

Raised Bill No. 580 AN ACT CONCERNING THE DUTIES OF VETERINARIANS  
WHEN PRESCRIBING PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS

Testimony of Dennis Steiger

March 12, 2008

Honorable Members of the Public Health Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Raised Bill No. 580. I feel it is critical that veterinarians provide the same standard of care to our pets as doctors and pharmacists provide humans when prescribing and dispensing medication. Current CT statues governing the veterinary practice do not provide this protection.

My wife and I had the unfortunate experience of losing our golden retriever, Sydney. Shortly afterwards it came to our attention that the Rimadyl prescribed by Dr Stuart was a likely contributor. We learned that Rimadyl has the potential for serious adverse reactions, that the dog owners should be warned to watch for symptoms, and that the dog should be carefully monitored. Dr Stuart did none of this.

The Rimadyl was prescribed by Dr Stuart based on a superficial exam claiming to be able to "feel a lot of arthritis". When my wife asked about potential side effects she was told to only watch for diarrhea and bring her back for a blood test in several weeks. When we brought Sydney back for the blood test additional Rimadyl was prescribed and dispensed prior to receiving the results. When Dr Stuart called several days later with the blood test results she reported they were OK. Sydney's liver values were elevated, likely a result of her age, to continue with Rimadyl and come back in 3mos for another blood test.

Several weeks later we contacted Dr Stuart about Sydney's condition. She had trouble standing, was not eating, and could not drink water without vomiting. Dr Stuart said not to worry dogs can go several weeks without eating, and the vomiting is likely a result of drinking too much too fast. She switched her medication to Etogesic that she said was more indicated for spinal issues that Sydney had. She had my wife come in to pick it up without asking to see Sydney. When my wife picked up the Etogesic she was also given Robaxin a muscle relaxer and was told to start the new medication that evening and see how she does in 48hrs. Sadly, Sydney did live another 48hrs.

Shortly after Sydney's death I was alerted to the dangers of Rimadyl and advised to inform Pfizer of the death. It was in this process I learned that; elevated liver values are key indicator of intolerance, that a baseline blood test should be done, that follow up blood test should be done frequently during the initial phase. When I supplied results of a blood test done 2 years earlier to Dr Lavin at Pfizer I learned Sydney's liver values were elevated then and she should not have been considered a candidate for Rimadyl treatment. He also suggested that I look at the information sheet available on the Internet in Pfizer's web site. When I read the following portion of the information sheet I got sick. Had I known

this we would have taken Sydney off Rimadyl immediately since she exhibited many of the symptoms.

***INFORMATION FOR DOG OWNERS:** Rimadyl, like other drugs of its class, is not free from adverse reactions. Owners should be advised of the potential for adverse reactions and be informed of the clinical signs associated with drug intolerance. Adverse reactions may include decreased appetite, vomiting, diarrhea, dark or tarry stools, increased water consumption, increased urination, pale gums due to anemia, yellowing of gums, skin or white of the eye due to jaundice, lethargy, incoordination, seizure, or behavioral changes.*

***Serious adverse reactions associated with this drug class can occur without warning and in rare situations result in death (see Adverse Reactions). Owners should be advised to discontinue Rimadyl therapy and contact their veterinarian immediately if signs of intolerance are observed.***

*The vast majority of patients with drug-related adverse reactions have recovered when the signs are recognized, the drug is withdrawn, and veterinary care, if appropriate, is initiated. Owners should be advised of the importance of periodic follow up for all dogs during administration of any NSAID.*

*All dogs should undergo a thorough history and physical examination before initiation of NSAID therapy. Appropriate laboratory tests to establish hematological and serum biochemical baseline data prior to, and periodically during, administration of any NSAID should be considered.*

We filed a petition (No. 2005-0420-047-011) with the CT Dept of Public Health regarding our concerns. We received a response that Dr Stuart did not violate any of the statutes governing veterinary practice. We made a second request clarifying our concerns and received the same response. That is why I am here today, to request what I consider a serious gap in the existing statutes be corrected.

When my doctor prescribes medication for me I am advised of possible risks, told what symptoms to watch for, and receive fully detailed information from the pharmacy. When we went to Dr Stuart, Sydney was examined and we were given medication to administer. Dr Stuart did not provide information about possible adverse reactions or what to watch for even when asked. The fact that veterinarians are allowed to prescribe and sell prescription medications without being required to provide appropriate information regarding the risks is a serious gap in Connecticut statutes. I have been given the explanation that since veterinarians purchase the medications in bulk it is not practical to give warning sheets to each patient. I cannot accept this with the technology of copiers and computers available today in all offices I've been in and that pharmacies for humans also purchase in bulk and do not seem to have a problem providing information with each prescription and even with refills. Also, I was told by Pfizer that tear off pads of the insert sheets are available for the veterinarians to give out.

To this day my wife and I feel guilty for administering the medication we believe killed Sydney even though it was done with the best intentions at the advice of our vet. Please pass this bill to help prevent any other pets from dying unnecessarily.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Honorable Members of the Committee on Public Health:

I support Bill #580. As a concerned pet owner, I consider it critical that veterinarians provide the same standard of care to our pets as doctors and pharmacists provide humans when prescribing and dispensing medication.

Christine Farris, Waterbury CT  
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Don Briggs Southbury CT  
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Tim Walsh - Naugatuck

Howard Taniff - Southbury

Bob Thompson - Oxford

Debra Karg - Newtown

Sue Doron - Danbury

Renee Chubb - Danbury

Airi Lundgren

Jerry Narwid

Pamela King - Waterbury

Mike Kato - Terryville

John P. ...

Al ...

Margaret Zielinski - Sandy Hook

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Maria McWhan Southbury, CT  
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