It's Time to Attend to Your Health

BY JOEL JACKSON

I SEE THE IRONY OF SUPERINTENDENTS TAKING CARE OF THEIR GOLF COURSES BETTER THAN THEY TAKE CARE OF THEMSELVES

determine baselines and changes to their golf courses.

But how many are on some program of routine physical exams based on age group to check up on changes of their own bodies? There are reams of research that say you should have regular checkups. But for whatever reason, we who are so quick to cite endless scientific facts about the health of our own turf ignore other scientific facts when it comes to our own health. Trust me, I know this from personal experience.

I am a coronary-artery disease patient. I have a 13-year old bypass graft that doesn’t work like it is supposed to. I skipped my annual physical last year. I’m human. I’ve been riding the computer too much lately and not exercising like I should. My diet wasn’t outrageous, but I knew I was out of shape. I didn’t want to hear any bad news. But I couldn’t renew my prescriptions without a checkup. I had to go. It had been five years or more since my last stress test, so they scheduled a follow-up visit.

First, doctors should change the name from “stress test” to “fitness evaluation.” I was stressed out just thinking about the possible results.

Well, I passed the test. Seems the heart muscle is doing OK. Enough collateral capillaries have formed around the blocked artery to keep the heart healthy, but I have to change my daily routine from coffee maker and computer to Nordic Track and Total Gym first thing in the morning. It’s a maintenance decision I’m willing to make.

I don’t want to leave my family in the lurch and have my friends crying at a premature memorial service. How about you?
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The Cost Factor: Most superintendents say they would try less-expensive generic versions of useful chemical products. But that doesn’t mean they’ll switch a salesman selling an inexpensive post-patent and generic fungicide came knocking on the maintenance facility door at Woodridge Golf & CC, certified superintendent Jim Husting would invite him in his office, give him a chair and a cup of coffee, and listen to what he has to say.

“If it was a comparative product and half the price of a branded product, I’d give it a look,” Husting says.

So would most superintendents, according to a recent survey by Gofdom. In an online poll conducted late last year, Gofdom asked superintendents: If a less-expensive generic version of a useful chemical product is available, how likely are you to try it? Forty-seven percent of superintendents said they were “very likely” to try it, and 21 percent said they were “somewhat likely” to try it. Only 6 percent said they “probably wouldn’t” try it, and just 1 percent said they “definitely wouldn’t” try it.

Economics has something to do with the positive response rate, especially during these penny-pinching times. If an owner or general manager orders a superintendent to slash X amount of dollars from the maintenance budget, the superintendent might consider trying a generic product to save money.
Hustings won’t consider it. “I’m not going
to try something new just because it’s new.”
Bruce Rickert, certified superintendent
of Medford Village CC in Medford
Lakes, N.J., is in the minority, but he says
he’s “probably not likely” to try a generic
product, no matter how much less it costs
than a branded product. Rickert says that
now because he once tried a post-patent
product and had a bad experience with
it. The generic chemical wouldn’t
dissolve in a vehicle’s spray
tank. “It cost me 14
man-hours to get
the material on the
course,” he says.
Generics may
offer an econom-
ical alternative,
but Rickert says the
cost issue works both
ways. The owner of Med-
ford Village CC expects Rick-
ert to watch what he spends, but he
doesn’t expect him to switch to an
unfamiliar generic fungicide to treat
anthracnose just because it costs less.
Rickert says his owner realizes there’s a
chance that such a product could be in-
compatible with other products and
cause major bucks worth of turf dam-
age. “It’s just not worth it,” Rickert says.
Joe DiPaola, golf market manager for
Syngenta Professional Products, says
product price is not the major issue
among superintendents. He cites com-
pany research that reveals superinten-
dents are less concerned about price than
other factors. “They’re much more con-
cerned about a product’s efficacy and
performance, as well as service provided
by the manufacturer,” he says.
Mike Fisher, who heads Fisher & Son
Co., a regional distributor in Malvern,
Pa., believes economics certainly play a
role in superintendents’ decision-mak-
ing, and for that reason they may con-
sider using generic products. But they
don’t go in with eyes wide shut.
“Most superintendents are cautious
about using generic products, especially
if they’re going to use them on their
greens,” says Fisher, whose business sells
about 90 percent branded products.
“They want to know that the products
are safe to use and will perform as well
as branded products.”
Sometimes that takes time, Fisher
adds. Most superintendents want proof
—as in university research or other
trials—that a product is capable. The
rap against some generic manufacturers
is they don’t test their products as much
as branded manufacturers because they
don’t have the money to fund the tests.
And then there’s the service factor.
Conventional wisdom says branded man-
ufacturers charge more for products but
provide outstanding service, especially if
superintendents experience problems
with their products. That same wisdom
says generic manufacturers can’t compete
with the brands on the service level.
Fisher agrees that superintendents are
more comfortable using branded prod-
cuts because they know they’ll usually re-
ceive excellent service. “They know that
a major supplier is going to be there to
guarantee its product and not disappear
on them if there’s a problem,” he adds.
DiPaola says branded manufacturers
provide outstanding service simply to
protect their product investment.
“Once a company has invested about
12 years and $120 million to put a pro-
duct in the marketplace, it certainly is going
to stand behind that product,” DiPaola
adds. “Besides, it’s the right thing to do.”
When Rickert experienced his prob-
lem with a generic product, he says he
didn’t get the service he expected from
the company to correct the problem. In
the end, the company offered Rickert
a free case of the product for his trou-
bles, but it wasn’t enough.
“I’m not saying the company is a bad
company, but it just doesn’t have the
overhead or support behind it to take
care of its customers when problems
occur,” he says. “I don’t know if generic
companies can handle complaints or
problems as well as the bigger compa-
nies. That’s my main concern.”
At least one representative of a post-
patent and generic chemical manufac-
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More post-patent products mean more market players.

