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- Web
- M&C

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Index

U.S.

U.K.

Americas

Europe

Middle East

Asia-Pacific

South Asia

Africa

Business

Education

Health

News Roundups

Features

Specials

Intel/Terror

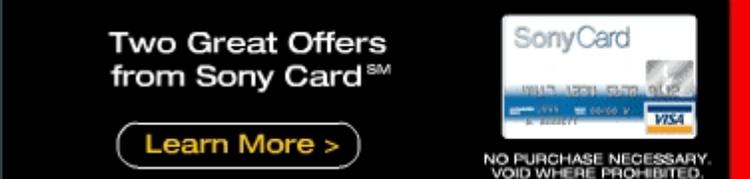
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Reuters - Latest

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News Roundups

News Roundup

Mar 15, 2006, 17:45 GMT

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Six Men Gravely Ill in London Drug Testing

LONDON, March 15 (UPI) -- Six men taking part in paid clinical anti-inflammatory drug trials were in intensive care in a London hospital Wednesday, two of them in critical condition.

Parexel, the clinical research company running the trial, said it had operated within regulatory guidelines, and said nobody else has been given the drug, known as TGN1412. The drug is made by German pharmaceutical company TeGenero AG, Sky News said.

The healthy volunteers were trying an anti-inflammatory drug at a private research unit at Northwick Park Hospital when they suffered a reaction that bloated their bodies 'beyond recognition,' a girlfriend of one of the men told the BBC.

The national Medicines and Healthcare Regulatory Agency immediately withdrew authorization for the trial and sent out an international warning to prevent it being tested elsewhere.

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Professor Herman Scholtz of Parexel said the organization had followed regulatory, medical and clinical research guidelines during the study.

'Such an adverse drug reaction occurs extremely rarely and this is an unfortunate and unusual situation,' he said.

Saddam Rants at Trial He Calls a `comedy`

BAGHDAD, Iraq, March 15 (UPI) -- Former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein called his Baghdad trial for massacre a comedy Wednesday and refused orders to stop making political statements.

Chief judge Raouf Abdul Rahman repeatedly interrupted Saddam as he read a prepared statement denouncing recent sectarian violence in Iraq before ordering the courtroom cleared to strip Saddam of his audience, CBS reported.

'You are being tried in a criminal case. Stop your political speech,' Rahman said, to which Saddam replied, 'I am the head of state.'

Rahman reminded him he 'used to be a head of state' and that he was merely a defendant now.

Saddam and seven codefendants are charged with killing 148 Shiites after an assassination attempt against Saddam in the Shiite village of Dujail in 1982. They face possible execution by hanging if convicted.

All the men have pleaded innocent.

One of Saddam`s lawyers told CBS the legal team has little doubt the court has already decided Saddam is guilty.

'I fully expect him to be dead by the end of the year, executed by this court in this show trial,' he said.

Bush Urged to Shakeup Staff

WASHINGTON, March 15 (UPI) -- Friends and confidants are trying to convince U.S. President George Bush to add a seasoned GOP veteran to aid

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5.
6.
7.
8.
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his struggling staff, CNN reported Wednesday.

However, Bush does not seem interested in a staff shakeup, despite a series of White House missteps in recent weeks, sources told the cable news outlet.

'No one is trying to get them to fire anyone,' said one GOP source. 'No one is trying to get them to make wholesale changes. This is just about adding a supplemental person to add to the mix.'

Another source joked that 'the more it becomes public, the more unlikely it is that it will happen.'

Chief of Staff Andy Card has reached out in recent weeks to search for ways to help Bush out of a growing political slump that has seen his approval rating slip to 36 percent, the lowest of his presidency.

There has been talk that Card should leave, possibly to become Treasury secretary. While Card has told friends he's not interested in moving, Republicans continue to push the idea, CNN reported.

Study: Rfid Tags Are Virus Vulnerable

PISA, Italy, March 15 (UPI) -- Computer experts at computing conference in Italy claiming radio frequency identification technology is virus vulnerable.

Radio frequency identification is a burgeoning microchip-based tracking technology that's replacing bar codes and also being used to identify pets and livestock, The New York Times reported Wednesday.

In a paper entitled 'Is Your Cat Infected with a Computer Virus?', scientists from Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam, also described how the vulnerability could be used to undermine a variety of tracking systems. They presented the work Wednesday.

RFID tags are designed to contain much more information and be read more quickly by computers than can bar codes. The tags are being used for an increasing variety of purposes, including tracking luggage at airports. That use, say the researchers, might give terrorists and smugglers the technology to evade airport luggage scanning systems, the Times reported.



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The computer scientists presented their paper during the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers Pervasive Computing and Communications Conference.

Eliot Spitzer Sues H&r Block over Iras

ALBANY, N.Y., March 15 (UPI) -- New York state officials said Wednesday they're suing the largest U.S. tax preparer for fraudulent marketing of individual retirement accounts.

The attorney general's office alleges that the H&R Block Co. 'steered hundreds of thousands of its clients ... into IRAs that were virtually guaranteed to lose money' because of a combination of hidden fees and low interest rates.

'The conduct described in today's complaint is particularly appalling because many of those hardest hit were working families who struggle to save,' Attorney General Eliot Spitzer said in a statement.

'Instead of providing these families with accurate information that would have allowed them to make informed choices, H&R Block steered them into retirement accounts that actually shrank over time.'

Spitzer's office began the investigation in 2005 after receiving information from an H&R Block tax preparer.



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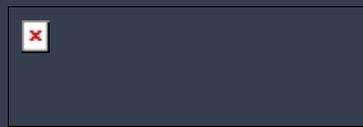


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