

An insider's look at Big Pharma's biggest cash cows

How what you DON'T know about your prescription could HURT you

It's probably *not* all that much of a revelation that the pharmaceutical corporations have the mainstream media just where they want it... firmly planted in their back pocket. After all, you can't make it through an hour of television without being treated to at least one drug commercial. But, unfortunately, Big Pharma's bullying influence extends *far* beyond those multi-million dollar ad budgets right into the news rooms where all that cash helps to drive the biased reporting on treatment options. The result, of course, is that coverage of nutritional, natural and holistic healing options—methods that are often superior to their pharmaceutical counterparts—is about as rare as a snowstorm in the desert in July.

So let's kick off the year with an honest, no-holds-barred, realistic look at Big Pharma's top performing cash cows. A recent report on the top selling pharmaceuticals in the United States reveals that many individual drugs have sales well into the billions.¹ If you're an investor that might be good news for your portfolio, but as a participant in the American health-care system trust me when I tell you that it's nothing but *bad* news for your health, and the health of all those you care about.

Ditch depression without dangerous drug side effects

You've no doubt seen the commercial for Abilify before. It's an animated ad featuring a cute little yellow pill (your antidepressant) and an adorable blue capital letter "A" (the star of the show, Abilify). Abilify (Aripiprazole) is typically paired with an antidepressant and it's used for the treatment

of a number of psychiatric illnesses including schizophrenia, bipolar 1 disorder, major depressive disorder, irritability associated with autistic disorder and other related conditions. Between October 1, 2012 and September 30, 2013 alone Abilify managed to rack up almost 6.4 billion dollars in sales, making it the undisputed king of Big Pharma's Drug Mountain, at least for that time period.

Interestingly (or frighteningly, depending on how you look at it) no one knows *exactly* how Abilify works. Most likely it affects the activity of neurotransmitters such as dopamine and serotonin.

Reported potential side effects of Abilify run the gamut and include nausea, vomiting, constipation, headache, dizziness, anxiety, insomnia, restlessness, fatigue, weight gain, tremors, blurred vision, drooling, involuntary movements and more. And of course, as is the case with other antidepressants, Abilify may increase suicidal thoughts or behaviors in children, teenagers and young adults. The drug shouldn't be used by anyone with dementia-related psychosis. This is especially of concern if you're a senior since it increases the risk of death compared to placebo. Abilify may also increase blood sugar in some users, and extremely high blood sugars can lead to coma or death.²

There's no question that conditions such as schizophrenia, bipolar 1 disorder, and major depressive disorder can be very difficult to treat. And if you're suffering from one of these illnesses I certainly don't need to tell *you* that getting them under control can be a challenge. But, thankfully, more and more psychia-



trists are finally starting to incorporate nutritional and holistic therapies into their treatment plans. Diagnosing and treating food allergies, digestive imbalances, heavy metal toxicity, and nutritional deficiencies could be the key to helping you reduce or even eliminate some of your symptoms. You should only use Abilify if your symptoms can't be managed with holistic therapies or when other medications are ineffective.

There are several supplements that can help those with schizophrenia. If you have this disorder you should be tested to see if you have a genetic mutation for abnormal folic acid metabolism (MTHFR mutation test). If this is the case I typically recommend supplementing with 800 to 2000 mcg Methylfolate (5MTHF) and 400 mcg to 1000 mcg of B12 (Methylcobalamin).

As with many psychiatric conditions it's also imperative that you increase your brain levels of omega

(continued on next page)

3 fatty acids. I recommend 2000 to 3000 mg of a combination EPA and DHA fish oil. Taking 1000 mg of N-acetylcysteine twice a day has been shown to improve mood.

And finally, Dr. Abram Hoffer, a Canadian psychiatrist who devoted much of his life to helping patients with schizophrenia using vitamin therapy, found that 3000 mg (or higher) of niacin taken daily was very helpful for his patients. (See his book “*Niacin—The Real Story*” for more details.) In addition, Dr. Hoffer successfully treated his patients using high doses of vitamin C, zinc, selenium and additional B vitamins.