Do branded manufacturers feel threatened?

BY LARRY AYLWARD, EDITOR

Branded vs. Generic. It’s not exactly King Kong vs. Godzilla, but this product match-up is making the chemical market much more competitive in the golf course maintenance industry.

More generic and less-expensive post-patent products are on the way. In fact, chemical industry insiders say that 80 percent of the active ingredients in branded chemicals will be available in post-patent products in the next five years. Comparatively, basic manufacturers will not be bringing a hoard of new patented and branded chemicals to the market in the next five years.

So the big question is: Where’s the chemical market heading and what impact will it have on the industry and end-users?

Mike Fisher, who heads Fisher & Son Co., a regional distributor in Malvern, Pa., says branded manufacturers should be concerned that more generic products in the market will mean more competition and perhaps lost market share for them. But increased competition is not such a bad thing, he adds. “It benefits end-users to a certain extent because branded manufacturers then have to look for ways to improve the quality and performance of their products,” he says.

From a branded manufacturer’s standpoint, the natural response is to feel challenged by the generic competition, says William Strickland, BASF Professional Turf’s marketing manager for herbicides and soil fumigants. Strickland realizes that generics have become an integral part of the business model.

“We’ve branded products, we’ve created a certain amount of value from the market associated to those brands, and we’ve had to adjust those models for the entrance of generic products,” he says.

Strickland, echoing Fisher’s philosophy, has nothing against the competition. “Competition in any business at any level makes for better business for the end-user,” he says.

Joe DiPaola, golf market manager for Syngenta Professional Products, knows more generic products will be introduced in the next few years, but he doesn’t expect Syngenta to be knocked from its perch as one of the industry’s top chemical manufacturers. That’s because he says Syngenta has the right products, people and technical support in place to serve superintendents. “We’re in a good position to serve the marketplace at a level superintendents have come to appreciate,” he says.

Bob Yarborough, business manager of turf and ornamental for Sipcam Agro USA, a Roswell, Ga.-based manufacturer and supplier of generic fungicides and Continued on page 40
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Stick to the Brands

BY JIM DAVIS

This time of year, superintendents across the country are sorting through their 2003 chemical management plans. In most cases, a combination of factors influence the selection process, including:

• What are the goals for my operation in 2003?
• What pest pressures will I contend with this year?
• Have I been satisfied with my current options?

Once the agronomic requirements are established, additional questions come into play:

• What specific products should I choose?
• What suppliers should I work with?
• How much will it cost?

Today, superintendents have more options in terms of solutions than ever before. These options run the gamut from name-brand products to off-patent generics, with many viable alternatives along the continuum. What factors play into the analysis of these options? While price is one consideration, we believe that a number of other variables factor into the value proposition and ultimately the purchase decision. For instance:

• What can I learn from my peers about the products they use?
• What are the results of the research trials on the products I’m considering?
• Who is the manufacturer of the product?
• What support do I receive from that manufacturer? Is there anything that stands out?
• Has the manufacturer returned value to me in the last year by supporting meetings or educational seminars?

When considering manufacturer support, what can we tell you about Bayer Chipco that you don’t already know? You probably know by now that we recently completed merging and integrating the Bayer Professional Care and Aventis Chipco Professional Products turf and ornamental organizations.

