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# The Health Reformer

## **The primary source of foodborne illnesses is animal excrement/feces**

A survey shows that 84% of adults have no idea that the primary source of Salmonella, Campylobacter, E. coli, and other foodborne pathogens on poultry and meat is animal feces.

The survey of 1,000 men and women was completed during the period of July 26-29, 2001, by Opinion Research Corporation International on behalf of the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine (PCRM). Foodborne illnesses are at epidemic levels in the United States; the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimate there are at least 76 million cases each year, usually from consumption of animal products.

"Our findings show the vast majority of Americans do not understand there are feces on meat and poultry," says PCRM staff attorney Mindy Kursban. "In fact, there's a major disconnect in the public consciousness between the foodborne illnesses that sicken so many of us and their originating cause - animal excrement."

Survey respondents answered the following question: "When Salmonella and other disease-causing bacteria are found on meat and poultry, which of the following do you think BEST describes where these bacteria originally came from?"

The answers were as follows:

- \* They [foodborne pathogens] came from animal blood (10%).
- \* They came from dirty hand (19%).
- \* They are naturally present in the meat (17%).
- \* They are naturally present in the animal's skin (9%).
- \* They came from animal feces (16%).
- \* They came from dirty air in a slaughter house (15%).
- \* Didn't think any of these were the right answer or didn't know (13%)

Statistically, respondents with college degrees, a household income equal to or greater than \$50,000, or residence in a metropolitan area were more likely to know that feces are the originating source of disease-causing bacteria.

The survey's release coincides with PCRM's filing today of a petition calling on the U.S. Department of Agriculture to protect consumers against feces-contaminated poultry and meat. PCRM's petition asks the government to declare feces an adulterant - an action that would greatly strengthen federal meat

safety regulations. PCRM also proposes that until the government can guarantee Americans feces-free food, all poultry and meat products should carry a biohazard label. Such a procedure is similar to how medical waste is treated.

*Copyright 2002, TB & Outbreaks Week via NewsRx.com & NewsRx.net*

Note: "Those who use flesh foods little know what they are eating. Often if they could see the animals when living and know the quality of the meat they eat, they would turn from it with loathing."

*The Ministry of Healing, p. 313*

## **Many parents have bought the alcohol industry's 'responsibility' message**

How dare an irresponsible industry such as Big Alcohol tell people to be responsible? Its 'responsibility' ads are full of hypocrisy! Unfortunately, many parents have bought the industry's message:

"When the American Medical Association questioned [parents]... in polls or focus groups, they tended to place responsibility for underage drinking on themselves and other parents. After decades of listening to industry "responsibility" ads, they often blame underage drinking on bad parenting.

In truth, a sizable number of children and adolescents who drink are living in the homes of very good parents. You see, even when parents talk to their children repeatedly about alcohol, and many parents do, the fact is this: children are living in an environment where alcohol is everywhere; where alcohol advertisements and products are designed to appeal to an ever-younger audience; and where alcohol is cheap and accessible.

The problem is compounded by the facts that most kids don't get the kind of comprehensive health education they need to get the facts. Instead, they see ads where drinking is portrayed as adult, glamorous and sexy. They see this kind of advertising every day on billboards and buses. They watch beer ads on television and thumb through liquor ads in magazines.

Advertising is like water; it seeps in gradually, through the cracks you can't see. It slips inside our kids' consciousness and that of their peers. Given that one of the most critical factors for at-risk behavior in a child is the behavior of his or her friends, this is a danger we can't afford to ignore.

The problem goes beyond just advertising to the products themselves. Brewers produce so-called

(Over, please)

"alcopops" with a sweet, fruity taste specifically designed to mask the taste of beer because most kids don't like the taste of it.

Children are also targeted in products like Zippershots, 12-proof treats that look like the Jell-O packages my grandchildren have in their lunch bags. Zippershots are packaged so deceptively that several states have banned them.

Across America, stores carry these "alcopops" in the same coolers as popular non-alcoholic sports and energy drinks. They top it off by making alcohol as affordable as a school lunch.

Add to this the glamorization of alcohol that we see in the entertainment industry, and what we get is an environment that encourages young people to drink. An environment where alcohol use is depicted as "cool" and underage drinking is slyly encouraged.

The alcohol industry says, "talk to teens," even as it targets the pre-teen market. But when the alcohol industry says, "talk to your kids," what they really mean is, talk to them - but for heaven's sake don't do anything else.

...Unfortunately, not all Americans are as informed as all of us here, but that doesn't mean they don't want to know more. As part of the AMA research, parents were presented with hard scientific data demonstrating that children are drinking. This made those same parents good and worried about child safety.