Nix heartburn naturally

Nexium (Esomeprazole), often referred to as “the little purple pill,” is used to treat chronic heartburn or acid reflux disease. This cash cow of a drug slides in a close second in sales to Abilify, grossing over 6 billion as well.

Nexium is in a class of drugs known as proton pump inhibitors (PPIs). Each year over 100 million prescriptions for this class of medications are written in the United States alone. These medications block the secretion of acid by inhibiting the proton pump in your stomach which is a key player in the creation of acid producing cells.

As you can imagine, shutting down acid production could have some unintentional and potentially very serious side effects. Reported potential side effects of Nexium include head pain, diarrhea, stomach cramps, gas, nausea, rash, sinus irritation, dry mouth, dizziness, to name just a few. Long term use could also increase your risk of bone fractures, confusion, and pneumonia. It's believed that Nexium can inhibit the absorption of various vital nutrients such as calcium, magnesium, B12, folic acid, and vitamin C.⁴

The bottom line is proton pump inhibitors were *never* designed to be

used long term. They're a temporary fix at best. Medications such as Nexium should be used for the short-term treatment of severe acid reflux or ulcers. Unfortunately, many Americans are on these drugs for a year or longer, compromising their ability to absorb nutrients. Natural medicine, on the other hand, is both safe *and* effective for treating acid reflux.

You should always start with the easiest and least invasive fix. In the case of heartburn and acid reflux that's simply avoiding carbonated beverages, alcohol, spicy foods, coffee, citrus and any other foods you have sensitivities to. In many cases, just avoiding these trigger foods can resolve the problem without any other interventions needed. Acid reflux is often a side effect of being overweight. If you're carrying around a few extra pounds simply shedding the weight could also help to quickly relieve your symptoms.

If eliminating trigger foods and losing weight don't do the trick, supplements or other alternative methods may be able to help. Try chewing one to two tablets of deglycyrrhizinated licorice root (DGL) twenty minutes before each meal. DGL has a soothing and healing effect on the lining of the stomach and esophagus.

Curbing prescription drug chaos

A report this past summer found that a staggering \$200 billion in healthcare costs are the result of the *improper* prescribing or use of prescription drugs. This represents 8 percent of the country's total healthcare expenditures. Murray Aitken, executive director of the group that organized the study noted, “These avoidable costs could pay for the healthcare of more than 24 million currently uninsured U.S. citizens.”³

Another gem, available from health food stores and online, is aloe vera extract. You can take a tablespoonful of soothing food-grade liquid aloe vera *before* meals. It's also available in freeze dried powders.

The citrus extract D-limonene is unique because it helps the lower esophageal valve to close preventing stomach acid from going up the esophagus. Take one tablet every other day for two to four weeks. It's also a good idea to carry around a small bottle of homeopathic nux vomica 30C pellets. At the first signs of heartburn dissolve two tablets in your mouth and your symptoms will likely vanish in just a few minutes.

Acupuncture and chiropractic can also help treat any nervous system imbalances that are causing or contributing to your acid reflux.

Eliminate the pain of depression without drugs

You know those drug commercials with the sad little wind up doll and the ad line “Depression hurts”? Those are for the popular drug Cymbalta (Duloxetine) which is used to treat anxiety, depression, nerve pain, and the chronic pain that comes with conditions like fibromyalgia and back problems. Cymbalta falls into a class of antidepressants called selective serotonin and norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors. It increases the levels of the neurotransmitters serotonin and norepinephrine in the brain, which improves mood and reduces pain signals.

I absolutely agree that depression hurts, but so do drug side effects and Cymbalta comes with a long list of potential ones of its own. Reported Cymbalta side effects include abdominal pain, nausea, constipation, loss of appetite, dry mouth, skin rash or itching, dizziness, fatigue, weight gain or weight loss, increased sweating, loss of sexual desire, increased

blood pressure, loss of sexual desire or sexual dysfunction, and seizures.⁵ Kind of sounds like jumping out of the frying pan into the fire doesn't it?

