

## 16580 COMPETITIVE PROBLEMS IN THE DRUG INDUSTRY

7. Intravenous self-administration of dextropropoxyphene in man utilized the pellet formulation of Darvon which is no longer available\* but the new propoxyphene formulations are soluble in warm water and on a pharmacological basis can be utilized intravenously for the same effect.
8. Single doses of dextropropoxyphene in excess of 800 mg can be lethal if untreated and it is estimated that in excess of 200 individuals die yearly of dextropropoxyphene overdose in the United States.
9. Most abusers of dextropropoxyphene appear to obtain the drug by legal prescription but thefts of Darvon from pharmacies and practitioners are being reported and the drug is available on the street at \$0.25-\$1.50. per capsule.<sup>27</sup>

In summary, DPX's narcotic-like pharmacologic properties have made it a highly abuseable drug.

### OLDER DPX DEATH STUDIES

In a huge Lilly-sponsored study involving medical examiners with a jurisdiction covering 52 million people, it was reported that DPX had been implicated in at least 1,022 deaths by the middle of 1975.<sup>28</sup> The authors found that, "the number of deaths involving propoxyphene is increasing each year, and at a faster rate than total drug deaths." They also found that "65.9% of all the cases had the word propoxyphene in the 'cause of death' statement on the death certificate." and that "in 34.1% of the cases the cause of death was officially attributed to something other than propoxyphene alone." In Detroit, the number of drug deaths involving DPX tripled from 1973 to 1975.<sup>29</sup> A similar pattern was observed in North Carolina, with 21 such deaths in 1973, 30 in 1974, and 16 during just the first three months of 1975.<sup>30</sup>

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\* Although the easily separable DPX pellet is no longer found in Lilly DPX capsules, at least a few other pharmaceutical companies still produce DPX in this highly abuseable preparation. See FDC Reports, December 12, 1977.