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# U.S. government approves sale of drug that curbs cholesterol

WASHINGTON (AP) — The federal government on Tuesday authorized the sale of a cholesterol-lowering drug that could help millions of people reduce their risk of heart attacks and strokes.

Lovastatin will be recommended primarily for patients with a genetic condition that makes it virtually impossible for them to control cholesterol by diet and exercise alone.

It will be labeled as intended for use in those patients and for others only when diet and exercise alone have not reduced cholesterol sufficiently.

However, now that the drug has been approved by the Food and Drug Administration, it will be up to physicians to decide which of their patients to prescribe it for.

Given the numerous studies that have established a link between high cholesterol and cardiovascular disease — coupled with the millions of Americans with elevated blood cholesterol — the new drug is likely to be prescribed for far more than the

estimated 400,000 Americans with the hereditary condition that renders them incapable of controlling the condition with diet and exercise.

Indeed, a leading researcher who hailed development of the drug acknowledged that the "greatest risk of misuse" will be patients and physicians who turn to lovastatin prematurely, before being certain that diet and exercise won't work for them.

Antonio Gotto, chairman of the Lipid Research Clinic at the Baylor College of Medicine in Texas, said, "Diet will remain the cornerstone of treatment for the majority of patients."

He was joined at a company-sponsored news conference by Michael S. Brown, professor of genetics at the University of Texas Health Center, and Joseph L. Goldstein, of the institution's department of molecular genetics.

Brown complimented researchers at Merck Sharp & Dohme Research Laboratories for "tremendous faith and perseverance" in pushing devel-

opment of lovastatin, and Goldstein said "everyone in basic science and clinical research is very excited about this drug."

One reason for that excitement, Goldstein said, is that it "acts to stimulate a normal process" and seems to have few serious side effects.

"One is capitalizing on a normal bodily process" by which the liver controls cholesterol levels in the body, he said.

Officials of Merck Sharp & Dohme, the U.S. manufacturing and marketing division of the parent Merck & Co., Inc., of West Point, Pa., said the new drug, to be sold under the brand name Mevacor, should be available in pharmacies in two or three weeks.

One tablet, the anticipated daily dose for most patients, will be sold to pharmacies for \$1.25 each.

The retail cost to patients will depend on how much their drug stores mark it up.

Jonathan A. Tobert, director of Merck Sharp & Dohme's cardiovas-

cular clinical research, said cholesterol levels rise again once the medication is stopped.

"As soon as you stop taking (cholesterol) level goes back up," he said. "Normally, you would take the rest of your life."

Dr. Richard Havel, director of Cardiovascular Research Institute at the University of California, San Francisco, one of the centers that conducted the first clinical trial of the drug in 1984, said there were some reservations about the drug's long-term safety.

"We will need more experience with it before we start giving it to people with high cholesterol who could be taking it for decades," he said.

In its announcement of which began approval, the FDA said lovastatin reduced total cholesterol in clinical trials by 18 percent to 34 percent, depending on dosage, and reduced the particularly dangerous low-density lipoprotein, or LDL cholesterol, by 19 percent to 39 percent.

# Poppy seed bagel sentences inmate back to term in federal penitentiary

HARTFORD, Conn. (AP) — A federal inmate was removed from a halfway house and returned to prison to complete his sentence, all because he ate a poppy seed bagel.

It seems Anthony Clarizio's gastronomic gaffe violated a new U.S. Bureau of Prison policy written because the seeds alter drug test results.

Medical experts say the effect of poppy seeds on urinalysis tests is well known and legal experts say the government has a right to test inmates for drugs, but some civil libertarians argue the policy is arbitrary and unfair.

Public Defender Richard Reeve said Clarizio, who lives in Stratford, was released to a Hartford halfway house about four months ago to complete his sentence for loan-sharking and extortion. Clarizio, who pleaded guilty to the charges two years ago, is scheduled to be released Oct. 1.

Reeve said Clarizio and a friend ate bagels taken to the friend's house in Stratford by a neighbor Aug. 9. The bagel contained poppy seeds, according to the manufacturer.

When Clarizio returned to the halfway house and routinely gave a

urine sample, he told house officials there could be a problem because he may have eaten some poppy seeds, Reeve said Tuesday.

Nevertheless, Clarizio, who is in his 50s, was sent back to federal prison in Danbury on Aug. 24, five days after failing a urine test, to complete his sentence.

Tuesday, William Olds, executive director of the Connecticut Civil Liberties Union, said, "I think it's an absurd rule and it smacks of the grave dangers of falsely imprisoning somebody."

Pyung Yoon, of Yale University medical school's department of toxicology, said urine tests cannot distinguish between exposure to poppy seeds and exposure to heroin or other illegal drugs made from the poppy plant.

Allan Adler, legislative counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union in Washington, D.C., said, "Generally, drug test policies take that into account and ask a person whether they've eaten something of that nature. If so, then the drug test

"I think it's an absurd rule and it smacks of the grave dangers of falsely imprisoning somebody."  
— William Olds, executive director of the Connecticut Civil Liberties Union

is put off until that's out of the person's system. It (Bureau of Prisons policy) seems to be manifestly unfair."