When asked about factors other than parental responsibility, including advertising, music, peer groups, and targeted products, the same parents who initially blamed underage drinking on permissive parenting acknowledged the impact of environmental factors. When given the opportunity, parents came to understand there was more they could do than just "talk to their teen." They could help change the alcohol environment." *By J Edward Hill*

Note: "The [alcohol] industry...has shown in many ways that it is far more interested in profits than in the health, safety and welfare of the people. It is more interested in expanding its customer base to insure economic viability, while blaming its best customers for their problems. It refuses steadfastly to define what it means by "responsible drinking." Even its "responsibility" messages serve its own interests, attempting thereby to absolve itself of corporate responsibility."

*TESTIMONY OF GERRIT L. DENHARTOG, PRIVATE CITIZEN, BigAlcohol.com*

### **Later School Start Helps Children's Self-Esteem**

Jan. 14, 2005 -- Enrolling children in first grade later rather than sooner may give them a head start on building their self-esteem, a new study shows.

Researchers found students who started first grade at an older age relative to their classmates scored higher on measures of self-esteem years later.

Grouping children by year of birth is a necessity for most school systems. But in recent years a debate has emerged about whether children whose birthdays fall near the "cutoff" for their age group should be held back or encouraged to enter first grade early.

According to the results of this study, researchers say parents should consider deferring school entry if their child will be among the youngest in first grade.

"Children who enter grade one that are younger than their classmates are at a slight disadvantage, and it would usually be ill-advised to try and get them in early," says study author

Angus Thompson, PhD, of the University of Alberta. "In fact, for the very young ones, it might aid their development and self-confidence to hold them back and put them in class the following year."

Researchers say building self-esteem in children is important because studies have shown that children who are self-confident are more likely to be happier, healthier, and more successful as adults.

In the study, which appears in the winter issue of Educational Research, researchers analyzed the records of 1,100 schoolchildren in Edmonton, Canada, enrolled in grades first through ninth. The records included general demographic information as well as information on age at which they entered first grade, family structure, and self-esteem.

The age range for entry into first grade is from 5.5 to 6.5 years old in Alberta, but parents are given some discretion regarding the year they enroll their children in school.

Researchers found that at all ages, self-esteem levels rose as age at school entry increased. The students who were older than their peers consistently scored higher on measures of self-esteem compared with their younger counterparts....

*By Jennifer Warner, WebMD Medical News*

Note: "Children should not be long confined within doors, nor should they be required to apply themselves closely to study until a good foundation has been laid for physical development. For the first eight or ten years of a child's life the field or garden is the best schoolroom, the mother the best teacher, nature the best lesson book. Even when the child is old enough to attend school, his health should be regarded as of greater importance than a knowledge of books. He should be surrounded with the conditions most favorable to both physical and mental growth." *Child Guidance, p. 300*

### **Moderate drinking costs businesses and industries worldwide billions of dollars each year**

Excessive drinking by employees cost businesses and industries worldwide billions of dollars each year in absenteeism and lost productivity, but it is not the heavy drinkers or alcoholics who are mostly responsible.

New research shows that it is the light or light-to-moderate drinkers who cause the most problems. More than half of all alcohol-related problems in the workplace are caused by light drinkers, and 87 percent by light-to-moderate drinkers.

The problems are mostly due to hangovers.

#### **It's the Light Drinkers**

"In the medical community, we tend to focus on alcoholics. But that's a very small number of people, whereas being hung over is a common thing," said Dr. Jeffrey Wiese, medical professor at the University of California. He and colleagues at a San Francisco veterans hospital reviewed medical studies on alcohol use published between 1966 and 1999.

Wiese's research appeared in the June 6 issue of the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, a biweekly journal published by the American College of Physicians-American Society of Internal Medicine.

Although hangover might be considered trivial - just deserts for the overindulgent - it has substantial economic consequences, Wiese said in his report. A recent British study noted that alcohol use accounted for 2 billion pounds (\$3.3 billion U.S.) in lost wages each year, most of which resulted from work missed because of hangover. Alcohol costs in Canada amount to \$7.5 billion each year, and \$1.4 billion is lost each year because of decreased occupational productivity

caused by hangover-like symptoms.

Studies in other countries show similar estimates for the annual cost of alcohol ingestion: Australia, \$3.8 billion; New Zealand, \$331 million; and the United States, \$148 billion.

In the workplace, the greatest cost incurred by alcohol is the decreased productivity of affected employees as a result of hangover-related absenteeism and poor job performance, Wiese says.

In Finland, which has a population of 5 million persons, more than 1 million workdays are lost each year because of hangover. Light-to-moderate users of alcohol -- 0 to 3 drinks per day for men and 0 to 1 drink per day for women -- account for most of the lost-work costs because they make up most of the work force.