The fact is antidepressants like Cymbalta are heavy-duty drugs and should only be used if natural therapies alone are found to not be effective enough. And the good news is studies show that natural, virtually side-effect free therapies such as St. John's Wort and SAME are comparable to antidepressants in the treatment of depression.

If you suffer from depression you can also try increasing the omega 3 fatty acids in your diet or taking an omega 3 supplement to relieve your symptoms. Studies show that low levels of omega-3s are likely linked to depression, so raising your levels could help drive away the blues. In addition, vitamin B12 and folic acid will help the neurotransmitters in your brain work more effectively. Work with a holistic doctor who can test both your neurotransmitter balance and nutrient levels to help create a personalized depression plan for you. And don't forget to get regular exercise and counseling, both of which are critical for relieving depression symptoms and for achieving long term improvements.

If you're suffering with fibromyalgia or chronic back pain natural anti-inflammatories including turmeric and MSM can help. Drugs simply block pain signals temporarily, but cold laser therapy, acupuncture, massage, and chiropractic can treat the root causes of your pain.

If you suffer with mild to moderate depression, targeted nutritional supplements could effectively relieve your symptoms. You can naturally raise your brain serotonin level... and your mood right along with it... by taking 300 to 400 mgs of 5 hydroxytryptophan (5 htp). I've found that 5 htp is effective in 90 percent of depression cases.

S'adenosylmethionine (SAME) also increases depression fighting brain chemicals such as serotonin and dopamine. A typical dose is 600 to 1200 mg daily. However, SAME is quite pricey. A much more cost-effective alternative is St. John's Wort. Studies have shown that 900 to 1200 mg of a standardized extract of St. John's Wort is comparable to drugs in the treatment of moderate to severe depression.

I absolutely agree that depression hurts, but so do drug side effects and Cymbalta comes with a long list of potential ones of its own.

Make sure to boost your levels of omega 3 fatty acids, which have been shown to alleviate depression. Shoot a dose of 2000 to 3000 mg of EPA and DHA combined fish oil dose. Lastly, make sure to get in your vitamin B12, folic acid, and other B vitamins. For the best results take an activated B complex daily.

Conventional and natural combo eases your arthritis

Humira (Adalimumab) may not be as common of a household name as some of the other drugs I'm covering today, but don't let that fool you. Humira has been on the market for over ten years and, according to an article in Forbes magazine earlier this year, it has joined the exclusive group of "best-selling drugs of all time" with annual sales topping \$9.3 billion in 2012.⁶

Humira is used to treat specific types of arthritis with pain and swelling that have an autoimmune component. This would include rheumatoid arthritis, ankylosing spondylitis, and psoriatic arthritis. It's also used for more severe cases of Crohn's disease

and ulcerative colitis. Humira works by blocking certain components of the immune system that are involved with inflammation and immune response.

As you can imagine, with all those sales there are a number of reported potential side effects for Humira. Those side effects include increased risk of infection including tuberculosis and invasive fungal infections, elevated liver enzymes, irregular or fast heart rate, stomach pain, blood in stools, mood changes, severe headache, easy bruising or bleeding, tingling or numbness in the hands, legs, and feet, muscle weakness, vision changes, extreme fatigue, seizures, and pain, itching, or swelling at the injection site. Frighteningly, lymphoma and other cancers have also been reported in children and adolescents using Humira.

This is a case where integrative medicine—combining the best of conventional and natural treatments—is often the best approach. If you have a moderate to severe case of an autoimmune-linked arthritis condition you may require treatment with Humira. However, a comprehensive natural approach initiated in the beginning stages of your condition may be very helpful. Natural therapies such as diet changes, detoxification of toxic metals like mercury and lead which trigger autoimmunity, treatment of a leaky gut, and the use of anti-inflammatory supplements should be used along *with* Humira treatment so that you may be able to stop using the medication in the future.

