

"Painkiller"



• Eli Lilly: Purveyor of dangerous drugs.

In 1957, Eli Lilly introduced Darvon, billing it as a non-narcotic painkiller without the addictive properties of morphine and codeine.

At one time, Darvon became the third most prescribed drug in the nation with an estimated annual sales of \$100 million. In 1974, 1.5 billion Darvon pills were dispensed.

In 1976, the U.S. Justice Department determined that despite claims by Lilly, Darvon was a widely abused narcotic that was being sold on the streets.

In 1977, Darvon had become the third best-selling prescription drug in the nation with an estimated 30 million prescriptions filled. That same year, Darvon was linked with 1,100 deaths, second only to heroin.

In 1978 Dr. Sidney M. Wolfe, director of the Health Research Group in Washington D.C., demanded that Darvon be banned, charging it was

addictive, associated with suicides, accidental overdoses and misuse by addicts looking for a high.

In 1979, Health, Education and Welfare Secretary Joseph Califano specifically asked doctors to avoid prescribing Darvon and ordered Lilly to warn doctors about possible hazards associated with Darvon.

The *New York Times* reported on charges that, "Darvon was on the one hand even less effective than aspirin in killing pain and on the other, more common even than heroin in killing people."

In March 1980 the FDA sharply criticized Lilly for inadequate warnings, saying that Lilly's promise to contact 125,000 doctors about Darvon's dangers had turned into "a standard promotional campaign."

The active ingredient in Darvon is a chemical closely related to methadone.

Methadone, promoted as a cure for street addicts, has been criticized as being just as addictive as heroin.

Despite the deaths and public outcry, Lilly has kept Darvon on the market to this very day.

Look for the special advertising supplement on TIME magazine appearing June 14 in USA Today.