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MEDICAL NEWS

September 13, 2004**Wyeth Receives FDA Approval For New Factor Delivery System**

Wyeth announced that it has received approval from the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for the ReFacto Antihemophilic Factor (Recombinant) R2 Kit, the first needleless reconstitution device with a prefilled diluent syringe for hemophilia.

Compared with the previous method for reconstituting ReFacto, the R2 kit is designed to provide a faster and simpler infusion process. The R2 kit contains a syringe prefilled with diluent, a vial adapter and a single-use vial of ReFacto containing either 250, 500, 1000 or 2000 IUs. The adapter is placed on the vial of ReFacto, and the adapter and prefilled syringe allow ReFacto to be reconstituted without the risk of needle exposure. The R2 kit is provided in a smaller package and has fewer components, reducing required storage space. Wyeth anticipates that the kit will be available by the end of the year.

Source: Company release.

September 6, 2004**Self-Recovery from Liver Infection Linked to Genes**

Researchers at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine recently found that for the 20% of people infected with hepatitis C who manage to recover on their own, the recovery is allowing the body's killer immune cells to be suppressed, rather than speeding up the body's immune system. The researchers were able to determine that a key protein, a receptor called KIR2DL3, in combination with genes for its attaching molecule, called HLA, was more common in those who self-recovered. Two copies of the gene (one from each parent) were required for self-recovery to occur. When the KIR receptors are not suppressing the immune system, the killer immune cells can rid unwanted cells from the body. The study can be found in *Science* online, August 6, 2004.

Source: Proteomics Weekly.

August 18, 2004**Nevada Sheep Focus of Stem Cell Research**

A team of University of Nevada-Reno researchers are injecting federally approved human embryo lines into sheep fetuses before their immune systems

have developed enough to reject the human cells. Sheep were chosen for this experiment because their stem-cell behavior is similar to that of humans. The hope is that one day sheep fetuses could provide viable human cells that could be extracted, multiplied and injected into the diseased organs of humans. Because new cells in a sheep liver, for example, would have been developed from stem cells taken from the bone marrow of the human donor, the recipient's body wouldn't reject them like they would reject a pure sheep liver. Scientists are optimistic that this science is only 10 years away.

Source: Physician Law Weekly.

August 16, 2004

Acquired Hemophilia Registry Analysis Conducted in Europe

In 2001, the United Kingdom Haemophilia Centre Doctors' Organisation enrolled 200 patients in a registry to gather information of the incidence and clinical features of acquired hemophilia, and the data are currently being analyzed. An independent committee of specialists in acquired hemophilia have recently initiated the European Acquired Haemophilia Registry to collect data across the rest of Europe. Researchers are hoping clinicians across the continent will enroll their patients in the

registry so that they can gain a better understanding and improved treatment for the rare disorder.

Source: Pharma Business Week.

August 14, 2004

Anti-Clotting Drug Could Induce Acquired Hemophilia

Hematologists at a United Kingdom hospital have found that clopidogrel (Plavix), a prescription drug used to help keep platelets in the blood from forming clots that might cause heart attacks or strokes, could be associated with hemophilia A. Two women were found to have developed excessive bruising, soft tissue bleeding and low factor VIII levels after taking clopidogrel for two to three months. A spokesperson from Bristol-Myers Squibb, which manufactures Plavix, said, "This is the first mention of this type of occurrence in clinical trials or post-marketing patient use of clopidogrel. The two cases will be investigated as part of pharmacovigilance procedures."

Source: Chemist & Druggist.

August 9, 2004

Rituximab Safe Treatment for Acquired Hemophilia

A recent Italian study found that selective B-cell depletion with rituximab is a safe and effective treatment for patients with acquired hemophilia and low inhibitor titers. Together with a reinforcement of therapy with other agents, rituximab seems to achieve a full and durable response in patients with high inhibitor levels. The study can be found in *Blood*, 2004;103(12):4424-4428.

Source: Hematology Week.

August 9, 2004

FDA Warns Manufacturers about Promotional Materials

This summer, NovoNordisk, Baxter Healthcare and Bayer Health Care each received warnings from the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regarding promotional materials. The letters came from the Advertising and Promotional Labeling Branch of FDA's Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research.

FDA found fault with three of NovoNordisk's brochures regarding its

NovoSeven product. According to an August warning letter, a patient guide contained no information of possible risks associated with the product; a flashcard, which refers to information on NHF's Web site regarding the early treatment of bleeding episodes, fails to cite any study comparing early and late treatment; and a Spanish-language patient brochure states that NovoSeven controls 92% of bleeding in joints, muscles and the mouth, but fails to cite a study sufficient enough to substantiate the claim.

In May, FDA contacted Baxter Healthcare regarding promotional brochures for its Advate product, saying the brochures were false or misleading because they "failed to reveal material facts and contained unsubstantiated claims with respect to other antihemophilic factors; in essence, the complaint is that the brochure claims that no other hemophilia A therapy offers better pathogen safety than Advate.

Also in August, FDA sent a letter to Bayer Health Care regarding information on Helixate FS, saying promotional materials "contain false or misleading representations that Helixate FS is safe and better than has been demonstrated by substantial evidence or substantial clinical experience." FDA is concerned that statements might lead a patient to think no other hemophilia A therapy offers better viral safety than Helixate. Another patient guide suggests that Helixate is superior to other factor VIII products because it can be infused into patients more quickly and easily. FDA is unaware of evidence to support this claim.

All three companies were asked to "cease the dissemination of violative promotional materials" described in their respective letters. These warnings come at a time when FDA has apparently been increasingly diligent in their scrutiny of all pharmaceutical promotional material, and a wide range of companies outside the hemophilia products area have received similar warnings.

