

Loose in the Foothills

by Bob Ring

Battle of the Pillbox

The biggest medical problem we face today is not healthcare reform, the solvency of Medicare, or the cost of drugs. While Congress is fussing about these secondary issues, I'm fighting the really important battle – how to get my medicine out of the %&\$#@& packaging.

I'm old enough now that I need to organize my daily medications in one of those pill holders, you know, the ones with different compartments for each day of the week. Not only that, but I've recently had to upsize my pill dispenser to hold the increasing number of pills.

Anyway, once a week, the battle begins anew when I try to fill those day-of-the-week labeled cubbyholes from my seven source containers.

Let's talk about Prilosec OTC, the anti heartburn medicine. You thought it was great to be able to get Prilosec without a prescription, didn't you. Well, you were wrong.

Instead of a nice mail-order plastic screw-top jar with my 90-day supply of pills, now I have to buy one of those 42-pill packages that contain six metallic foil "cards," each with seven pills neatly aligned and embedded in them.

Visualize me with scissors, cutting close up to and then around seven individual pills with the delicate moves of a surgeon. The metal foil is very sharp; you could lose a finger. So this very careful cutting of all six cards takes most of the morning. Good thing this stuff isn't for a heart attack!

There must be a better way and I, as a proud retired engineer, thought I'd found it. If I exert enormous pressure on the back of the foil, over each pill, I can explosively jettison the pill out the front side of the card. But, about two in seven pills break in two due to the tremendous strain. And doing this in the bathroom, I lose about one of seven pills down the drain (at about 50-cents a pop) when the ejected pill ricochets into the sink. Finally, after several pills, my thumb is useless for the rest of the day. It's enough to give you heartburn! I ask you, is this fair?

During a recent pill-release fiasco, after Pat quit laughing, she offered to help. Being a knitter, Pat is very accomplished with scissors. (I think that make sense, doesn't it?) Anyway, we decided to concentrate on our strengths. Pat cuts the foil cards along the sides of each pill and then I push the little "suckers" out the side.

We have these pill parties every 42 days.

So it took two mature adults, with five college degrees between us, but we have won the battle of the pillbox.

Now don't get me started on those child-proof medicine jars ...