

DC Online

Brian Sutton, DC

Smoking and Offspring Behavior

Researchers from Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York report that mothers who smoke during pregnancy are far more likely to experience behavioral problems with their offspring. This study of 99 mothers and their two-year-old children found a fourfold increase of rebelliousness, impulsive behavior, and other parental stressors among those that smoked while carrying children. The researchers speculate that smoking influences the structure and function of the nervous system during the early stages of development, possibly by interfering with fetal oxygen supply.¹

1. *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*, April 2000.

Turmeric Treatment

A compound found in the yellow spice turmeric, thought to have anti-cancer properties, is showing so much promise in early trials that a group of companies is gearing up for large-scale production. The compound, *P54*, extracted from turmeric and used to create pharmaceuticals to treat certain cancers. The compound also acts as an anti-inflammatory agent, and may be used for the treatment of canine arthritis.²

2. Phytopharm signs cancer manufacturing deal in India. Reuters, April 13, 2000.

Vitamin C for the Gall Bladder

A study published in the *Archives of Internal Medicine*³ reports that vitamin C deficiency may make a person more susceptible to gall bladder disease. The study involved more than 13,000 people over six years. Women who had low blood levels of ascorbic acid were more likely to develop symptomatic gallstones. Men showed no such relationship. It is thought that ascorbic acid controls the conversion of cholesterol to bile compounds.

3. *AIM*, April 10, 2000.

Post-Downsizing Disease

Research from Finland suggests that employees who were not laid off during a company's downsizing experienced a decline in health. Psychologists studied absenteeism and medical records of 764 municipal employees who were kept on after large-scale layoffs. These workers began missing work twice as often, and reported five times the number of backaches and other

musculoskeletal problems. The researchers blame stresses related to increased workloads, insecurity, and changes in social relationships.⁴

4. *British Medical Journal*, April 8, 2000.

Anesthesiologists and Suicide

A report in the *New England Journal of Medicine*⁵ reveals that the suicide rate for anesthesiologists is 10 times higher than the general population. Among 500 death certificates examined, 10 percent listed suicide as the cause of death, compared to one percent in the average populace. The deaths weren't all related to an availability of anesthetic drugs: large numbers died from gunshots, hangings or other traumatic self-inflicted injuries. The researchers unsure if the occupation is responsible for the suicide, or if self-destructive people gravitate to that profession.

5. *NEJM*, April 6, 2000.

Elderly Breast Cancer

A study published in the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute*⁶ suggests that breast cancer in patients older than 70 years may not be as dangerous as the same cancer in younger women. Examining records of 300,000 patients, researchers discovered that the eight-year survival rate of women with small tumors and no lymphatic involvement was nearly identical, presumably after treatment, to similarly-aged women with no cancer.

6. *JNCI*, April 5, 2000.

Withholding Antibiotics

A group of pediatric physicians in Rochester, N.Y. conducted a novel study on 383 of their child patients. They practiced what they term "judicious antibiotic use" in children with colds and other upper respiratory infection, i.e., the doctors didn't use antibiotics unless there were clear indications that the child might be suffering from an infection for which antibiotics were effective. The study involved children from infancy to age 12. About 25 percent received antibiotics. In many pediatric practices, most children with upper respiratory infections are given the drugs routinely. The study⁷ concludes that withholding antibiotics from these children did no harm; in fact, fewer children from the nontreatment group needed follow-up care.

7. *Pediatrics*, April 2000.

Soy - but Not Isoflavones - for Breast Cancer

A number of studies have suggested that increased soy consumption helps to prevent breast cancer. Most benefits have been attributed to isoflavone compounds found in soy. Purified isoflavones have subsequently been marketed as a cancer-inhibiting substance. However, a new

study has surprised researchers who were trying to quantify the effect of these compounds. They found that soy protein with the least isoflavonoid content actually worked the best.⁸ More studies are sure to follow.

8. Report to American Association of Cancer Research meeting, San Francisco, April 3, 2000. Dr. Andreas Constantinou, University of Illinois at Chicago.

Walnuts to Lower Cholesterol

The *Annals of Internal Medicine*⁹ reports that walnuts, consumed as part of a low-fat, Mediterranean-style diet, appear to help lower blood cholesterol levels. The study involved older men and women who began the study with levels between 222 and 340 mg/dL. The walnuts were substituted for the olive oil and other foods high in monounsaturated fats, typical of the Mediterranean diet. Cholesterol levels declined four percent more than expected. Overall, walnuts provided about 18 percent of total caloric intake.

9. *AIM*, April 2000.

Training Your Body to Store Fat

Research published in *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise*¹⁰ suggests that working out while restricting food intake may encourage your body to store more fat when it has the opportunity. Athletes were monitored for their energy expenditure and intake on an hourly basis in this study, then body fat measurements were taken. After analyzing the results, the researchers conclude that if you want a leaner body mass, it is better to consume smaller meals more frequently than to eat three meals daily, or to skip on breakfast and lunch to end the day with a big meal. Working out under a calorie deficit, they say, encourages the body to store energy as efficiently as possible when you do finally eat. This translates into more body fat.

10. *MSSE*, April, 2000.

Yew Tree Bark and Hazelnuts

Paclitaxel, a compound from which the cancer drug Taxol is made, was only known to exist in any quantity in the bark of the Pacific yew tree. Now, however, researchers from the University of Portland¹¹ have discovered it in hazelnuts. During an analysis to find out why some hazelnut trees are resistant to a certain type of blight, they found the compound in the nuts, shells, and tree branches. The concentration is about 10 percent of that found in yew tree bark.¹²

11. Led by Angela Hoffman. 12. Meeting of the American Chemical Society in San Francisco. Reuters, March 29, 2000.

House Dust for Asthma

Researchers in Denver, Colorado suggest that low levels of dust around the house may increase the likelihood that a child will develop asthma.¹³ In their study, they measured the levels of bacterial endotoxins in the home environment and compared that to allergic responses of 61 asthmatic babies. They found a dramatic increase in allergic and asthmatic reactions in those babies subjected to low levels of endotoxins at home.

Asthma is one of the world's fastest growing diseases, and is increasingly being thought of as a product of a sterile environment. It is seen much less frequently in rural settings and farms. In effort to reverse this trend, there are trials planned in Britain to inoculate infants with the toxins to which they are no longer being exposed naturally. Very enterprising, I'd say.

13. *Lancet*, May 11, 2000.

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