

Protection, pharmacies lost with import of drugs

Here's a really bad idea that's catching on across the country.

Illinois and several other states are backing the plan, which offers services in Kansas. Known as I-SaveRx, the program buys common drugs in Europe and Canada and ships them to people here. It claims to save them half the cost.

Great idea. If you don't mind losing your friendly local drug store.

And all contact with the one health professional who can protect you from conflicts and problems caused by prescription drugs.

As more and more Americans turn to regular medication — more than 60 percent of us by some estimates — the danger of drug interactions, reactions and side effects grows exponentially.

We've all known someone, maybe a relative or friend, who suffered from drug reactions. It's as common as prescription drugs.

In a system where a doctor prescribes, and a patient fills the prescription by mail or phone order, even e-mail, who's looking out for the patient?

The doctor is too busy. He or she may not know what other doctors have prescribed. Often times, nursing staff may be too busy to notice. Patients befuddled by drug overdose don't usually know what's happening to them.

In the extreme case, like the arthritis drug Vioxx, people may be having heart attacks and never know the cause.

Taking the pharmacist out of the loop — or

making him or her just a cog in an assembly line — is not the answer.

We do need to do something about the high price of medications. If the same drug, produced under the same patent by the same firm in another country, is half as expensive across the border, then something is wrong with the way we regulate the drug business.

The weak link is not your local pharmacy, which charges based on the cost of drugs it pays. The weak link is farther up the line.

If a drug company can afford to sell the same thing for half price in another country, then we've driven the cost of doing business here way too high.

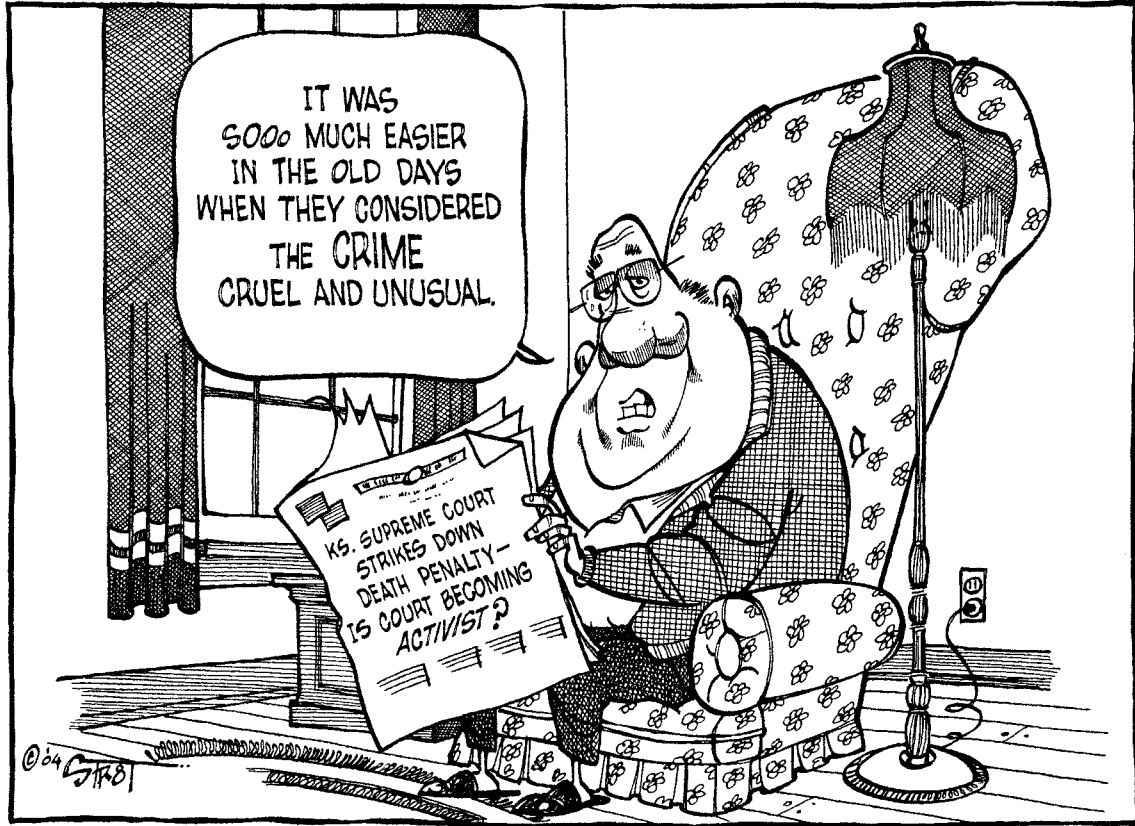
Congress needs to take a look at U.S. laws with an eye to making drugs more competitive and more affordable. More regulation isn't the answer. The market is. Changing laws on liability and patents might be part of the solution.

