

Generic Valium Approved by FDA

Three companies recently got approval from the Food and Drug Administration to market generic versions of Valium, the fourth best-selling drug in the United States. The companies won FDA approval under a streamlined review process that was established last year for generic drugs.

Diazepam, which is the active ingredient in Valium, will cost substantially less because of price competition among several companies. Currently 100 5-milligram tablets of Valium cost about \$22, according to the American Association of Retired Persons. Zenith Laboratories, Inc., one of the companies that received approval, says it will cut the price by 30 to 50 percent. The other two companies are Mylan Pharmaceuticals Inc. and Parke-Davis. Additional companies have also applied to FDA to market diazepam.

Hoffmann-La Roche, the manufacturer of Valium, in February tried to block FDA approval of generic diazepam, asserting that they were not bioequivalent to Valium. FDA, however, rejected the company's argument (*Science*, 26 July, p. 369; 26 April, p. 472).—**MARJORIE SUN**

Navy Personnel Told to Attend Fewer Conferences

An effort by Secretary of the Navy John F. Lehman, Jr., to cut down attendance by Navy personnel at conferences and symposia is causing a bit of a stir among technical societies. The president of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), in particular, has written to Lehman warning that the new policy "could be harmful to the technical competence of personnel who are important to the Department's [of the Navy] mission."

The concern stems from a directive Lehman sent to all Navy units in June whose purpose was "To reduce attendance at and participation in non-government sponsored symposia, conferences or meetings by any other name." To achieve this goal, Lehman

ordered a 25 percent reduction in funds spent on conference attendance for the rest of fiscal year 1985, which ends on 30 September, and a 50 percent cut for fiscal year 1986. The actual reduction is likely to be greater than this, however, because the cuts must be based on expenditures between June and September 1984, a period when relatively few conferences were held.

One Navy official told the *New York Times* that the directive was sent out after Lehman began noticing numerous brochures for conferences and symposia. The IEEE, which has many members in the Department of Defense, has asked Lehman to make an exemption for scientists and engineers. "It is essential that those scientists and engineers who work for the Navy, both military and civilian, keep abreast of the most recent developments in their fields of competence," wrote IEEE president Charles Eldon.—**COLIN NORMAN**

Paying for Research Instrumentation

The problem of financing research equipment continues to get high-level attention in Washington. In early September the House Task Force on Science Policy held a hearing on a study conducted by a university-industry group that was commissioned in 1982 by the federal Interagency Working Group on University Research Instrumentation.

The report, "Financing and Managing University Research Equipment," notes that instrumentation is getting ever more expensive while its useful life is getting ever shorter—having shrunk to 5 years or less. But for more than 15 years, "the funds available from all sources have failed consistently to reflect the rising costs and declining useful lifetimes of academic research equipment." Benchtop equipment priced at \$50,000 or more is common. According to a National Science Foundation survey, 72 percent of department chairmen say critical experiments are impeded by equipment shortages, 20 percent of the instruments are obsolete, and only 52 percent of those in use are in top working condition.

The situation has not been ignored: the NSF, the Defense Department, and the Department of Energy are making stepped-up investments in instrumentation. Nonetheless, there has been a major drop in the proportion of research project support that is being allocated for equipment—at the National Institutes of Health, for example, the proportion fell from 11.7 percent in 1966 to 3.1 percent this year.

The study, conducted by the Association of American Universities, the Council on Governmental Relations, and the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges, developed 26 recommendations after examining funding regulations and practices.

With regard to federal policies, the report says "inconsistent interpretation" of regulations "leads to unnecessarily conservative management practices at universities." For example, it says interest on borrowed funds should always be an allowable cost, and title to new equipment should be vested to universities on acquisition. It recommends that federal agencies more adequately recognize the full costs of equipment, including maintenance and space renovation. It also advises more flexibility, allowing for the sharing of costs across award and agency lines.

As for the states, the report recommends that they grant institutions more flexibility in handling funds—for example, universities need to be allowed to carry over appropriations from 1 year to the next. States could revise their controls on procurement in recognition of the typically specialized nature of scientific equipment. They could also loosen much of their controls on debt financing of equipment in recognition of the increasingly short useful lifetime of many instruments.

The universities, for their part, are advised to explore greater use of tax-exempt debt financing (borrowing) for new equipment. The report says a more centralized approach to planning would facilitate this activity. They could also seek approval from funding agencies to stagger the costs of expensive equipment that is charged directly to research project awards. Equipment sharing within universities is encouraged, as are new mechanisms to encourage universities to

transfer unused equipment to other institutions.