This allows us to have more than 40 field employees in the areas of sales, research and development, and technical service. We supply the market with more than 20 chemical solutions and numerous value-added programs, like Chipco Academy, Accolades and Greenback, just to name a few.

In addition, we have a full regulatory staff in place to manage through the many EPA requirements of product stewardship. The regulatory staff are often unsung heroes, defending products long after patents expire.

Recent examples of this include reregistration work Continued on page 44

A Valuable Option

BY OWEN TOWNE

When superintendents sit down to crunch their annual budget numbers, they face and evaluate an array of alternatives. These days, one key consideration is choosing between a brand-name product and the equivalent material in the form of post-patent chemistry.

In most cases, post-patent materials offer the better value and are useful alternatives to higher-priced brands. Let’s take a look at some of the reasons why an increasingly growing number of superintendents are making post-patent pesticides their products of choice.

For turf managers, the two leading considerations for choosing a specific product are performance and price, in that order. The material must work, and efficacy will always be the chief requirement for superintendents. But in most every case, generic products perform at least as well as the originals. That is because the quality of the active ingredients must be at least equal, but in many cases superior, to that of existing materials. In fact, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) verifies that the technical material or active ingredient of the generic is at least equivalent to that of the original before the product can be marketed.

In many cases, post-patent products are manufactured in more up-to-date facilities than the initial products. These newer formulations often take advantage of the most recent technological improvements in manufacturing and can make better, and more efficient use of the raw materials used in the process.

Since generic materials are generally less expensive than brand-name products, they particularly make sense in today’s economy. As I talk with turf managers, distributors and others in the supply chain, I keep hearing that the economics of a product are increasingly important to them. Once they appreciate they can get the same bang for fewer bucks, the decision is fairly simple. That’s why we’ve seen a steady growth in the number of superintendents using post-patent products in recent years. It’s also why we expect this number to grow annually.

One reason the generic market is growing so quickly is that so many of the major products are post-patent. Most of these are proven performers that make first-rate rotational and tank-mixture partners for the newer chemistries. With even more key active ingredients coming off patent in the next few years, a larger number of generic offerings will be added to the industry’s arsenal of pesticides. Superintendents will see value in these products as long as they perform.

Remember that post-patent products aren’t only of

Continued on page 45
You'd like the convenience of a long-term surfactant – if you could find one that really worked. That's why we've developed Aquatrols Sixteen90. This long-term surfactant remains effective in the soil for up to three months, reducing water repellency and promoting turf uniformity. And unlike some "long-term" surfactants, we guarantee that it's safe to use on all fine turf regardless of climate or environmental conditions.

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Continued from page 36
herbicides, says branded manufacturers shouldn't feel threatened by generic manufacturers. He says there's room for both branded and generic products to succeed.

The game
Gary Curl, president of Specialty Products Consultants in Mendham, N.J., says basic manufacturers will be less inclined to invest in research and development for new products if their profits potentially decline at the hands of generic manufacturers.

"As profits go down, the market isn't as attractive and a company invests less to provide a greater return to shareholders," Curl says. "In the long term, you'll see a decline in the number of new products coming into the market from the basic manufacturers."

Curl says it's difficult to define the "long term." But he says an influx of new chemicals in the next five or 10 years is not realistic, especially since manufacturers have to jump through so many hoops and spend millions of dollars to bring them to market. "But there are incentives for the big companies to defend and continue to grow their businesses, especially if there are no new active ingredients in development," he notes.

Curl expects basic manufacturers to put more emphasis on product formulations to give them a leg up on the generic competition, as well as a new angle for marketing.

"There will be more of an emphasis on the handling and formulation characteristics of different products," Curl says. "Improvement doesn't necessarily mean a change in the active ingredient, but it can be a concentrated effort to enhance the properties of the formulation. Maybe the product becomes easier to mix in a tank or easier to apply. Or maybe it can be applied on a 28-day schedule instead of a 21-day schedule because it has better binding characteristics to the leaf surface."

BASF's Strickland acknowledges that basic manufacturers are more targeted in the new chemicals they introduce because of the substantial investment (in the range of $100 million, he says) it takes to bring one to the market. But he stresses that BASF will continue to market its products aggressively based on a variety of factors, especially service and ongoing studies to back the products' performances. Strickland believes most generic manufacturers can't match the service and product research provided by branded manufacturers.

The future
Strickland says he's concerned the chemical market will become driven by economics if generic products continue to secure more market share. If that happens, university studies and customer...