

DC On-Line (Chiropractic Research)

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Hospital Errors Reduced by Computers

Researchers testing a new computerized prescription procedure at a large hospital in Boston were able to cut serious adverse effects of medication errors by 55 percent. The computer limited doses to reasonable amounts and checked for medication allergies and drug interactions. According to the researchers, though, a large portion of the lessening of harm to patients was that the doctors were required to type the prescription into a computer. This precluded errors caused by illegible handwriting, apparently a big problem.¹

1. *JAMA*, October 21, 1998.

White Meat and Colon Cancer

Researchers at Loma Linda University in California are suggesting that fish and chicken eaters are just as likely to contract colon cancer as are those who eat red meat. Their study of 34,000 people found that the cancer rates were similar for both groups, but higher than rates for strict vegetarians. The cancer rates correlated well with the amount of meat consumed on a weekly basis. Those eating meat four times a week or more had three times the risk of the vegetarians.²

2. Drs. Singh and Fraser, *American Journal of Epidemiology*, October 1998.

Neck Manipulation by MD Causes Death

A coroner's inquest in Australia reveals the sad case of a 36-year-old man who died at the hands of a general practitioner performing spinal manipulations. The man's mother pleaded with her son to see her chiropractor when he told her that he nearly passed out after the first treatment. He did not heed her warnings and returned for another neck manipulation. Shortly after that last treatment, he suffered a fatal stroke. The doctor admitted that no x-rays or detailed case history were taken. A chiropractor that was called as an expert witness in the case stressed the importance of training in spinal manipulation, doing a thorough case history and x-ray studies in patients with spinal pain.³

3. Australian Associated Press, November 17, 1998. "Warning over untrained spinal manipulation by GPs," concerning the death of Graeme "Brett" Ormiston.

Overcooking and Breast Cancer

A study published in the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute*⁴ suggests that women who prefer their meat well-done are at a higher risk for breast cancer. Compared to those who consumed most of their meats in a rare to medium state of doneness, their chances of suffering from the disease were more than 400 percent higher. Charred meat is known to contain many carcinogens, which the researchers speculate led to the cancers they saw. However, they caution that undercooking meats can cause a much more immediate health danger.

4. *JNCI*, November 1998

Football and Domestic Violence

A few years ago, a coalition of women's groups claimed that professional football games caused an increase in domestic violence of up to 40 percent. Now a new study is challenging that contention. A three-year study of calls to the Los Angeles County sheriff's office found no difference between football Sundays and Sundays when no game was played. An exception, though, was during the playoffs and the Super Bowl, but only if a local team was involved. The football game itself, researchers conclude, does not increase aggression.⁵

5. Presented at the annual meeting of the American Public Health Association in Washington, D.C., November 17, 1998, by Lawrence D. Chu of UCLA.

Cooking Garlic

A researcher from Pennsylvania State University⁶ says that roasting or microwaving garlic can weaken its anti-cancer properties if not done properly. One minute in the microwave or 45 minutes in the oven is enough to completely destroy garlic's benefits, unless measures are taken. He says to crush or chop the garlic and let it stand for 10 minutes before being heated. For whole roasted garlic, some benefits can be preserved by cutting off the top of the bulb before heating.⁷

6. John Milner, head of the department of nutrition.

7. United Press, November 16, 1998.

Clogged Artery Surgery

A procedure called carotid endarterectomy, the surgical removal of blockages from the carotid arteries, first became popular during the 1980s as a stroke preventive measure. New research is suggesting that the operation may be overused and have limited benefits.⁸ Canadian researchers say that for vessels that are less than 50 percent occluded, there is no benefit at all. A slight benefit may be ascribed to the technique for higher blockages, up to 69 percent, but a clear benefit can be shown only after the artery is 70 percent stenosed.

Unfortunately, these numbers only apply to the best surgeons in the field. For others, the picture is not so good, as the surgery itself can easily lead to a stroke. Another study notes that many hospitals in the United States and Canada show a much higher mortality rate for this procedure than is

typically reported in medical journals.⁹

8. *NEJM*, November 12, 1998.

9. Dr. Jack V. Tu, et al. *NEJM*, November 12, 1998.

Niacin for Cholesterol

A researcher from Duke University in North Carolina reports that niacin appears to have a positive effect on blood levels of HDL, the "good" cholesterol. He compared a time-release form of the vitamin to a known HDL-raising drug (gemfibrozil) and found that the niacin worked twice as well.

Volunteers taking niacin raised their HDL levels an average of 26 percent during the study.¹⁰

10. Reported to the annual meeting of the American Heart Association in Dallas, November 11, 1998, by Dr. John Guyton.

Smoking Moms

If you're a mother who doesn't want her children to fall into the smoking habit trap, consider this. Research shows that if you smoke, your preschoolers are six times more likely to already be planning to smoke when they grow up. Researchers interviewed 504 preschoolers in upstate New York and note that 70 percent said they expected to smoke when they were older. The largest percentage of these had mothers who smoked. A father who lights up also had an impact, but only to half the extent.¹¹

11. Reported by Dr. Christine Williams of the Child Health Center at the American Health Foundation, Valhalla, N.Y., to the American Heart Association meeting in Dallas, November 10, 1998.

Exercise for Heart Attack Victims

A survey of 5,000 physicians who had suffered one heart attack suggests that regular exercise dramatically improves one's future survival chances. The doctors were asked how frequently they exercised each week to the point of "breaking a sweat." Those that did this two to four times each week decreased their risk of dying from any cause by 40 percent and from another heart attack by 50 percent.¹² The research was done by Dr. Michael Gaziano of Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston.

12. Reuter, November 10, 1998.

Intelligence and Heart Disease

A new study reports a strong correlation between risk factors for heart disease and problems with cognitive abilities. In a 50-year study of nearly 1,800 volunteers, it was discovered that as they aged, their thinking abilities seemed to decrease in proportion to the number of risk factors they had for heart disease. These factors include smoking, diabetes, high blood pressure and obesity.

None of the subjects had cognitive impairments at the start of the study, but as they aged, a series of neurophysiological tests began to show differences that had occurred gradually over the years. Each additional risk factor showed a strong corresponding amount of mental decline.¹³

13. United Press, reporting on the work of Dr. Merrill Elias of the University of Maine-Orono, November 9, 1998.

Nuts for the Heart

Researchers from Harvard Medical School in Boston report that men who eat a lot of nuts seem to be resistant to sudden deaths from heart disease, especially fatal arrhythmias such as ventricular fibrillation. In fact, those who consumed the highest quantity of nuts had the lowest risk for any heart-related death, even after adjusting for age, exercise, blood pressure, cholesterol, diabetes and alcohol. It is thought that alpha-linolenic acid is responsible for a large portion of the healthy effects of nuts. The study analyzed data from the 12-year Physicians Health Study that involved more than 22,000 subjects.¹⁴

14. United Press, reporting on the work of Dr. Christine Albert.

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