Hear No Evil, See No Evil – Chantix, Drug Advertising, and the FDA

In 1997, the FDA decided to relax the guidelines pertaining to televised pharmaceutical ads. In the following years, direct-to-consumer ads took off from a $12 million dollar business to a $4.1 billion dollar business by 2006. In 2011, it was estimated that 1 billion per year was being spent.

The amount of money spent is a boon to the television stations and one of the reasons mainstream news media often buries news that is unfavorable to pharmaceutical companies. They don't want to bite the hand that feeds them.

Aside from obvious corruption, the naiveté of the American people regarding pharmaceutical companies is astounding. Although some reports of the pharmaceutical companies' flagrant disregard for human lives are publicized and stories of them being fined billions of dollars for civil and criminal activities should concern us, somehow we don't connect the dots. The same company that may have been fined billions for corruption regarding another drug also makes vaccines, but we are told vaccines are safe and, therefore, believe what we want to hear.

Even when whistleblowers come forward to reveal that their company falsified claims that their vaccine worked and even falsified lab work to back up their claims, and the government decides to prosecute, the majority of Americans still believes pharmaceutical companies to be benign – to be the good guys! And worse yet, Americans believe the FDA holds its citizens in a sacred trust – that the FDA looks out for us. This belief is so ingrained we can't even read an insert or hear a frightening list of possible side effects to a drug and weigh

the possible consequences. Somehow we hear only what we want to hear.

Chantix claims to be the number one best selling drug to stop smoking. This is the script to one of their television commercials.

Chantix Ad

Testimonial: My name is Louis and I quit smoking with Chantix. I tried to do it in the past and I wasn't successful. Quitting smoking this time was different because I talked to my doctor, and I – I got a prescription for Chantix.

Narrative: Along with support, Chantix varenicline is proven to help people quit smoking.

Testimonial: It was important to me that Chantix was a non-nicotine pill. The fact that it reduced the urge to smoke helped me… get that confidence I could do it.

Narrative: Some people had changes in behavior, thinking, or mood, hostility, agitation, depressed mood, and suicidal thoughts or actions while taking or after stopping CHANTIX. If you notice any of these, stop Chantix and call your doctor right away.

Tell your doctor about any history of mental health problems, which could get worse while taking CHANTIX.

Don't take CHANTIX if you've had a serious allergic or skin reaction to it. If you develop these, stop Chantix and see your doctor right away as some can be life-threatening.

Tell your doctor if you have a history of heart or blood vessel problems or if you develop new or worse symptoms. Get medical help right away if you have symptoms of a heart attack or stroke.

Use caution when driving or operating machinery. Common side effects include nausea, trouble sleeping, and unusual dreams.

Testimonial: I’m very proud. I love myself as a non-smoker.

Narrative: Ask your doctor if Chantix is right for you.

So What Did You Hear?

Did you hear anything other than the fact that this drug may help smokers quit? Did you dismiss the warnings, thinking they only happen to the other guy?

Let’s break this down. The entire ad from start to finish is 242 words of which 58%, 141 words, are exclusively used for the warning. We were warned that this drug may cause the following:

- Changes in behavior
- Changes in thinking
- Changes in mood
- Hostility
- Agitation
- Depressed mood
- Suicidal thoughts
- Suicidal actions
- Exacerbation of mental illness

All of the above can happen when you are using the drug and *after* you quit using it!

It also has a vague warning related to blood vessel problems, heart attacks and stroke.

It might be dangerous to operate machinery.

Allergic reactions have occurred including skin reactions, some of which *can be fatal.*

And then it tells you the common side effects:

- Nausea
- Trouble sleeping
- Unusual Dreams

None of these side effects or warnings would be listed if trial subjects had not experienced them. We aren't told how many went through trials. We are not told what percentage experienced these side effects. We have no idea if this drug is safe for us. All we do know for sure is that the risk ratio of how many may sue the company compared to profits from sales is favorable enough for this drug to be on the market.

So what is a good margin? How many people can die? How many might be killed by the person taking the drug? You see, even though they took up more than half of the commercial with warnings, they still didn't cover everything! And compared to their website warning, they also watered it down a bit.

Chantix Website Warning

On the Chantix website, the warning section, titled the "Important Safety Information and Indication," is 474 words long. It includes more warnings: drug interactions, seizures, intensified effects of alcohol, blackout episodes (amnesia), and more. The web warning also stresses the "hostility and agitation" by mentioning it twice along with stating the words "aggression and anger." So along with many health warnings, including death, consumers may turn hostile and aggressive.

Does this mean they may abuse their spouses, children, neighbors or strangers before killing themselves? Is this a fairly clear warning that this drug may be the catalyst for a mass shooter event?

The consumer who wants to pop a pill to quit smoking probably doesn't hear this. On the website, the only symptoms with a percentage is nausea – 30%. This alone may cause a consumer to think twice. But other warnings, life threatening and life

altering warnings with no percentages will be dismissed.

It is time we look at these drugs critically and demand full information. Most of all, it is time we opened our eyes to the truth.

Recommended Reading:

- *How to Detoxify From Antibiotics and Other Chemical Antimicrobials*
- *How to Detoxify From Chemotherapy and Repair the Body*
- *Why Do So Many Drugs Get Recalled?*
- *If You're on Prescription Drugs, Don't Kid Yourself*

Sources:

- *Chantix TV Commercial – Louis – Chantix*
- Important Safety Information and Indication – Chantix
- *Big Pharma's Big Fines – Pro Publica*