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Client: CroFab Release

Project: PPW 2008 Press Release

Draft #: 7

Date: 3/13/08

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**The Lessons of Poison Prevention Week (March 16 - 22) Apply
 to Grownups, Too**

**Once a Poisoning Occurs, Fast and Effective Treatment is
 Critical**

Melville, NY - March X, 2008 - The third week in March is Poison Prevention Week. According to the Poison Prevention Week Council, more than 2 million poisonings are reported each year to the 61 Poison Control Centers (PCCs) across the country. Although most Americans are familiar with cases of a child accidentally swallowing a harmful substance, many are surprised to learn that poisonings are still one of the most common causes of death among adults.

Modern medicine has made great leaps in the treatment of poisonings. In fact, the safety and efficacy of today's antivenoms and antidotes mean that fewer people face long-term disability or death from poisons than in generations past. However, in order to benefit from these life-saving treatments, patients must seek medical attention as soon as possible and the hospital must be properly stocked with the appropriate medication.

For example, the American Association of Poison Control Centers received 4,624 total venomous snakebite reports in 2006, but many experts believe that this number is underreported. However, thanks to the availability of antivenom, together with widespread educational efforts and heightened media attention, only about a dozen deaths from North American crotalid snakebites are reported each year. If a venomous snakebite is suspected, seek immediate medical attention. To reach your local poison control center, call (800) 222-1212.

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Of course, avoiding exposure is always preferred. Snakebite season, which runs from late spring through early fall, is fast approaching. Fortunately, in many cases, snakebite can be avoided simply by leaving snakes alone. Most people are bitten because they try to handle or get a closer look at these snakes. To avoid being bitten, stay out of tall grass, remain on paths, keep hands and feet out of areas that are hidden from view and be very cautious when picking up rocks or firewood. If hiking or climbing in a known venomous snake habitat, wear appropriate protective clothing such as high-cut hiking boots or long pants.

Another common cause for adult poisonings, especially among older adults, is an interaction between medications, or accidental overdose of a prescribed medication. Furthermore, some medications can slowly build up in the body over time, leading to a gradual poisoning.

One example is caused by digoxin, a common cardiac medication used in the treatment of congestive heart failure and also to slow heart rate in some conditions. It is estimated that 16 million digoxin prescriptions were written in the U.S. in 2006.¹ Between 1995 and 2005, the number of reported digoxin toxicity increased 10.5%². It is estimated that between 26% to 29% of patients on digoxin experience some level of toxicity³.

Like other prescription drugs, digoxin poisoning may be due to a gradual build up in the body as the result of impaired kidney function. It may also be caused by drug interactions, unintentional overdose or intentional overdose. Antidotes are available that will quickly reduce the amount of digoxin in the blood, but as in most poisoning cases, quick medical treatment is vital.

Patients taking prescription medication need to understand the risks associated with each drug and the signs of a reaction. They should be taught what may dangerously interact with the medication, including over-the-counter medicine, herbal supplements and alcohol. Some medications, such as digoxin, require that physicians periodically check patient's blood serum levels to monitor for signs of toxicity resulting from a gradual build up. Finally, prescription bottles should be clearly labeled and kept out of reach from children.

1. (Source: IMS data)

2. (Source: AAPCC data)

3. (Source: Beller GA, Smith TW, Abelman WH, et. Al. Digitalis Intoxication: a prospective clinical study with serum level correlations. N Engl J Med 1971; 284(18):989-74)

Whether the danger comes from a snake or a prescription bottle, seek immediate medical attention if a poisoning is suspected. The toll-free number (800) 222-1212 connects callers to the local state's poison control center.

Fougera, a division of Nycomed US, is working with local poison control centers to ensure that emergency departments, both large and small, are prepared to treat patients with antivenom and antidotes. "We are working in partnership with the poison control centers to encourage every hospital to stock adequate supplies, even if they expect to treat just one patient a year," said Jackie Beltrani, Sr. Director of Institutional Sales and Specialty Marketing for Fougera. "We don't want to see any patients experiencing a delay in treatment from either being transferred to a location with the appropriate resources, or waiting for the antidote or antivenom to be delivered to an unprepared facility."

About Fougera

Fougera is a leading manufacturer and distributor of a wide range of multi-source topical and ophthalmic pharmaceuticals in prescription and over-the-counter dosage forms, as well as treatments for emergency/critical care.

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