Opening the border to cheaper drugs might help. But let's not do it by killing a local institution.

Our pharmacists are under pressure from mail-order and Internet houses, insurance companies and now state governments. Gov. Kathleen Sebelius got involved in the Canadian drug movement, then wrote a long letter explaining herself to pharmacists statewide.

The answer does not lie in bankrupting our local drug stores. Let's get that straight. We need contact with our pharmacists.

— Steve Haynes



Cat hates other felines, loves dog

Miss Molly is mad. Her house is overrun with cats. Never mind that Molly Monster is a cat herself. She hates cats.

Our son-in-law Nik, who rescued a gray-and-white kitten from a construction site near Topeka five years ago, claims that Molly thinks she's a dog.

He may be right. Molly loves Annie, our Brittany spaniel, and likes to go for long walks with us. And she hates cats.

For a cat hater, the holidays at our house weren't pleasant, and things aren't getting a whole lot better.

Molly and April Alice, our blond female, share the house with an armed truce most of the time. They hiss at each other as they pass and stage about one major cat fight a week. At night, Molly sits on my lap and April Alice on Steve's.

Then youngest daughter arrived for the holidays toting Rupert and Jezebel, two of her three female cats.

Jezebel is a scaredy cat and immediately headed for a hole in the basement ceiling. She came upstairs to sleep with daughter at night and spent the rest of her time hiding.

A few days later, son arrived on our doorstep with a cat carrier. Out



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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came Frank and Jules. Frank is April Alice's son and Jules is her daughter. (No I don't know why my children gave their female cats male names — you'd have to ask Lacy and Lindsay.)

Now there were six cats in the house, and Molly was in rare form. She hissed and growled at everything that moved, including the humans. She was as grouchy as a bear with a sore tail. Everywhere she turned, there were cats, and she hates cats.

After four days, it was time for son to pack up and head back for Lawrence. He caught Jules fairly quickly, but was having trouble with Frank. He finally found him under the couch in the living room.

Actually, he found him in the couch. The old lining on the bottom

has a big hole and Frank was crouched up amongst the springs. It took four of us to turn the couch over and disentangle him.

Note to self — Get couch fixed before Easter.

Then it was time for youngest daughter to leave. However, she left Jez and Rupert behind. Her boyfriend is allergic to cats, and she sweet talked her gullible mother into taking two of hers for "a few months."

Now there are four cats in the house, and Molly only has to hiss and growl every half hour or so and hope the intruders go away soon.

I hate to break the news to her, but I think the boyfriend is becoming serious.

Those "intruders" could be here for a long, long time.

Gift box can be deceiving

I'm a box saver. If I see a nice, sturdy box, I save it. You never know when you're going to need a box that's the perfect size for containing a necktie, a dozen cookies or a pair of overalls.

The downside to wrapping presents in boxes that belie what waits inside is that moment of disbelief when the gift-receiver first removes the outer wrapping paper and, for a fleeting moment, believes you really did give them a dozen moth balls or a set of hinges.

My 5-year-old granddaughter called last night to thank us for her Christmas present. I had made a pink chenille neck scarf and wrapped it in a small box that, at one time, had contained laundry detergent tablets.

Taylor said, "G'ma, I thought you had given me soap."

We returned Saturday night from another week in Juarez, Mexico, where we accompanied a team from a Mennonite Brethren Church at Fairview, Okla. We built a three-room house for a Mexican family in 2 1/2 days. It was our second trip with this team, and it was like a reunion of old friends.

Several teen-agers came with them. What a neat bunch of kids they were. When they realized that one of the windows would be facing directly to the side of another building, they determined to at least give the family something to look at: They decided to design a mosaic mural for the wall.

They scavenged the empty lots for broken pottery, tiles, glass,



Out Back

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marbles, bottle caps, even an old CD. After it was assembled, it was colorful, creative and made with love.

The team also brought several small children. Little Rebecca was only 5 but she was quite an addition. On their trip down, she said to one of the adults, "I bet you're glad I could come this year. Last year, I was 4 and I couldn't come; but this year I'm 5 and I could."

Josiah is 8, but well on his way to doing a man's share of work. On the first day of building, we pour the cement foundation. Josiah appointed himself "water bucket filler."

Fifty-gallon barrels of water were standing by as our supply. Josiah couldn't lift full buckets of water out of the barrels, so he found a discarded gallon milk jug and had someone cut the top off, leaving the handle, to make him a pitcher.