Stop autoimmune in its tracks with an integrative approach

Enbrel (Etanercept) has some similarities to Humira. It's an injectable medicine used to treat certain types of autoimmune arthritis such as rheumatoid, psoriasis, and ankylosing spondylitis as well as the skin condition psoriasis. Enbrel works by blocking the activity of a normal

(continued on page 6)

Plant extracts pack fat-dissolving power

Researchers looking for plant extracts that could both inhibit the formation of fat (adipogenesis) and the breakdown of fat (lipogenesis) settled on GM and another plant extract known as *Sphaeranthis indicus* (*S. indicus*). *S. indicus* has a long history of use in Ayurvedic medicine (a traditional healing system from India). For centuries the extract was used to treat liver problems, diabetes, and skin diseases as well as improve mood disorders such as anxiety, aid in digestion, and to protect the liver. And both test tube and animal studies indicate that these two plant powerhouses are fat fighters. The next step would be to examine this dynamic duo's fat-dissolving effect in human subjects.

In an eight-week randomized, placebo controlled study sixty obese volunteers were divided into two groups. One group of thirty received 800 mg of the two extracts and the other group got a placebo. Both groups followed a 2000 calorie per day diet and were instructed to walk for a half hour five days a week. The results were impressive to say the least.

Those taking the combined extracts...⁵

- ▶ averaged a 4.6 pound weight loss after just two weeks

- ▶ dropped an average of 11.74 pounds total (3.7 times more than those on the placebo)
- ▶ shaved an average 4.7 inches off their abdomen (2 times more than those on the placebo)

The extract users also averaged an impressive 3.9 times greater drop in body mass index and a 2.2 times greater reduction in waist-to-hip ratio compared to the unlucky placebo group.

A second study was conducted with sixty obese volunteers. Again, similar to the first study, researchers found statistically significant changes in body weight and other measurements in the extract group.⁶

The plant combo has *also* been shown to increase circulating levels of the fat burning hormone adiponectin by an astounding 22.5 percent.⁷ Adiponectin, which is produced by fat cells and makes your cells more sensitive to insulin, lowers your glucose and insulin levels. Ultimately this leads to weight loss, a drop in cholesterol levels and a lowering of inflammation. And research shows

Insider's Tip

The FDA hates weight loss studies when diet and/or exercise aren't involved. To keep the FDA happy, these two components are generally added to any weight loss study.

that the combined plant extracts also have a significant effect on triglyceride (blood fat) levels, reducing them by a mind-boggling 41.6 percent compared to baseline.⁸

You can already find this fat-busting duo in health food stores and online. And while it's true that this plant combo works well alone, when it's combined with a few other carefully selected ingredients its power becomes even more potent. I'm working closely with my Product Development team to create a brand-new formula for my patients and readers. Stay tuned for more information in the next few months! **HR**

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inflammatory component of the immune system known as TNF. When using Enbrel you may be at an increased risk for infection and skin disorders, low blood counts, heart failure, nervous system problems, autoimmune reactions (Lupus-like symptoms), psoriasis (ironically), and lymphoma or other cancers.⁷

Enbrel is a powerful medicine that should only be used for severe autoimmune cases that cannot be controlled solely by natural therapies. This is particularly true for psoriasis. For a detailed integrative approach to treating psoriasis see my August 2013 issue of *Health Revelations*.

Autoimmune issues often start in the digestive tract where the majority of your immune reactions occur. Natural therapies that target the root causes of the disease can work well to ease and reverse symptoms, especially when used in the beginning stages of

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autoimmune diseases. If you have had one of these conditions for some time I typically combine holistic therapies along with a medication like Enbrel. Over time, targeting the root cause with holistic treatments may help you to discontinue Enbrel.

Natural anti-inflammatory supplements such as turmeric (1500 to 3000 mg daily) can help to reduce your pain and inflammation. Boswellia... 1500 mg of a standardized extract daily... is another excellent anti-inflammatory. And be sure to take 3000 to 4000 mg of an inflammation-reducing EPA and DHA combined fish oil daily.

