



# Child-Safe Packaging Group

## Newsletter – February/March 2001

[www.chilsafepackaginggroup.com](http://www.chilsafepackaginggroup.com)

News flash.....A British Standard for pharmaceutical blister packs by mid year

### The end is in sight for dangerous blister packs.....

After almost six years of campaigning we can report that the Department of Health has now accepted that the United Kingdom needs a standard of child panel testing for blister packs for pharmaceuticals. And it has accepted that blister packs now in use in the United Kingdom are unsafe.

Recognising that the draft European Standard CEN TC 261 is bogged down in discussions throughout various European Union countries, John Denham MP, Minister of State at the Department of Health said *'It is recognised that there is still some way to go in finalising this document (TC 261). Because of this the BSI has agreed, through discussions with Medicines Control Agency officials, that a national standard covering the testing protocol for assessing non-reclosable packaging for pharmaceuticals could be in place within six months.'* (April 2001)

Mr Denham was writing in November 2000 in open correspondence with one of the members of the Child-Safe Packaging Group.

Lord Hunt of Kingsheath, Health Minister in the Lords, said *'I have asked officials in the Medicines Control Agency to undertake a review of the issues surrounding child safety and packaging, including the use of additional label warnings in addition to the use of child resistant packaging.'*

This clearly shows an about face on the part of the Department of Health who, until the death of three year old Yaquob Lookman in Yorkshire and representations from the West Yorkshire Coroner, members of the Child-Safe Packaging Group and various members of the packaging press, had adhered to the belief that blister packs were 'inherently child resistant.'

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A standard and with it, the end of unsafe blister packs, could be with us by mid year. However, Dr James Robertson - a Senior Paediatrician, was keen to point out that it would be folly to create a standard that existing packs could comply with simply to save money at the expense of lives. He said *'I have seen too many ingestions by children to treat this matter with anything other than the utmost seriousness.'*

The Editor of Packaging Magazine, Ron Pidgeon, made the most telling comment in his editorial on December 14<sup>th</sup> 2000. He said *'Sadly it took the death of a toddler to highlight the serious problems that can arise from packaging that allows children easy access to pills.'*

### Background to the campaign for safer blister packs.....

It was in 1995 that the child safe packaging group subjected standard UK blister packs to the sort of testing required of them in the United States.

The blister packs failed and proved to be anything but child resistant.

A sample of forty children tested the packs and 92.5% accessed at least three tablets prior to the method of opening being demonstrated.

### Impact on the Pharmaceutical industry.....

The change of attitude by the Department of Health has spurred members of the pharmaceutical industry together with design and development organisations to, what can only be described as impressive action.



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Already a major global manufacturer has effected improvements to its standard blister for a prescription antibiotic and has sought to create a cognitive barrier to opening by children and a barrier of dexterity requiring two thumbs to be used to push through the tablet from the blister.

Thusfar we do not believe that this product has been child panel tested but it is definitely a step in the right direction. (For details email [swilkinsassoc@lineone.net](mailto:swilkinsassoc@lineone.net))

Two UK development organisations have recognised that very soon major pharmaceutical manufacturers will be crying out for child resistant blisters and have begun development work in earnest.

### Changed attitudes to child resistant packaging.....

Throughout the industry Packer/Fillers and Brand owners are looking afresh at child resistant packaging systems for products which could be harmful to children.

You need only look at the toiletries or household products shelves at your local supermarket or the horticultural product shelf at the garden centre to see child resistant closures proliferating.

The reason is that child resistant packaging does save lives and everybody in the supply chain; brand owners, packer/fillers and retailers, recognise that the risk of an ingestion is just not worth taking.

As Ron Pidgeon, Editor of Packaging Magazine, said 'Sadly it took the death of a toddler....'

Strangely enough we are not the only industry to be guilty of complacency and the Department of Health is not the only government Department to be equally complacent. In January 2001, an article in The Times pointed out that the International airlines, with the exception of El Al, Israel's national carrier, had '*spurned bomb proof baggage boxes.*'

These are the boxes that carry the baggage on an airliner and the bomb proof variety 'could', the article continued '*have saved the passengers on Pam Am 103 who were killed at Lockerbie twelve years ago.*' Perhaps it will need another tragedy to change their minds.

### Child-Safe Packaging Group Representation.....

The Child-Safe Packaging Group continues to be represented in the INCPEN Ad Hoc Trade Association and the Institute of Packaging Environmental and Safety Common Interest Group. Visit our Website [www.chilsafepackaginggroup.com](http://www.chilsafepackaginggroup.com) for up to date information about us, or email the CSPG at [swilkinsassoc@lineone.net](mailto:swilkinsassoc@lineone.net) alternatively contribute to Packmail at [PackMail@calico.ndirect.co.uk](mailto:PackMail@calico.ndirect.co.uk) and join in the ongoing debate about child safe packaging.

If you want to join us ask about our membership packages; corporate membership, individual membership or affiliate membership for charities