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### Meridia does not pose risk of heart valve damage, officials say

d Drug Administration approved first new obesity drug since a ban two popular diet remedies left but the new medicine poses rious risk, too.

Knoll Pharmaceutical's Meridia moderately effective" at helping ents shed pounds — in studies, mere dieters, the FDA said

blood pressure and pulse rate tmay endanger certain patients,

FDA warned. "We still have some concern," d FDA's Dr. James Bilstad, who ged doctors to rigorously check ients' blood pressure and pulse and to prescribe it only to the seusly obese. "This drug should esimply a few pounds.'

But the FDA said Meridia does appear to pose the risk of heart r's ban of the nation's most popr diet drugs, Redux and fenfluine, the "fen" in fen-phen.

The agency approved Meridia urday night over the objections ts own scientific advisers, who

ts, no one with poorly controlled pertension, heart disease or ired a stroke should use the drug, eFDA cautioned. And it is only for seriously obese, as measured by

Commission

backs use of

dietary labels

WASHINGTON (AP) - Makers of di-

lp people's health, a presidential com-

sion said Monday — but it backed off

Ultimately, consumers will have to do

ir own homework before buying sup-

ements to make sure they're not wast-

"It behooves the public ... to do a fair

anel chairman Malden C. Nesheim, pro-

onday on how a 1994 law should be im-

lemented. It recommended that nutri-

onal claims be "supported by scientifi-

vidence available publicly, but commis-

ioners dropped a recommendation in

ubmit a summary of evidence to the

Industry officials complained that the w does not require them to submit this

lisclosing it could help their competitors. He said consumer groups also com-plained that it could look like companies

Responsible companies will supply the

nformation to consumers who ask for

roof that their products actually work,

"Informed and interested consumers

The law requires manufacturers to as-

ure dietary products are safe, and it

abels and how these claims must be

scientists evaluating them first. Under the

aw, the FDA acts only if trouble is sus-

a Shalala, the secretary of Health and Human Services, who has 90 days to de-

cide whether to propose the recommen-

The commission also recommended:

identify and investigate supplements that

pose hazards. "There must be a strong and

-Dietary health claims on the labels of

-The industry consider establishing a

The FDA establish a panel to review

—Specific guidelines for the content of

herbal products that companies wish to

labels including warnings when appro-

priate and guidance on using terms such

supplements should be based on the

that is required for conventional foods.

scientific committee to review labels.

market as preventive and therapeutic.

as "stimulate" and "promote.

The FDA be given more money to

dations as formal rules.

ught to start asking for that," he said.

fact, they did not.

sor of nutrition at Cornell University.

ary Supplement Labels concluded.

greater, such as someone who is 5 feet, 6 inches and weighs 185

Knoll pledged Monday to educate doctors and patients to use Meridia responsibly. "We are going to actively discourage cosmetic use of this medication," said Carter Eckert, president of Knoll.

But Knoll cannot sell Meridia for

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Food ship of weight to height — of 30 or welcomed Meridia as a desperately needed option — particularly after September's ban of Redux and fenfluramine.

> It's great news for dieters," said Dr. John Foreyt of the Baylor College of Medicine.

But Foreyt said he hoped September's diet-drug scare had con-vinced dieters that Meridia is only for the seriously obese. "It's not to be used willy-nilly," Foreyt said. Plus, Meridia "will not help in the absence of changing your diet and

being a little more active." Consumer activists urged Meridia users not just to see a doctor for regular blood pressure tests, but to check themselves regularly with an at-home blood pressure

"If you catch a rise, you can stop it" by simply stopping the drug, said Lynn McAfee of the Council on Size and Weight Discrimination. "People have to be responsible about

Meridia, known chemically as sibutramine, works a little differently than fenfluramine and Redux did. They fooled patients into feeling full by boosting production of a brain chemical called serotonin. Meridia, on the other hand, slows tonin it naturally produces.

But doctors don't know why Meridia would raise blood pressure especially if patients lost weight. On average, Meridia patients' blood pressure increases two to three points and their pulse speeds up four to five beats a minute.



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### Meridia Use

FDA cautions patients with these conditions:

- hypertension
- heart disease
- irregular heartbeat
- history of stroke

moderate obesity

forcement Administration is determining how strictly to control predetermined Meridia could pose a small risk of addiction and recommended limiting refills unless pa-

Some 58 million Americans are overweight, and obesity experts

# Experimental brain cancer

tricks tumors into swallowing brain cancer patients.

The therapy shrank tumors by at least half in nine of 15 patients. In one of those patients, the cancer disappeared for five months before recurring; in another, it was gone for nearly two

"We haven't cured anybody, and it's not likely we can at this point" because it's too early in the treatment's development, said Richard J. Youle of the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke.