If you have rheumatoid arthritis or ankylosing spondylitis a collagen supplement can help with your joint symptoms and may even reduce the autoimmune response in the affected joints. Taking 5,000 to 10,000 IUs of vitamin D daily to reduce autoimmunity is a good idea too. Just be sure to have your blood levels monitored. And while not a supplement, talk with your doctor about low dose naltrexone (LDN), a medication that can help to safely reduce the autoimmune response.

Steer clear of statins for cholesterol control

Crestor (Rosuvastatin calcium) is a popular drug that's used to treat high cholesterol and triglyceride levels, reduce the progression of atherosclerosis, and prevent cardiovascular disease. It's what is known as a "statin" drug and it works by inhibiting an enzyme involved in the manufacturing of cholesterol in the liver called HMG CoA Reductase.

Statin drugs typically have quite a hefty list of potential side effects and Crestor is no different. Reported side effects include headache, nausea, abdominal pain, constipation, rash, muscle weakness or pain, increased risk of infection, decreased cognitive function, fatigue, liver or kidney

damage, an increased risk of diabetes and possibly even an increased cancer risk. Statin drugs can also deplete the body of vital vitamins including coenzyme Q10 and vitamin D.⁸

If you've been reading *Health Revelations* for any length of time you probably know I'm not a big fan of statins. They come with a long list of troubling side effects and I've found a high percentage of patients experience at least one of them. Just as important, the cholesterol story is not nearly as black and white as the mainstream media has led you to believe. The real truth is, simply manipulating cholesterol levels is *not* the answer to preventing cardiovascular disease. Treating the underlying reasons for the inflammation is a critical piece of the puzzle. Cholesterol and lipid levels can safely be changed with a combination of diet, exercise, and nutritional supplements.

I've found that most people can "normalize" their lipids with the appropriate supplements. Red yeast rice extract at a dose of 2400 mg daily works well for most, and without those notorious statin side effects. Plant sterols are plant-derived substances (approved by our "illustrious" FDA no less!) that can help reduce your risk of cardiovascular disease. The sterols bind the cholesterol so it can be expelled from your body. I typically recommend a daily dose of 2 grams of plant sterols taken in divided doses with meals. Thousands of people rely on aged garlic extract to balance their lipids and improve artery health. Try 600 mg twice daily. And one of the

Red yeast rice to the rescue

In head-to-head comparisons red yeast rice has been shown to be just as effective as statins at lowering total cholesterol, triglycerides and LDL cholesterol... but without the risks of major side effects. See my December 2013 issue in the online archives for more details.

newest cholesterol busters is Bergamot extract which dramatically lowers total and LDL cholesterol while boosting HDL cholesterol. Try 1000 mg daily.

Tackle troublesome triggers and breathe easier

Advair Diskus (fluticasone propionate) is an inhalant medication that's used to prevent and control the respiratory symptoms of asthma and lung diseases including wheezing and shortness of breath. An Advair inhaler contains two active ingredients; a steroid for reducing inflammation and a component that relaxes the bronchial muscles of the breathing tubes while reducing allergenic chemicals in the airway at the same time.

Potential side effects when using Advair range from annoying to serious and can include headache, hoarseness, throat irritation, stomach upset, fungal overgrowth in the mouth and throat, sinusitis, dizziness, arrhythmias and an increased risk of asthma-related death.⁹

As is so often the case with mainstream drugs, asthma medications miss the mark because they don't actually treat the *root cause* of why you get symptoms in the first place. Root causes for your asthma symptoms can include environmental and food allergies or sensitivities, nutritional deficiencies such as vitamin D, B6, B12, and magnesium, poor digestive function, hormone imbalance, and emotional distress. When you target these root causes you can reduce the need for drugs and in some cases even eliminate them altogether. Medications like Advair can be useful to help stabilize your symptoms while the root triggers are being addressed by a holistic doctor.

Supplements can go a long way in reducing the airway inflammation associated with asthma. One of my favor-

(continued on page 8)

PERSISTENT PAIN MELTS AWAY *(continued from page 1)*

around the rectum). We both felt Robert may have a tear in the abdominal wall that had not been found on his previous scans. We asked Robert if he remembered injuring the area playing sports or lifting anything but he couldn't recall any such event. An MRI would give us the best image of the soft tissues in the area.

