates. She found this to be especially true when we were in the Las Vegas airport.

But back to Louisville . . .

We found a place in the under cover garage and began to move toward the ticketing check-in. It was a pretty good hike for Lois.

Marilyn and I checked out bags at the ticket counter, but Lois would have nothing to do with that. She wanted to carry her suitcase on the plane.

I can understand I wouldn't check my bags for a long time, but there came a time when I realized it was going to be a lot easier to just let the airline worry about them.

So far, we have been lucky. We have never had the airline lose one of the suitcases or anything else we have decided to check.

We got Lois to the security gate and once she had gone through the process we were on our way to the gate.

Of course the gate we were assigned for our flight was at the very end of the airport. We hoofed it down there. I will admit I had to pull the suitcase most of the way or I would have worn out my mother-in-law.

We got on the plane and settled it.

From there, of course we had to go through the explanations of what was going to happen next.

We were on the plane ready to go.

We had a very happy flight crew and the plane was loaded from front to back.

After a while the crew began to make jokes and many of the passengers were taking part.

When the male flight attendant on the crew stopped at our seat I told him this was my first flight and that she should get her wings, just like any other first time passenger.

He took it from there. They gave her wings, a pen with the airline logo, a signed certificate by all of the crew members and even offered her a glass of wine, which she refused claiming she wanted to be sober when she got to Las Vegas.

The trip west of course was well in front of the sun so Lois was able to look out the window and give us the play by play of what she saw. She did this as well on the way back, taking pleasure in every new thing she saw.

While in the Las Vegas Valley she was bug eyed many times. Seeing the light of the Las Vegas Strip at night. Visiting a date ranch in California and Death Valley National Park.

She was able to stand on the lowest point in the western hemisphere, nearly 300 feet below sea level.

We had lunch in Furnace Creek, where the only gasoline station in Death Valley is located, as we dined in the local restaurant at the village and also visited the general store for the all important stash of souvenirs.

Along with visiting her twin great-grandchildren I am pretty sure the highlight of the entire trip was going to the Las Vegas Hilton and along with gambling getting the chance to attend the Barry Manilow concert. Lois was not a first time winner, dropping nearly six dollars before wanting to cash out and get the rest of her $20 bill back.

She was excited as a child at an amusement park. We were lucky that our daughter was able to procure three complimentary tickets to the show.

Manilow's show was absolutely high energy and brought us music from the 1940s through the 1970s.

We also all ate some Thai food, first for me but for other than some spring rolls

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Veloz Viewpoints

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

What a week it has been. As many, if not all, of you know my parents and Grandma came to visit this past week. I had a great time. I only wish their visit could have been longer.

I'll start with last Wednesday. Wednesday evening was their arrival. I got a call from my parents around six to tell me that they were on their way to Pahrump from Vegas. Ben and I were preparing dinner, green enchiladas – a favorite of my mom's, and we needed to know how long it would take them to get here so we could have everything ready to eat as Ben and I were pretty hungry.

The day had already been rather eventful. My best friend since high school had called me earlier in the afternoon to share the news that she was pregnant. Lauren and her husband had been trying, unsuccessfully for more than a year to have a baby. So, the news of her pregnancy is very exciting news and I was more than thrilled to hear it.

Also on Wednesday, Ben's brother and his wife headed into Vegas to have their second child. He came a month early and has had some trouble with fluid in his lungs. He is still in the hospital with pneumonia and has to be there until this coming Saturday at least. For those of you who believe in the power of prayer, please keep him in your prayers. His name is Aydon Connor Veloz. Thank you.

Anyway, back to the family visit. Mom, Dad and Grandma arrived at our house around 7:30. We visited and ate dinner. I think Grandma liked this new meal and I know Mom did! She knew I married Ben for a reason.

After dinner we visited shortly and then headed to bed. It had been a very long day for my parents and Grandma. And with all the excitement I had been through, it had been a long day for me too. Thursday morning I got up with Ben and helped him get out the door for school. The babies were awake so I fed them and then took them in to wake up Mimi and Papaw for some playtime in the big bed. They like to roll around in the bed and I thought "what a perfect time!"

We slowly got ready and ate breakfast. After the babies had their naps we headed out to Death Valley, California. We spent some time at the General Store buying some souvenirs and then had lunch at the café. After lunch we headed out to a place called Badwater, which used to be a salt lake but has dried. It is 282 feet below sea level. You could see the salt on the ground and if you looked up at the mountain there is a sign that marks sea level. It is pretty cool if I do say so myself.

After a short stop we headed back to Pahrump as it was time to go into Vegas. Ben and I drove in separately as with seven people it is difficult to find a vehicle to fit all of us with the babies' car seats.

We went to dinner at the Las Vegas Hilton Buffet. It had a wide variety of food and I certainly enjoyed it. After dinner, Mom, Dad and Grandma went to the Barry Manilow concert and Ben and the babies and I headed to the hospital to visit our new nephew/cousin.

