



Open Wide: Here Comes IntelliDrug

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ILLUSTRATION
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HAYWARD

Manfred and Jacob are having lunch at a small sidewalk café in Stuttgart. The bratwurst is good, the matzo soup excellent, and the Heinekens cold. Suddenly Manfred cocks his head slightly to one side mid-chew, listens intently. "What's that noise?" he asks.

"What noise?" Jacob queries.

"That clicking, topockita-pockita noise. Don't you hear it?"

"Oh, *that*," Jacob says, brightening. He reaches in his mouth with thumb and forefinger and pries out two of his lower molars that resemble a unilateral partial denture from dentistry's distant past. "This is my IntelliDrug Device. I am diabetic; I need four kinds of heart medications and six prescription drugs I don't even know what they're for."

"This thing," he continues, indicating his teeth, "automatically solves all my problems of memory lapse and noncompliance. It is the lingerie du chat, as we say in Tel Aviv."

"French for 'cat's pajamas,'" Manfred says. "You're not French."

"I know. We just do it to annoy them. Feh!"

We leave the two friends noshing on their vittles to do a little research on what promises to be the biggest thing in dentistry and medicine combined during the last two weeks. Potentially even bigger than the silicone implants and tooth whitening that have become as necessary as oxygen for the under-60 set.

While American dentists were engrossed in discovering shades of white beyond the ability of the human eye to appreciate, and insisting no edentulous space goes unimplanted, European and Israeli experts were hot on the development of a high-tech automatic drug dispensing device they have named IntelliDrug. Because of insufficient space on the product, the runner-up name of Der Schmartzigdruggendrippendiviser didn't make the cut.

Here's the skinny as explained by Roger Cheng of Dow Jones Newswires: Dr. Andy Wolff, an Israeli dentist, initially came up with the concept of an automatic drug-dispensing device, knowing the average patient has the compliance level of a

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preschool toddler when it comes to taking his prescribed medicines. Luckily, Wolff immediately thought of the mouth as the proper site for such a device. No telling where it would have been placed if brain surgeons or proctologists had had a glove in the decision.

Miniaturization being what it is these days, we should not be surprised to learn that the device being prepared for comprehensive tests by a consort of 15 different European and Israeli companies will house the following components: a pump, custom valves, a microprocessor, batteries, and a reservoir for the drugs. There will be a communication port so that the device can be remotely controlled, eventually linking it

with cell phones or nearby hospitals.

Political alarmists have been quick to detect a parallel between IntelliDrug and the “Manchurian Candidate.” If a man’s mediations can be controlled remotely by perfect — or imperfect strangers — what else can it do? So many things to protest, so little time!

Of interest to dentists are reports that the IntelliDrug device, all enclosed in a space the size of two molars is “strapped” in. Strapped in? To what? Ask all the Doubting Thomases among us. It is said to be easily removable by technicians (not exodontists) who can then refill the drug reservoir, change the battery, and give it the standard lube, oil, and filter service at

any convenient Jiffy Lube outlet.

Dr. Wolff is pretty excited about this and so are the pigs on which the concept has been successfully tried. Except for the occasional ticked-off porker holding a one-way ticket to Hormel, not a single incident of Mad Pig Disease has been detected. Once the pigs have given the tests a hooves-up, Dr. Axel Schumacher, who is helping design the pumps, declares he hopes to have a prototype ready for human testing by the end of the year. The pigs hope so, too, indicating they would like to get back to their normal activities of truffle hunting and seeking better building materials to thwart big, bad wolves. ■■■■