Another condition to consider was an undiagnosed infection such as a bacteria or parasite in the digestive tract. Robert hadn't had a stool test as of yet. However, he didn't have any obvious problems with his stool such as diarrhea or waves of cramping that come and go. Still, it was a consideration.

While Robert waited to get approval for his MRI (since he was in a HMO) he was given some treatments for his pelvic floor tightness by an osteopathic doctor at my clinic. He got some minor relief from the soft tissue treatments. I gave him pain medication to take, particularly at night, so he could get some sleep.

I had Robert follow up with a surgeon who examined him and agreed that he likely had a tear in his soft tissue of the abdominal wall (a hernia). When the MRI results finally came back we were all quite surprised to see that they were negative for a hernia. We still didn't have any answers for Robert and meanwhile he was still unable to work because of the intense pain. I even offered to lend him the clinic wheelchair since it was so difficult for him to walk.

Puzzled that Robert's imaging and blood work tests were all normal I decided to order a thermogram on his abdominal wall. Thermographic imaging uses non-invasive infrared camera technology to detect heat and inflammation in the body. I hit pay dirt! The thermogram revealed that there was inflammation in the ileocecal valve in Robert's digestive tract.

The ileocecal valve is a muscular valve connecting the small intestine (ileum) to the large intestine (cecum). The valve is located above the appendix in the lower right side of the abdomen. It allows digested food to pass through into the large intestine and prevents the backflow of fluid and food from the large intestine back into the small intestine. While never really addressed in conventional medicine, the ileocecal valve can have trouble opening leading to a backup of stool and the irritation of nerves in

the area. And an inflamed ileocecal valve can cause pain throughout different regions of the abdomen like Robert was experiencing.

Excited that we may have pinpointed the problem, I called up the radiologist who had reviewed the imaging. I asked him if he knew of any cases where someone had such severe abdominal pain from an inflamed ileocecal valve. He confirmed that he had known of several cases that were similar.

I reviewed the images with Robert showing him where the pain was originating from. I asked him how his bowels were moving and he said they'd been sluggish for some time. In fact, they had been slow even before he had started using pain medications which often cause constipation. To get his bowels moving normally again, and to alleviate pressure on the ileocecal valve, I prescribed a fiber supplement to be taken with lots of water twice a day. I also had him start on a probiotic to supply helpful bacteria which aid natural bowel movements. Finally, since Robert's thermogram showed lesser but obvious inflammation throughout much of his digestive tract I also prescribed a "bitter digestive formula" to be taken with each meal. With herbs like gentian root and ginger the supplement mix stimulates better functioning of all the digestive organs.

For direct treatment of his ileocecal valve I sent Robert to get electro-acupuncture. Combining acupuncture needles with electrical stimulation, the treatments are designed to encourage better nerve flow.

Sure enough, Robert quickly started noticing improvements in his pain. Within just a few days he returned my clinic wheelchair and as each day progressed he got better and better. It wasn't long before the hellish pain was behind him and he returned to work full time. In this case Robert had all the right conventional tests but it required thinking "outside the box" to diagnose his perplexing problem. Unfortunately, with the "five minute and prescribe" office visits that are the norm for conventional medicine these days, the vast majority of mainstream doctors don't have the time to devote to unraveling medical mysteries like Robert's. If you're suffering with a problem your primary care doc hasn't been able to resolve, consider visiting a naturopathic doctor instead. **IR**

BIG PHARMA'S CASH COWS *(continued from previous page)*

ites is pine bark extract. I've watched many of my patients have tremendous improvements in their asthma symptoms by taking just 150 to 200 mg daily. Studies confirm that pine bark extract is effective for both children and adults. Also, 400 mg of magnesium daily is a must. And if you're prone to allergies that cause your asthma to

flare up 1000 mg of quercetin two to three times a day could help. **IR**

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