He soon learned why the jug had been thrown away: There were several holes in the bottom. But still, he could fill and empty the pitcher faster than the water could leak out.

He set the bucket he was filling on the ground, and began to dip. It wasn't long before the water level

was lowered enough that he had to dip way down. Somebody got a cute picture of him from the backside with nothing showing but his little cowboy boots, legs and hip pockets.

The oldest members of the team were a 74-year-old husband and wife who had been missionaries to Mexico. What a beautiful couple.

So never say, "I'm too old to do anything." If you want to go with us next time, the bus leaves Feb. 12.

Feliz y prospero año nuevo. (Happy and prosperous new year.)

From the Bible

Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy; To deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine. Our soul waiteth for the LORD: he is our help and our shield. For our heart shall rejoice in him, because we have trusted in his holy name. Let thy mercy, O LORD, be upon us, according as we hope in thee. Ps. 33: 18-22

Litterbugs abuse Sappa Park

We walk the road at Sappa Park a lot. It's not quite two miles down to the lake, so we can park at the highway, walk to the shelter house and loop around to the dam, then back to the car in about an hour.

This fall, we began to notice how trashy the right of way along the park road was getting: Beer bottles, cigarette packages, fast food wrappers, junk of every description.

We were upset. We were angry. But we decided that probably wouldn't have much impact on the idiots who were throwing this junk out.

So we decided to just do what we could.

We searched the truck, but we had only one grocery sack stuck under the seat. As we started walking, we started filling it. Here is what we found:

Beer, No. 1 on the list. Bud Light, three bottles and a can. Budweiser, one bottle, one can.

Boulevard unfiltered wheat, one lone bottle. Just one high-class beer in the crowd.

Bush Light, one can. And a Mike's Hard Lemonade bottle.

Teen-agers like Bud Light, apparently. Coors drinkers must be older or more socially responsible.

And not one hard liquor bottle in the mix, the name for the lemonade



Along the Sappa

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notwithstanding.

Cigarettes: Salem, Marlboro, Camels, Cambridge. Only six total packs, but smokers are a messy lot. We didn't count the butts.

Drink bottles: Mountain Dew Pitch Black (looks awful), two Mountain Dew, two Gatorade, Dr. Pepper, Sierra Mist, Bug Juice, Powerade, and one unidentified, flat bottle. A Pepsi can. A chocolate milk container.

Food wrappers from Subway, Mean Genes, generic breakfast burritos, mustard, ketchup, pickle relish and chopped onions in little packets, a stuffed biscuit wrapper, and an A&W float cup.

Sour Punch Straws, a red plastic straw, a napkin and a Skol Bandits can.

And a can of Super Penetrating Oil.

We got halfway to the dam, down to the picnic area where the road turns into the trees. Our bag was full. What a mess.

That left half the road to pick up. I guess we'll go back. It beats complaining. (We did go back. It took four bags to finish up.)

There are a lot of slobs out there who litter. I'd be willing to bet that none of them stops to pick up along the highway.

As long as we criminalize teen-agers who drink, they're going to throw the bottles out. Duh.

The younger generation may claim to be environmentally aware, but I'll be willing to bet that most of this stuff came from people under 30.

I don't mind picking up our town park, but it'd be nice if more people showed love and respect for it. It's an underrated treasure, a great place to spend time. And some days, a mess.

Caring residents helped children

To the Editor:

While many of us were with our families this holiday season, exchanging presents, we knew that 81 area children were getting the opportunity to do the very same, thanks to the many gracious and thoughtful people of Oberlin and Decatur County.

The Angel Tree has completed yet another successful year due in great part to all of the wonderful people who helped make it possible. Without those people, like our media and businesses, especially the articles done by Kimberly Davis at *The Oberlin Herald*, and Fredrickson Insurance for letting us locate the Angel Tree there, this need might have gone unmet.

The power of media helped the Social and Rehabilitation Services to play an active part also. They jumped in with both feet and helped get flyers to the Decatur County residents they assist.

The list is long of those who generously took time to play a part in a child's Christmas. From anyone

Letter to the Editor

looking into my office in the days before the parents picked up presents, the comments were always the same: "Won't these children have a wonderful Christmas?"

Watching the joy on the faces of those of you who donated or purchased for the children and the tears

of joy and gratitude on the parents' faces as they picked up their children's gifts makes me proud to say I live in Oberlin!

Thanks to all.
Abby Hissong
Angel Tree Coordinator
Oberlin

Write

The Oberlin Herald encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of public interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author.

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We do not publish anonymous letters. We sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise.

We do not publish form letters or letters about topics which do not pertain to our area. Thank-yous from this area should be submitted to the Want Ad desk.

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