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September 13, 2004

Bruce Evatt Retires from CDC

Following a distinguished 40-year career devoted to the bleeding disorders community, Bruce Evatt, MD, retired from his post at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on June 30, 2004. In nearly 30 years with the CDC, Evatt served in several capacities,

including his final one, director of the Division of Hereditary Blood Disorders for the National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities.

At a dinner celebrating Evatt's service, Sally Crudder, acting director of CDC's Division of Hereditary Blood Disorders, spoke of Evatt's dedication to the community. "His consumer perspective is what distinguishes him from the typical public health bureaucrat."

In June 2003, Evatt was honored at NHF's Third Annual Gala for his groundbreaking research identifying the specific dangers of blood-borne viruses, including AIDS, to the hemophilia community and his lifelong commitment to improving the lives of those with bleeding disorders worldwide. Evatt received the Hilfenhaus Award on March 9, 2004, at the International Plasma Protein Conference in Brussels. The Hilfenhaus Award honors individuals who have contributed significantly to the world of plasma products during the course of their career. In addition to serving as a volunteer for Hemophilia of Georgia, he was also a liaison between NHF and the World Federation of Hemophilia (WFH) and vice president for WFH's Developing World program.

According to CDC, "Bruce's numerous scientific accomplish-

ments during his career had a major impact on public health not only in the United States, but around the world...His science-based effective prevention strategies and his insistence on giving the utmost consideration to the effects of any decisions on the people ultimately affected by those decisions have made him equally esteemed among both the medical and lay leadership of the bleeding disorders community." Evatt's research led to safer blood donor screening and blood product manufacturing policies and set the standard for incorporating preventative practices into the treatment of patients with bleeding disorders.

Some of his other illustrious scientific accomplishments include: the discovery of the hormone thrombopoietin, which eventually led to a recombinant form used to treat chemotherapy patients at risk from bleeding secondary to thrombocytopenia; the identification of protein C as a major risk factor for venous thrombosis and thromboembolic disease; the discovery of the sequence of factor V Leiden; the demonstration of AIDS transmission in transfusion recipients, which led to safer management of blood banks and products; and the demonstration that heat treatment of lyophilized clotting factor concentrates rapidly inactivated the HIV virus, which led to heat-treated concentrates for hemophilia patients, for which

he received the Murray Thelin Award for Distinguished Research, the US Public Health Service Award and a Commendation Medal.

"Bruce is one of our most precious and tireless volunteers at the World Federation of Hemophilia. He has always shared his knowledge, experience and kindness with many people of the international hemophilia community," says Claudia Black, World Federation of Hemophilia (WFH) program director. "The expertise he has developed through his work at CDC was very important and extremely useful in the last decade to the expansion and development of hemophilia care programs worldwide. I have worked with Bruce for eight years now and he has become a great source of inspiration to me and a friend. He has a unique combination as a great scientific mind with a global perspective on life combined with wonderful personal qualities." Evatt still has two years left on the WFH Executive Committee.

"His concerns about the next generation of doctors and a possible shortage of specialized coagulation specialists, the need for training programs and its impact on non-malignant hematology has resulted in new fellowship programs and great hope for our future," said Crudder. "His early recognition of molecular factors, his vision of applying the successful model of comprehensive care to other chronic diseases and the integration of thrombophilia care into HTC's are other topics in which he made his mark. A mark that continues to have a deep impact on helping to improve the lives of all persons with bleeding and clotting disorders-those in the past, in the present and in the future."

NHF looks forward to continuing work with Evatt and greatly values his historic and important knowledge of bleeding disorders.

September 13, 2004

New Family Fundraising Tool Unveiled

NHF has developed an exciting new tool to help the bleeding disorders community help the It's Time for a Cure campaign: now those interested can "Click for a Cure" by building their own personal fundraising Web page on NHF's Web site, www.hemophilia.org! It just takes four simple steps to create a personalized Web page, complete with photographs and personal stories. The pages can then be e-mailed to friends and family, asking them to help reach fundraising goals in support of the research that will one day deliver a cure for bleeding disorders.

NHF's personal Web pages are a fun, easy and proven effective way to raise much-needed funds for the It's Time for a Cure campaign, while also spreading the word about its importance. To join the growing network of people across the country who are committed to driving this search, go to www.hemophilia.org/cure.

Phase II of NHF's It's Time for a Cure campaign launched in 2002 and is committed to raising \$10 million in a five-year period. Every dollar raised goes to the direct support of research in gene therapy and other areas with a significant potential for finding a cure. Each person's efforts play a crucial role in reaching the goal!

September 3, 2004

Save the Date: NACCHO

Wyeth has announced that the third annual North American Camping Conference of Hemophilia Organizations (NACCHO), a program it sponsors, will be held February 11 to 13, 2005, in Arizona. The conference is an opportunity for chapter and camp leaders to meet with colleagues and camping professionals in order to share and learn new information and techniques to enhance camp programs. For more information about the conference, contact Michael Rosenthal, executive director, Hemophilia Association, Inc., at (602) 955-3947.

September 1, 2004

Washington Days 2005 Dates Announced

NHF's annual advocacy and legislative conference, Washington Days, will take place on March 10 and 11, 2005, at the same location as last year, the Washington Marriot in Washington, DC. This conference provides members of the bleeding disorders community with an opportunity to convey issues and concerns with Congressional representatives and staff through face-to-face meetings. Highlights include a reception and training session, a trip to "the Hill" to meet with Congressional members and a full day of state advocacy training. More information will be available in the coming months. In the meantime, contact Yalda Kasaeian at (212) 328-3742 or ykasaeian@hemophilia.org.