

DC Online

Brian Sutton, DC

Shoes, Air Pockets, and Ankles

A study of 10,000 Australian amateur basketball players suggests that air cells in some popular basketball shoes may be making players more prone to ankle injuries. The researchers found that a number of factors that contributed to the ankle injuries, including a lack of stretching during warm-ups, and how an athlete landed. However, a statistical analysis showed that players who wore shoes with air cells in the heels were four times as likely to suffer an injury.¹

While the number of players involved in the study was large, the actual number of injuries was only 37, so further studies on the subject are likely.

1. *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, March 26, 2001.

Mild Exercise Helps

For those sedentary people who can't bring themselves to get the three hours of brisk walking each week that federal guidelines recommend, a new study suggests that even a nightly 8 1/2 -minute amble can be helpful. According to a paper published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*,² women who took gentle strolls that totaled about one hour per week cut their risk of coronary heart disease in half. The researchers stress that more exercise produces better results, but hope these findings will encourage some otherwise sedentary people to at least get off the couch for a few minutes each day.

2. *JAMA*, March 22, 2001.

Protein for Bone Mass

An analysis of the Framingham osteoporosis study suggests that, at least for the elderly, a high protein intake may help prevent osteoporosis. Using bone density measurements, researchers found that the participants who consumed the most protein, including animal meats, maintained their bone density the best. The volunteers who had low protein diets, about the equivalent of one half of a chicken breast each day (or less), lost a significant amount of bone in the spine and pelvis during the four years of the study.³

3. *OTC*, April 6, 2001, reporting on the work of Marian Hannan of the Hebrew Rehabilitation Center for Aged, Research and Training Institute in Boston.

Vitamin C for the Heart

A study of patients with a wide variety of lifestyles and health conditions, published in *The Lancet*,⁴ concludes that higher blood levels of vitamin C decreased mortality from heart disease by about 20 percent. The vitamin C levels in the subjects were the result of consuming fresh fruits and vegetables. The researchers suggest that as little as one extra serving each day can have a significant impact on disease prevention.

4. *The Lancet*, March 3, 2001.

Weight Gain and Diabetes

A new study from Denmark reinforces observations of many clinical practitioners that weight gain increases the risk of adult-onset diabetes. Researchers tested the glucose tolerance levels of 480 men after charting their weight gains for 30 years, and found abnormal glucose tolerances occurring more than twice as often in those that had gained the most weight. Researchers contend that a 5-10 percent decrease in body weight can significantly reduce a person's risk of diabetes.

Statistics suggest that more than 90 percent of adult-onset diabetes patients are overweight.⁵

5. Reuters, June 1, 2001, reporting on the work of Thorkild Sorensen of the Institute of Preventive Medicine in Copenhagen.

Bad Doctors Unreported

In 1986, Congress created the National Practitioner Data Bank, an attempt to prevent physicians who had been disciplined in one state from moving to another to hide past indiscretions. The database is only open to state licensing boards and certain health care providers who need to make informed decisions about referrals. Unfortunately, it appears that hospitals and HMOs are not reporting disciplinary actions to the database. Despite the high rate of medical errors in the U.S., a new report by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services found that from 1990 to 1999, 84 percent of HMOs failed to report even one physician; about 60 percent of hospitals did the same. The law requires that such institutions report any disciplinary action that affected a doctor's clinical privileges for at least 30 days. Typical reportable events could include unwarranted surgery; operating on the wrong side of a patient's body; having sex with patients; improperly prescribing drugs; and personal drug use.⁶

6. Reuters, May 29, 2001.

For Education, Cash is Trash

German researchers studying increases in educational spending by industrialized nations over the past few decades have concluded that the money was wasted. Scholastic performance, they say, has declined from 1.2 to 3.4 percent in the major countries that have increased spending. For example, the United States has been increasing public school funding about 2.5 percent above the rate of inflation each year, yet the outcome has declined from 1.2 to 2.2 percent, depending on the

criteria used.⁷ Countries that infused much larger amounts of cash into their educational systems fared no better.

7. Reuters, May 24, 2001, reporting on the work of Erich Gundlach and Ludger Woessman of the Kiel Institute of World Economics, and Jens Gmelin of German development bank KfZ.

Abdominal Muscle Exercise

Researchers from San Diego State University, on a quest for the ultimate abdominal exercise, used electromyography to test 13 popular techniques and exercise equipment/gadgets for their effectiveness. The best performer, they say, is an exercise that requires no equipment, called the "bicycle maneuver." The patient lies with the back pressed against the floor, raises the knees, and "pedals" as though riding a bicycle. This produced 250 percent more muscle activity than traditional crunch-style sit-ups.^{8,9}

8. Published in the May-June supplement to the American Council on Exercise's publication, *Fitness Matters*.

9. <http://www.acefitness.org/fitness/index.cfm>.

Jet-Lagged Brains

A new study published in the journal *Neuroscience*¹⁰ concludes that persons who travel long distances by air on a regular basis suffer a form of brain deterioration. The researchers studied MRI brain scans of 20 female flight attendants who had regularly flown across seven time zones for the previous five years. The study found a significant shrinkage of the right temporal lobe among the women who had less time to recover between flights. Mental capacity tests found a diminished ability in the areas of short-term memory and cognition (such as recognizing simple shapes and patterns) in these subjects.

The writers of this work suggest that the effects are the result of disruption of normal circadian rhythms, and thus would also apply to shift workers and other people who do not have regular sleep patterns.

10. *Neuroscience*, May 2001.

Remember Your Walk

A paper presented to a meeting of the American Academy of Neurology¹¹ finds that walking and other moderate exercise is likely to help prevent loss of memory and other mental impairments associated with aging. The study looked at 6,000 elderly women over eight years, using standardized cognitive tests to measure mental capacity. Researchers report that the exercise need not be intensive, as a simple daily walk produces improvements, but note that more exercise appears to produce a greater benefit.

11. May 1, 2001, at the Philadelphia meeting of the American Academy of Neurology; reported by

Reuters.

Reflux Surgery

Patients with severe gastric reflux disease (heartburn) often opt for a surgical repair in the hopes that they can get off their medication, or maybe reduce their risk of cancer from the constant irritation. A new study, however, concludes that they are likely to be disappointed. About two-thirds of such patients, according to this work, still need the medication years after the operation. In addition, there does not appear to be any difference in the rate of cancer between those who have the surgery and those who take only medication.¹² The report yielded one rather interesting statistic: Almost 40 percent of the surgical patients died during the 10 years of the study (mostly from heart disease) compared to about 28 percent of the medicine-only group.

12. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, May 9, 2001.

Fish for the Prostate

A Swedish study of 6,272 men of varied lifestyles suggests that a diet that includes fish offers some protection from prostate cancer. Over the 30 years of this research, 466 of the men developed prostatic carcinoma. A statistical analysis of the data showed that those who consumed no fish were two to three times more likely to be so diagnosed compared to men who consumed moderate to large quantities.¹³ The authors suggest that the omega-3 fatty acid content of seafood is the reason.

13. *The Lancet*, June 2, 2001.

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