



## State laws permit laetrile use despite FDA ban

Testimony to the influence of public opinion is the recent legislative activity concerning laetrile, the apricot pit derivative used in cancer therapy. Several state legislatures have circumvented the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) ban on interstate shipment of laetrile by passing laws allowing manufacture, sale, and use within the states. There has been increasing pressure on the FDA to reconsider its prohibitive regulations.

Indiana, the second state to enact legislation (Alaska was the first), stated laetrile is not a drug or a controlled substance under Indiana statutes governing the use, manufacture, or distribution of drugs and controlled substances within the state. Therefore, physicians may prescribe or administer laetrile in lieu of or in addition to "customary or accepted" modes of treatment. The patient must sign a written informed request stating the physician has told him that the manufacture and distribution has been banned by FDA; that the American Cancer Society, American Medical Association, and the Indiana State Medical Association do not recommend its use; and that alternative recognized treatments have been offered.

Other states that have legalized laetrile are Arizona, Nevada, and Florida. The Arizona law permits manufacture and distribution, exempting it from another Arizona law prohibiting manufacture and distribution of drugs

or devices that do not comply with the federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act. In Nevada, laetrile may be manufactured and used in accordance with regulations of the state board of health, and in Florida, laetrile may be prescribed and used until found harmful by the State Board of Medical Examiners.

With no definitive studies on laetrile's effect on humans, reactions to its use have been based on emotions, pressures of interest groups, and studies on animals. Now that Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Institute and the National Cancer Institute are making preliminary plans for extensive clinical tests, there is hope that its use will be determined more by scientific methods.

In other action involving FDA regulations, Indiana also reversed the FDA ruling on saccharin, the first state to do so. Included in the same legislation enacted on laetrile was a provision stating, "Notwithstanding any rule or regulation ever adopted by the federal Food and Drug Administration concerning sodium saccharin," the chemical substance may be manufactured, distributed, sold, and used within the state of Indiana. FDA has proposed that saccharin be declared unsafe as a food additive.

■ How soon an administration-sponsored National Health Insurance (NHI) bill will be submitted is still unknown with some predictions being not until March. In the meantime, the Advisory Committee on National Health Insurance Issues of the US Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) has been meeting throughout the summer and will continue its sessions into the fall.

Composed of 29 public members and sev-

eral HEW officials, the committee has as its only nurse member, Ingeborg G Mauksch, speaker at "The paradox of the risk taker" session at the 1977 AORN Congress in Anaheim. The committee is to review issues relative to financing, access to care, inefficiencies in the delivery of services, need for preventive and primary care, and the cost of medical care nationally. It will also examine the roles of federal and state governments and private insurance industry in administering a national health insurance and the relationship of NHI to existing government health programs.

These responsibilities seem to indicate that the committee will have strong input into any NHI proposal of the administration, but after its first meeting, May 20 to May 21, many nongovernment members believe the committee will have only a passive role. They were told by the chairman, Hale Champion, HEW undersecretary, that they "will not be asked for a recommendation or a consensus or for votes" and that even though they will be asked to critique and react to the working papers on NHI, the ultimate decision will be made by President Carter and HEW Secretary Joseph Califano.

The committee will also look into the Canadian national provincial health program. The concluding sessions will be held about Oct 1 in Washington, DC.

■ In Idaho, a recently passed law has changed the Idaho Code relative to nursing, broadening the definition of the "practice of professional nursing" to include the "administration of medications and treatments as prescribed by nurse practitioners."

In North Carolina, the legislature has adopted a resolution urging the United States Congress to "initiate immediately a program to provide reimbursement for services rendered by duly certified and supervised physician extenders, even though their supervising physician is not physically present."

In New Mexico, a 1977 statute requires each certified physician's assistant to submit annually proof of completion of continuing education as required by the board of medical examiners.

*Dora B D'Amico*  
*Associate editor*

## **Consumer catalog lists federal publications**

How does my car work? What is a canker sore? Should I buy or rent a house? How can I obtain a copyright?

"Consumer information," a quarterly catalog of the Consumer Information Center, lists over 200 free or low-cost federal publications available to the public on health, safety, housing, food, employment and education, and many other subjects of interest to consumers.

Health care topics include general information about diet and nutrition, vitamins and minerals, physical fitness, smoking, alcohol abuse, diseases and common ailments, and medicine and drugs.

A branch of the US General Services Administration, the information center was established by Presidential order in 1970. It is responsible for encouraging federal agencies to develop and release information for consumers and for increasing public awareness of this information. More than 24 government agencies are involved in the preparation of the pamphlets.

The catalog and publications can be ordered through the Consumer Information Center, Pueblo, Colo 81009.

## **COPA recognizes NLN programs**

The National League for Nursing's (NLN) accreditation program for diploma and practical nursing programs has been officially recognized for the first time by the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA). In addition, COPA has granted continuing recognition to NLN as the accrediting agency for master's, baccalaureate, and associate degree nursing programs. COPA's recognition of the League's accreditation program applies through July 1, 1982.

The notification of approval stated that initial recognition of NLN's role in accrediting diploma and practical nursing programs was granted in accordance with new regulations expanding the scope of COPA's recognition provisions.