Of course, only Ben and I were able to see him as by this time he was already in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). He is pretty small. He has dark skin and very dark hair. He is pretty cute. He is the smallest baby I have seen in eight and a half months, and be-

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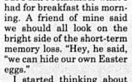
Talkin' From The Mountains

Okay Gravity, You Win



Okay gravity, you win. I hoped to be the first person to beat growing old, but I've lost the battle.

The muscle tone is gone and the old pectoral muscles are sagging. Everything on my body has become bigger, softer and closer to the ground.

Just a few years ago, I played full court basketball with college kids. Now my legs get sore just climbing the bleachers to watch a basketball game.

I used to snicker when my Granddaddy would get up out of his easy chair and yell out, "Whooo! Oh Lawdy! Whooie!" Now I make those same old man sounds when I get up or sit down. And talk about scary, I got up this morning, looked in the mirror, and it wasn't me! It was Granddaddy!

Nature is playing other tricks on my poor old carcass. The hair has quit growing on my head, and now grows profusely out of my ears and nose.

I wake up at 5 a.m. wide-eyed and bushy tailed no matter what time I go to bed, but I'm so tired by noon, I have to take a nap--and 45 year olds refer to me as "sir." That really hurts.

I can remember things I did when I was 4-years-old but I can't remember what I had for breakfast this morning. A friend of mine said we should all look on the bright side of the short-term memory loss. They, he said, "we can hide our own Easter eggs."

I started thinking about all this when a magazine for senior citizens said the only guideline for writing a column for the magazine was that their writers could never use the terms old or elderly, and the magazine only allowed positive comments about aging.

I got to pondering the positives of being a senior citizen. I couldn't think of any, so I guess I'll stick to writing for The Carlisle Mercury. Publisher Hank Bond understands crochety old men because Hank is ahead of his time. He's not a senior citizen yet, but he's already crotchety.

I don't want to write for a magazine that encourages old men and women to get plastic surgery and all that stuff. Most of the old people I've seen who have had a face-lift look like the Joker from Batman.

And what's with older women getting breast implants? What a waste of money that is. Would halogen headlights look normal on a 47 Plymouth? Let 'em say, ladies. It's natural. Quit trying to beat gravity.

I think we older folks should all take a cue about being realistic about our age from Minnie Pearl, the great country comedian.

Minnie told the story about how the wind was about to blow her hat away, so she reached up and grabbed it with both hands ignoring the fact that the wind had blown her skirt up over her waist.

She says a man yelled and said, "Lady you're exposing yourself.

"Young man," Minnie yelled back, "what you're looking at is 70 years old. This hat is brand new!"

Now that's having your priorities straight.

One day in my classroom, a student asked me if people as old as me still had goals in life. I told him that people never stop having goals, the goals just change.

"When I was 2-years-old," I told him, "My goal was not to wet my pants. When I was 18, my goal was to graduate from high school and get through the Army and college. At 30, my goal was to make a good living and provide for my family. And now," I told the young man, "I'm back to that original goal: not to wet my pants."

I don't like getting old, but I am consoled every month when the social security check arrives.

Dale Greer is a member of the faculty at Morehead State University. He has an expansive background in media including award winning reporting and stints as a major television anchor. He can be reached via email at, ddgreer@roadrunner.com

Editor's Note: I hope Mountain Man Dale can remember he wrote this column.

Fourth District Report

Fighting for Kentucky's Children

When the original SCHIP legislation was authored in 1997 by the Republican-controlled Congress, their mission was simple: to provide children from low-income families with access to quality healthcare. SCHIP must be reauthorized in a manner that ensures that the benefits of the 50,000 Kentuckians currently in the program continue, while providing a responsible expansion for the children most in need who are not currently covered.

Last week, the House of Representatives refused to allow fundamentally flawed legislation to become law. I joined 153 of my colleagues in voting to send this legislation back to the drawing board. That vote does not eliminate SCHIP for Kentucky children. In fact, Congress has extended the current program through November 16, 2007. We can find a better way to help the uninsured and provide health care coverage to low-income children.

Regrettably, the SCHIP bill included several provisions that distract from the reason for SCHIP in the first place: health care for low-income children. For example, this proposal would provide SCHIP benefits to nearly 700,000 adults, while at the same time leaving more than 500,000 children across the country without medical benefits.

In addition, the bill would require Kentuckians to pay out $602 million more in increased taxes than children in our State would receive in health care benefits. This disproportionate share in the new taxes would provide benefits for residents of States like New York and Michigan.

The provisions in the legislation that could allow illegal immigrants to receive SCHIP benefits are of great concern to me. In 2005, the Inspector General at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reported that an audit in Oregon uncovered that roughly 3% of beneficiaries were ineligible because they were not U.S. citizens. At the time, Oregon allowed applicants to self-attest to their citizenship.

The legislation considered last week made a nominal attempt to address the issue by requiring the use of social security numbers to verify eligibility. However, Social Security Administration Commissioner Michael Astrue wrote to Congress that this provision alone would not prevent illegal immigrants from receiving taxpayer benefits through SCHIP. When asked if the provision would detect or prevent an illegal alien from receiving benefits, Commissioner Astrue responded in part, "No."

As we work on a way forward, we must strengthen the citizenship verification procedures used by our States to grant SCHIP benefits. Doing so will help ensure the integrity of the program and make sure the resources are reaching those in need.