The primary morbidity that affects light-to-moderate drinkers is the hangover, not the long-term consequences of alcohol abuse, such as cirrhosis and cardiomyopathy. Chronic alcoholism is responsible for only a small proportion of the total societal cost of alcohol use, the report said.

Researchers also found that people with hangovers posed a danger to themselves and others long after their blood alcohol levels had returned to normal, suggesting that hangovers could be more insidious than actual inebriation.

"Even if you don't feel severely hungover, your cognitive abilities, concentration and technical skills may actually be diminished," Wiese said. "With inebriation, you're at least more aware of it perhaps more than with a hangover."

*From Buddy T, Your Guide to Alcoholism / Substance Abuse*

Note: The U.S. brewing industry claims to be a dynamic part of our national economy, contributing billions of dollars in wages and taxes. Yeah, right! The opposite is *also* true. As this article points out, the beer business is continually sucking out the physical, mental, and economic strength of America's workforce.

## **FDA Incapable of Protecting America's Prescription Drug Supply**

Nov. 18, 2004 - An FDA scientist says the FDA, which is charged with protecting America's prescription drug supply, is incapable of doing so. He also warned that the problems with the arthritis drug Vioxx, which was removed from shelves earlier this year, may be just one of several drugs that aren't safe.

David J. Graham says he was pressured by superiors not to warn the public about the cardiovascular risk of Vioxx and urged lawmakers Thursday to create an independent safety office free of influence from regulators who approve new pharmaceuticals.

Graham told senators that the FDA's ability to police the safety of drugs already on the market is being compromised because the agency is "too cozy" with the drug industry.

He also stunned the hearing audience and some committee members when he warned that besides Vioxx, which was pulled from the market by its maker, Merck & Co., on Sept. 30, there are five more available drugs that should be closely reviewed for safety.

Graham specifically cited:

Crestor, for high cholesterol

Bextra, for arthritis

Meridia, for obesity

Accutane, for acne

Serevent, for asthma

## **5 Drugs Questioned**

When asked by Sen. Jeff Bingaman (D-N.M.) to list the five drugs, Graham said the weight loss drug Meridia may not work as well as expected because side effects cause many patients to stop taking it before it can have an effect. The side effects, including elevated blood pressure, may not be worth the limited benefit, he said.

Graham also questioned the use of the acne drug Accutane and the cholesterol-lowering drug Crestor. Accutane is known to cause birth defects if pregnant women use the drug, but Graham said the FDA has not done enough to ensure that women of child-bearing age follow safety measures. Crestor can increase the risk of kidney failure and a muscle disorder called rhabdomyolysis but may offer little advantage over other cholesterol drugs on the market, he said.

Graham also listed Bextra, a drug from the same class as Vioxx, and the asthma drug Serevent, saying that data suggest that it could increase the risk of death from asthma.

Lawmakers then asked Sandra L. Kweder, MD, acting director of the FDA's Office of New Drugs, to respond to Graham's list of potentially dangerous drugs.

"It's important not to get so focused on the risks that one forgets about the benefits," she said.

### **Next: The Case of Vioxx**

Graham, an associate science director in the FDA's Office of Drug Safety, has accused FDA officials of trying to discourage him from sharing the results of a California study showing that high doses of Vioxx increased the risk of heart attacks and stroke by up to 500%. The drug was later removed from the market when a Merck study showed that the cardiovascular risk was real.

An estimated 20 million people took Vioxx between its approval in 1999 and its withdrawal in September, and Graham calculated that the drug caused up to 139,000 heart attacks, 30% to 40% of which could be expected to result in death.

Kweder said that no one knows how many -- if any -- patients were actually harmed by Vioxx and that Graham's estimates of 139,000 heart attacks were theoretical. "These are not real deaths. They're a mathematical model that is put together with a number of assumptions along the way."

Graham told members of the Senate Finance Committee that scientists reviewing the safety of drugs already on the market are frequently overruled by those in the Office of New Drugs, which clears medications for initial marketing. That also happened when he raised questions about the ill-fated Vioxx, he said.

He also accused the agency of resisting pleas from safety officers in 2001 to place strong warnings on the Vioxx label warning of heart risks.

"In these situations, the new drug-reviewing division that approved the drug in the first place and regards it as its own child typically proves to be the single greatest obstacle to effectively dealing with serious safety issues," he said.

Graham continued, "Vioxx is a terrible tragedy and a profound regulatory failure. I would argue that the FDA, as currently configured, is incapable of protecting America against another Vioxx. We are virtually defenseless."

### **Call for Independent Safety Office**

Several researchers, including Graham, urged lawmakers to create a new independent FDA drug safety office free from

the influence of officers who review drugs for approval. "The same group that approved the drug is also responsible for taking regulatory action against it. This is an inherent conflict of interest," Graham said.

