

## DC Online

Brian Sutton, DC

### Smoking Injuries

A new study of Army recruits in basic training concludes that smokers are more likely to sustain a variety of exercise-related injuries. The research involved 2,000 men and women and was statistically adjusted for a number of factors that might have skewed the results, such as smokers starting out in poorer physical shape at the onset. The recruits, who were not permitted access to cigarettes during basic training were significantly more likely to suffer from blisters, bruises, sprains and broken bones if they were smokers.<sup>1</sup> Other studies have found decreased healing time among smokers, suggesting that these new findings may be due to cumulative microtraumas.

1. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, April 2000.

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### Fiber Foods for Diabetes

A study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*<sup>2</sup> suggests that a high-fiber diet can help control blood sugar levels in diabetics. Researchers found that volunteers who consumed roughly twice the amount of fruits and vegetables recommended by the American Diabetes Association lowered their blood glucose readings by 10 percent during this six-week experiment. The test diet contained 50 grams of fiber per day, which translates to about seven or eight servings of fruits and vegetables, plus three servings of whole wheat or other grains.

2. *JAMA*, May 10, 2000.

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### Home Care for Strokes

A new study reports that stroke patients recover quicker when they're sent home earlier from the hospital. Over 100 patients participated in the randomized study: half were sent home early (after an average of 10 days), while the rest followed through on a typical hospital care regimen, averaging a 16-day hospital stay. After three months, those that went home early were doing many more everyday activities, such as gardening, housework, golf, and keeping in touch with friends and neighbors.<sup>3</sup>

3. *Stroke*, May 2000.

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### Pesticides and Parkinson's

Researchers from Stanford University School of Medicine report a correlation between exposure to

ordinary pesticides used around the home and development of Parkinson's disease.<sup>4</sup> Over 1,000 people were questioned about pesticide use; half of these volunteers had been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. The data suggests that household insecticides double a person's risk of coming down with the disorder. Herbicides also were implicated, but gardening pesticides and fungicides did not seem to have much effect on the statistics.

4. Reported to a meeting of the American Academy of Neurology in San Diego by Lorene Nelson of Stanford, May 5, 2000.

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#### Lead-Based Alzheimer's Disease

Research from Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio<sup>5</sup> points to a significant environmental risks for Alzheimer's disease: lead exposure. The study found that people exposed to lead because of their occupation were more than three times as likely to develop Alzheimer's disease later in life. This category of worker includes welders, potters, munitions workers, and people who work with certain types of inks, among others.

5. Led by Elisabeth Koss, Reuters, May 3, 2000.

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#### Belly Size and Impotence

The Harvard School of Public Health reports that the size of a man's belly appears to influence his chance of becoming impotent. The larger the waist measurement, the more likely a man was to suffer from erectile dysfunction, investigators say. Researchers believe excess weight reduces blood circulation, leading to the disorder. They suggest that a waist size of 42 inches or more in an average-build man is too much.<sup>6</sup>

6. Reuters, reporting on the work of Eric Rimm, et al., May 3, 2000.

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#### Anger-Induced Heart Attacks

Researchers for the University of North Carolina have been quantifying the effects of strong emotion on the cardiovascular system recently. In the journal *Circulation*,<sup>7</sup> they have published a study that finds a threefold increase in the frequency of heart attacks in people who are prone to fits of anger. The effect was especially noticeable in persons of normal blood pressure. This study of 13,000 participants suggests that such heart attacks are not caused by a piece of cholesterol-rich plaque breaking off and clogging a smaller artery, but as a result of blood vessel spasms related to strong emotional states. Of course, clogged arteries would aggravate a heart condition.

7. *Circulation*, May 2000.

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#### Hypnosis for Pain

A Boston study of 241 surgery patients concludes that hypnosis can exert a very strong pain-killing

effect.<sup>8</sup> Their surgeries were mostly vascular-related, intending to clear clogged arteries. No general anesthetic was used, and the patients were allowed to control their own pain medication as needed. In the hypnosis group, half the patients required no pain medication at all; they also had fewer complications during the surgery. In addition, surgeries went faster, apparently because of fewer distractions caused by such complications.

8. *The Lancet*, April 29, 2000.

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#### Diabetics Must Keep Moving to Stay Alive

Research from Dallas' Cooper Institute for Aerobics Research<sup>9</sup> concludes that diabetics live longer if they stay physically active. The study involved more than 1,200 men with type II diabetes over 12 years. Sedentary men died at a rate twice that of physically active men. The work did not distinguish between various types of exercise.

9. *Annals of Internal Medicine*, April 27, 2000.

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#### Salmonella Developing Drug Resistance in Cattle

A recent case of salmonella infection in a young boy is worrying health officials, because the strain turned out to be resistant to one of the very few antibiotics thought to be still effective against most bacteria: ceftriaxone (brand name Rocephin). The bacteria was also resistant to a dozen other antibiotics. Further tests revealed that the bacteria came from cattle (from the family's ranch in Nebraska), which had been recently treated with ceftriaxone. The case is documented in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.<sup>10</sup>

10. *NEJM*, April 27, 2000.

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#### Dialysis Problems

Old dialysis equipment is being blamed for severe reactions in kidney patients, ranging from severe headaches to loss of vision and hearing. Investigators found that a fiber used in dialysis machines across the country breaks down with age, releasing chemical byproducts into the patient's blood. The problem was brought to the attention of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 1996 after seven patients at an Alabama hospital had such reactions within 24 hours of treatment. In that case, the dialyzers were more than 11 years old.<sup>11</sup>

11. *JAMA*, April 26, 2000.

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#### Skewed Statistics

Researchers from Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, considering the question of whether or not prostate screenings save lives, are warning that statistics may not be a reliable way to answer this question. After searching through 4,000 medical records, their paper, published in the *Journal*

of the National Cancer Institute,<sup>12</sup> suggests that in many cases the listed cause of death may not be accurate. They suspect that many doctors are reluctant to list prostate cancer as a patient's cause of death if they have undergone aggressive treatment, as this would be an admittance that the treatment failed. They say that prostate screening evaluations should take this bias into account.

12. *JNCI*, April 2000; Dr. Craig Newschaffer, et al.

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