But Robert Hassen, spokesman for the Danbury prison, said all prisoners allowed to complete their terms in halfway houses sign a statement promising not to consume poppy seeds.

"He's got to go over it with his correctional counselor," Hassen said. "I would find it hard to believe that any one would not read his furlough release."

The policy was put into effect in all federal halfway houses in 1986 because "inmates started using way out of positive drug tests," Kathy Morse, spokesman for the Bureau of Prisons in Washington, said.

There were 8,773 inmates referred to halfway houses in 1986, Morse said.

"There's nothing illegal about eating a poppy seed," Morse said. "Poppy seeds trigger the exact same test results as an illicit drug when in fact they've taken seeds."

"The poppy seed violation is obviously that's less serious than one using heroin," she said. "The way it's a violation of their condition."

Reeve asked U.S. District Judge Ellen B. Burns in New Haven Monday for a reduction in Clarizio's sentence. Burns said she planned to rule soon.

John Durham of the U.S. attorney's office said Clarizio should appeal the halfway house's decision instead of seeking a reduction in sentence.

# Appeals fail as convicted killer goes to electric chair in Georgia

JACKSON, Ga. (AP) — William "Billy" Mitchell, convicted of murdering a 14-year-old boy during a holdup at a grocery store that also left the teen's mother wounded, was executed Tuesday in Georgia's electric chair.

Mitchell, 35, was the fourth person executed in the state this year and the 11th since Georgia resumed executions in 1983.

Nationwide, 90 people have been executed since the 1976 U.S. Supreme Court ruling that cleared the way for states to reinstate the death penalty.

Mitchell was pronounced dead at 7:21 p.m., said Department of Corrections spokesman John Siler.

His lawyers appealed to the U.S.

Supreme Court after being turned down Monday by the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

The high court voted 5-3 to deny a last-minute request for a stay of execution.

The Georgia Board of Pardons and Paroles also upheld the death sentence Tuesday, even though Mitchell's lawyers asked the board in a letter not to consider the case.

The letter expressed Mitchell's regret for the pain suffered by the family of the victim, but noted the board had denied clemency to other condemned men who had been model prisoners.

"Simply put, he believes very strongly that clemency as an alternative to execution does not exist in Georgia," the letter said.

Mitchell pleaded guilty to killing Christopher Carr during a holdup at the grocery store in Sylvester where Carr's mother worked.

"I won't be satisfied until I get revenge," the boy's mother, Peggy Carr, said in a 1985 interview.

Mrs. Carr was shot four times during the robbery, which netted Mitchell about \$160.

The U.S. Supreme Court upheld Mitchell's sentence in June after ruling on April 22 in another case that Georgia's death penalty does not discriminate against some prisoners on the basis of race.

Mitchell also was sentenced to life in prison for killing a 50-year-old man the day before the Sylvester robbery.

# Mexican president: Border shows promise

MEXICO CITY (AP) — President Miguel de la Madrid said Tuesday the northern border region has recovered from economic crisis and "renewed its traditional confidence and vitality."

In his 113-page state of the union message, the president attributed the region's recovery to economic diversification and the increase of the "maquiladora," or twin plant, assembly industry along the border.

"This has made its pattern of development less vulnerable and has consequently strengthened its role as a rampart of national sovereignty," de la Madrid said. The six of Mexico's 31 states that border the United

States traditionally have been its most prosperous. The area was hit hard by the economic crisis that started in 1982 and the accompanying devaluation of the peso currency.

Maquiladora plants that assemble goods for export, taking advantage of low labor costs in Mexico, now vie with tourism as the nation's No. 2 source of foreign exchange after petroleum.

De la Madrid, cautioned, however, that economic development in the border region shows that the infrastructure for industrial development is inadequate there. The growing population also is placing pressure on urban services, he said.

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# Firefighters battle blaze in California

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Thousands of firefighters called in from across the state were deployed Tuesday in forests of Northern California battling hundreds of light-spawned fires that blackened 68,000 acres and forced evacuations in some mountain communities.

Three rural communities in western Oregon were threatened by fires surging through dry timber, while firefighters in Idaho slowly gained ground against a range blaze that reached a neighborhood in Pocatello.

In California, nearly 400 firefighters battled major blazes in the Stanislaus, Klamath, Tehama and Shasta-Trinity national forests and nearly 300 smaller blazes. Mike Milosch of the U.S. Forest Service in Sacramento said.

Milosch said firefighters controlled about 700 other blazes ignited by nearly 5,000 lightning strikes since Saturday.

"But we're probably going to get some more fires, with lightning activity expected to continue for a day or two," Milosch said.

It is the worst onslaught of kind in California since the lightning-plagued summer of 1983 when a fire in the Los Padres National Forest blackened nearly 200,000 acres, fire officials said.

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