"An independent office of drug safety which does not report to the FDA new drug approval section should be established," said Gurkirpal Singh, MD, chief science officer at the Institute of Clinical Outcomes Research and Education at Stanford University in Woodside, Calif.

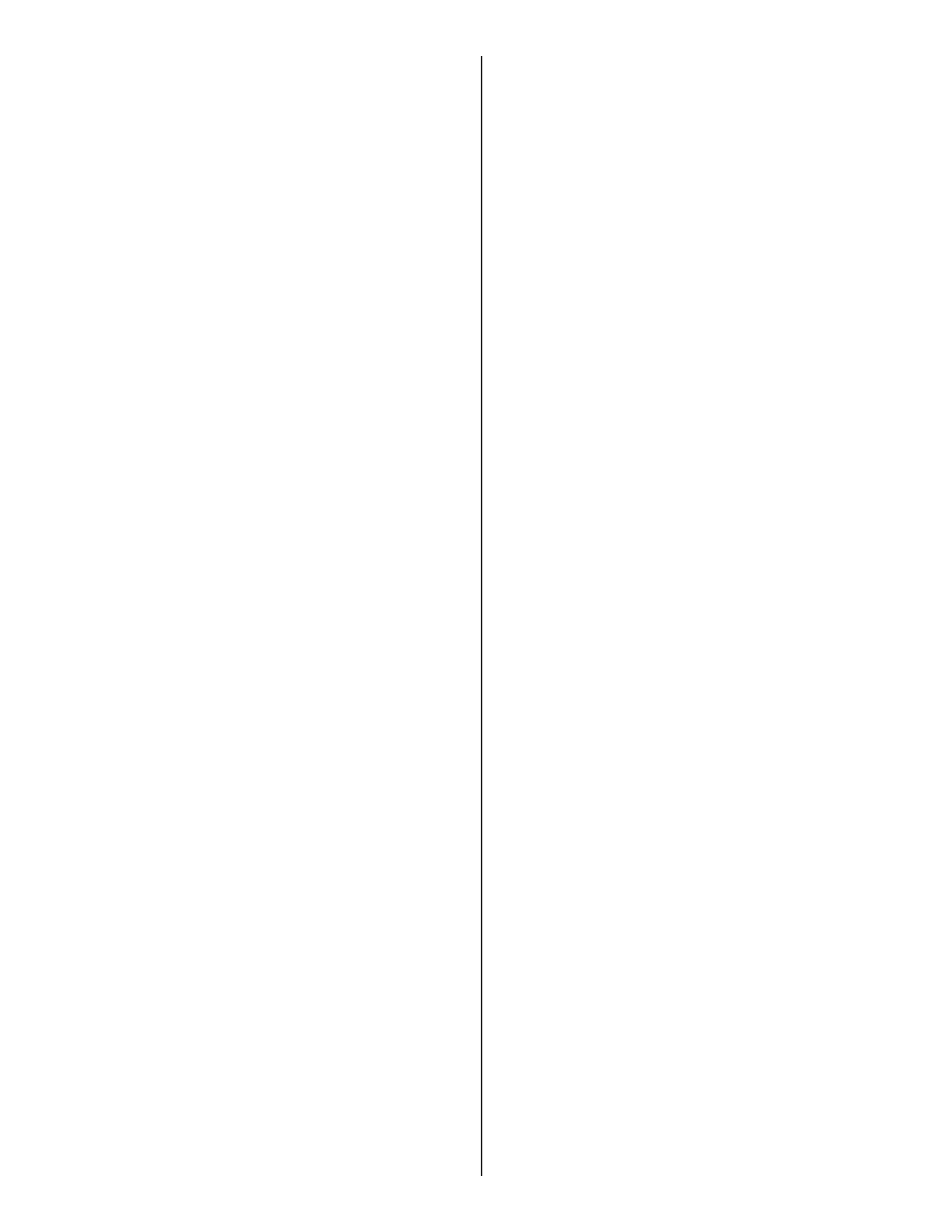
Kweder said that she has not seen the problems within the FDA that Graham described.

"That is not the FDA that I know," she said.

Kweder said the FDA's current system "works very well" in assessing the risks and benefits of drugs both before and after they are put on the market. But asked by Sen. Max Baucus (D-Mont.), the committee's senior Democrat, if she would support restructuring the agency, Kweder said that concerns about it may be founded.

"I don't have any objection, sir, to an independent Office of Drug Safety."

Shuffling the agency could have an important impact on the way the FDA approves and polices drugs. Safety officers would for the first time be able to disclose study data directly to the public separately from the drug approval process. The new office could also be able to independently conduct safety reviews with teams of outside experts. *By Todd Zwillich, WebMD Medical News*



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