Universities are urged to be more aggressive in seeking donations from industry. The report also proposes that Congress modify the Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981 to expand the definition of donations that qualify for tax deductions. It further recommends that research and development tax credit be retained. It adds that the social and behavioral sciences should qualify for the purposes of both the equipment donation deduction and the R&D tax credit.

These measures would improve efficiency in procurement and use of scientific instruments, says the report. Nonetheless, "the overall problem is so large . . . that it cannot be properly addressed without substantial, sustained investment by all sources—federal and state governments, universities, and the private sector."

—CONSTANCE HOLDEN

Condor Agreement Reached

The State of California has reached a tentative agreement with the Interior Department's Fish and Wildlife Service on what to do about the handful of California condors remaining in the wild. State officials have been pressing to capture all the birds, while Interior and the National Audubon Society have sought to allow some birds to remain free.

The plan arrived at on 30 August at a meeting of the state's Fish and Game Commission, the Audubon Society, Interior, and other groups making up the California Condor Recovery Team appears to strike a compromise. It calls for immediately capturing three of six wild condors. But it also provides for three other captive birds, whose genes are represented by other members of the captive flock, to be released in a year or so.

The purpose of leaving the condors free to roam their 11-million acre range in the San Joaquin Valley is to preserve the condor culture, provide guide birds to assist members of the captive flock to adapt to the wild, and to defend the habitat from being developed. This compromise, however, hinges on Interior agreeing to buy the 13,800-acre Hudson Ranch, something the Administration has refused

to do so far. Congress has appropriated \$8.9 million for purchase of the Hudson property, which is owned by a land developer. The ranch now serves as a feeding and observation station. It is meant to provide the condors with a safe feeding area and a release site for captive birds that is relatively free of contaminants and hunters. Interior Secretary Hodel is expected to act on the matter in the near future.

The release of three young birds, the offspring of the "Santa Barbara pair," the only set of birds that are reproducing, could be scuttled by the state if any condors perish in the wild during the next year. In addition to the Santa Barbara pair, one male whose gene stock is represented in the captive flock will be left in the wild. In the event of a loss in the next 12 months, not only would the state have the right to block the release of captive birds, but it could require that the remaining wild birds be captured.

The Fish and Game Commission has favored taking all the birds into captivity at the Los Angeles and San Diego zoos. Behind the agency's stand is the loss of six birds that disappeared last winter, leaving just



Young condors

nine birds in the wild as of this spring. Since then three more condors have been captured, bringing the size of the captive flock to 21.

California officials also have insisted the Interior accelerate mortality studies on the condors so that a workable preservation plan can be devised before captive condors are released. A prime cause of condor's demise has been lead poisoning, which occurs as a result of the birds feeding on animals that have been shot by hunters. In the past, birds also have been killed by cyanide contained in coyote traps, hitting power lines, and hunting.

—MARK CRAWFORD

APA Issues Warning on Antipsychotic Drugs

Continuing concern about the risk of tardive dyskinesia, or involuntary twitching of the muscles, in patients taking antipsychotic drugs has prompted the American Psychiatric Association to issue a warning about use of these agents. Antipsychotic or "neuroleptic" drugs are estimated to cause tardive dyskinesia in 10 to 20 percent of patients, some of whom may not need them.

According to Melvin Sabshin, medical director of the psychiatric association, "Antipsychotic medications are very effective in halting or alleviating the severe psychoses that afflict the severely mentally ill. In many cases, patients who suffer from the debilitating excitement of manic-depressive illness or by the threatening hallucinations of schizophrenia are able to lead productive lives as a result of these medicines. But like many other medications, neuroleptics can cause side effects and we are urging psychiatrists and other physicians to carefully weigh the benefits of the medications against the potential for developing tardive dyskinesia."

The risk has been known for some time. In fact, the psychiatric association first formed a task force on the neurological effects of antipsychotic drugs in 1977. But the problem of inappropriate prescribing and prolonged use is still serious enough to warrant a renewed educational effort. In particular, association officials say, "... neuroleptic drugs are sometimes used in clinical situations where other drugs or non-pharmacological treatments would be primarily indicated." A letter to the association's 31,000 psychiatrist members urges them to "serve whenever possible as consultants to medical colleagues in nursing homes, correctional facilities, institutions for the developmentally disabled and other facilities where the prudent use of neuroleptic agents is extremely important."

An apparent increase in litigation over tardive dyskinesia also lies behind the association's recent warning. Thus, its letter says, "In this context we would emphasize the importance of adequately documented informed consent." —BARBARA J. CULLITON