Responsible alternatives are available to reauthorize SCHIP. Representative Dave Camp [MI-4] recently introduced H.R. 3864, the Kids First Act. The Kids First Act increases State SCHIP allotments by $14 billion over the next five years, providing coverage to 1.3 million new poor children. The bill does not contain any earmarks and prohibits illegal immigrants from receiving taxpayer benefits. The Kids First Act was originally introduced by Senators Mitch McConnell [KY] and Trent Lott [MS]. The Kids First Act would result in more resources to provide health care to Kentucky children than the proposal considered last week.

As Congress works to reauthorize SCHIP in the coming weeks, I will work with my colleagues to protect health care for low-income children through a responsible bipartisan compromise.

Steve's Report

The first time we were stationed in Hawaii, I was part of a joint service command responsible for accounting for those still missing as a result of the war in Vietnam. When the commanding general held staff meetings with the colonels and lieutenant colonels, I was invited to sit in the back as the sole enlisted member. After all the discussion was complete, the general would say, "Now that we've thought it through, let's see if it passes the commonsense test. Sergeant Scalf, what do you think?"

Now, I'm not going to try to convince you that I was the general's most trusted advisor, or that he always followed my counsel, because that simply wouldn't be true. Still, over time, as I continued to stand up and speak out about what I believed was right, regardless of what others thought, I earned a reputation for "telling it like it is."

Late one evening, a few months after we had moved on to our next assignment, I received a phone call from one of the colonels I had worked with in Hawaii. He said, "Sergeant Scalf, there's someone here who needs to ask you a question." A new voice came on the line and asked, "I need to know how many Vietnamese linguists are in the Army Reserves, and what units they belong to."

What a strange request. I didn't work with the Army Reserves. I didn't have access to that kind of information. Why were they calling me?

I told him I might know a couple of people who could probably put me on the right trail, but that it might be a couple of days before I could get back to him. The caller explained, "I need this information in 30 minutes. Do what you can and give me a call back."

30 minutes?! I felt a nervous knot of panic forming in my stomach. But after a few moments, my mind finally kicked into gear. I dialed information and got the home numbers of my contacts and gave them a call (getting one of them out of bed.) They were able to give me a couple of numbers in California, and those people provided a couple more numbers in Florida. Before long, I was able to piece together the required information. Less than 25 minutes later, I was back on the phone with Hawaii.

After I passed on what I had learned, the voice thanked me, paused, and then added, "You have no idea who you're talking to, do you?" It was more of a comment than a question. "No, sir," I admitted, "But I know the colonel, and if it was important enough for him to call me, I knew I needed to help." The voice explained, "This is Admiral Joseph Prueher, the Commander in Chief of U.S. Pacific Forces. I'm about to get on an airplane for Washington, D.C. and need this information for a meeting in the morning with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Commanding Generals of the Army Reserves and the National Guard Bureau. Well done, son. Good job."

The first thing I did after I hung up the phone was let out a huge sigh of relief that I hadn't choked – that I had been able to come through with the information in spite of the nearly impossible timeline. That colonel obviously had more faith in me than I had in myself.

Even after the initial wave of relief had passed, I still couldn't wrap my mind around the events that had just transpired. Half-dazed, I stumbled up the stairs and said to Cindy, "Honey, you're never going to believe who just called me on the phone..." After I recounted

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Remember Your Recare

The importance of regular examinations

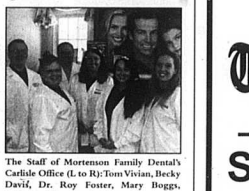
Taking good care of your teeth and gums should be a habit. We like to see most of our patients for a checkup at least once every three to six months.

We refer to your checkup visit as a *recare* appointment. A recare dental visit can take up to an hour. Your checkup will normally include a complete cleaning, a fluoride treatment, any required radiographs and a comprehensive dental examination for cavities or other problems.

If there are no problems needing treatment, we probably won't see you again until your next recare appointment!

Giving your teeth regular checkups is the only way to keep them in tiptop shape. Recare visits help to catch dental problems like decay before they turn into painful cavities. Routine dental examinations can detect life-threatening diseases like oral cancer in the early stages when they are most treatable. That is why most dental insurance plans cover at least two recare appointments per year. Insurance companies know from experience that regular recare is a great long-term investment in your health.

We encourage you to book your recare appointment well in advance. If you aren't sure when you're due for your next one, don't delay – give the Carlisle Office of Mortenson Family Dental a call at **289-5418**. Good dental habits will help your teeth last a lifetime!



The Staff of Mortenson Family Dental's Carlisle Office (L to R): Tom Vivian, Becky David, Dr. Roy Foster, Mary Boggs, Rhonda Sibert and Kayte Land. Not pictured is Dr. Garry Meeks.

Tooth Tips

- Brush after every meal or at least twice a day
- Use a fluoride toothpaste
- Use brushes with soft nylon bristles and a flat surface
- Replace your brush about every three months
- Use a mouthguard if you play contact sports
- Floss every day
- See your dentist regularly!

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