The small study, which was designed to look for side effects effectiveness, is reported in the Nature Medicine. In an accompanying editorial, Dr. Robert versity Medical Center called the result impressive but stressed the transferrin.

that it must be confirmed by further work.

study originated in the brain, rather than migrating from elsewhere in the body. About 18,000 Americans are expected to get cancers arising in the brain this year; less than half will be of the types treated in the study.

The patients had recurring, growing brain cancers that hadn't been cured by standard ther-

The experimental treatment took advantage of brain cancer's appetite for iron. To attract iron, tumor cells sprout chemical hitching posts that grab transferrin, a substance that shuttles

For the treatment, researchers yoked molecules of transferrin to molecules of diphtheria toxin. The toxin was altered so it would not harm nor-Martuza of the Georgetown Uni- mal cells, but it would still poison cancer cells that sucked it in with

### surgery shows potential NEW YORK (AP) — An ex-Nearly all the cancers in the

## Child psychologists urge special treatment for sister of Iowa septuplets

peek at her tiny brothers and sisnot seven instant rivals for Mom-

For the first 21 months of her life, the family revolved around Mikayla, then the only child of Bobbi and Kenny McCaughey. But before Mikayla turns 2, four little brothers and three sisters all born last Wednesday should be home from the hospi-

"I tell my patients that it attractive woman and telling his wife, 'Look at how beautiful she is, how warm and wonderful. Now I expect you to love her and be nice to her," said child psychologist Alice Sterling Honig of

Child psychologists say the McCaugheys must be careful not to get so busy with the septuplets that they ignore Mikayla.

Nancy Segal, a psychology professor at California State University-Fullerton and director of on the effects of multiple births on older siblings, but mishandled relationships can lead to resentment, withdrawal and anger toward the parents and brothers

"What happens is that people

When Mikayla McCaughey got a multiple birth begin to lavish attention on the multiples and really tend to exclude that older child," Ms. Segal said.

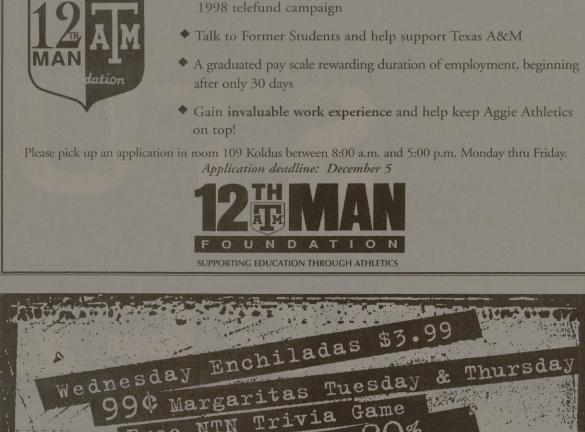
McCaughey said last week that his oldest child was thrilled when she first saw the family's new additions. "I brought her down yesterday and she just kind of sat there in my arms and said: 'Baby! Baby!'" he said.

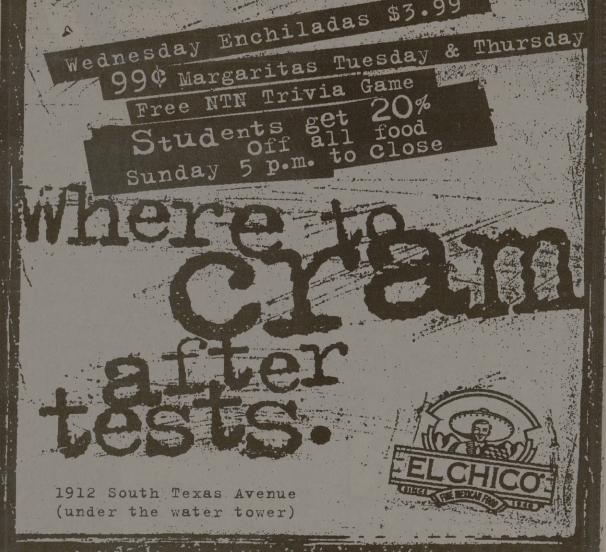
But the McCaughey family has said that Mikayla does not yet understand that the seven babies are her parents' and that they eventually will come home.

The family has made sure to focus attention on Mikayla and involve her when gifts are given, said her aunt, Michele Hepworth, who has cared for Mikayla since Mrs. McCaughey was confined to bed nine weeks into the pregnancy.

When the family was given a new van, Mikayla's name was written on the side along with those of her brothers and sisters. When Gov. Terry Branstad stood with the family to talk about donations for a new house, he had a stuffed Winnie the Pooh for Mikayla.

"She's going to be a wonderful big sister," Ms. Hepworth said. "She loves to play with baby dolls all the time, cradles them and puts them to sleep."





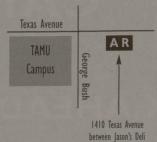
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The FDA had no comment on the report Monday.