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DOCTOR'S OFFICE

# What You Don't Know Could Kill You

by Robert S. Mendelsohn, M.D.

Your morning newspaper often features headlines lauding a new "miracle drug" that has just appeared. You may find this reassuring, but you shouldn't. An inordinate number of this year's drugs were developed to cure damage caused by a miracle drug that was proudly announced in some previous year.

An incredible example is the major tranquilizer, Thorazine, which is prescribed for psychotic disorders, nausea, vomiting, tetanus, agitation, excessive

Most drugs reach the market after being subjected to animal tests, and the first human testing they get is when your doctor tests them on you. There is inherent danger in every one of these drugs, yet only about one in twenty is a significant improvement over the drug it is intended to replace. Most drugs are not developed to enrich your life, but to enrich those who make, prescribe and sell them.

Tens of thousands of people die every year from the side effects of drugs. So what you don't know *could* kill you.

Some doctors relate to women as though they functioned on the same intellectual plane as their kids.

It is not uncommon for a doctor to advise a male patient to "work out" his problems in the gym or on the golf course, while a female with the same symptoms is likely to be given a prescription for Valium.

If you take 80 to 120 milligrams of Valium a day for forty to sixty days, you are hooked. Most doctors don't prescribe that much, but people go to several doctors, figuring if some makes them feel good, more will make them feel better.

Doctors like it because it keeps people quiet and happy. People like it because it makes them feel good.

The manufacturer likes it because it makes money.

An ally of the pill salesperson is the pharmacist, who also has an enormous stake in the efforts to urge doctors to prescribe the maximum number of pills. Consequently, many pharmacists conspire to inform the pill salesperson about which of their powerful poisons are most popular with each of the doctors in the area they serve. This enables the drug salespeople to concentrate their efforts on the doctors who have been least receptive to the potions they sell.

No woman should accept a prescription from her doctor without questioning its worth. Remind yourself that medicine hasn't changed since two centuries ago when Voltaire wrote, "Physicians have been pouring drugs about which they know little for diseases about which they know less into human beings about whom they know nothing." That warning is even more appropriate today because there are so many more drugs to abuse. □



anxiety and tension. One of its side effects is extrapyramidal reactions — symptoms resembling those of Parkinson's disease. When this side effect appears, it is treated with Artane, which has side effects of dizziness, nausea, psychotic manifestations, delusions and hallucinations, mental confusion, agitation and disturbed behavior.

The indicated treatment for a person who suffers from Artane's side effects is — what else? — Thorazine! The drug is like a tiger chasing its own tail. You may — and should — wonder how your health can be improved by a drug that produces the very symptoms it is supposed to cure.

An incredible percentage of the medicines some doctors prescribe — possibly three out of five — simply don't work. Many are prescribed for purposes for which they were not intended. Far too many are prescribed in place of safer and more effective alternatives.

Reprinted from *MALE PRACTICE: How Doctors Manipulate Women* by Robert S. Mendelsohn, M.D. Copyright © 1981 with permission of Contemporary Books, Inc., Chicago.