

## DC On-Line (Chiropractic Research)

Brian Sutton, DC

### Heart Disease and Women

A common misconception in the United States is that women are resistant to heart disease. This is only true until menopause, when they quickly catch up. A study published in the *British Medical Journal*<sup>1</sup> reports that more women die of heart disease than men in the U.S. -- a quarter of a million each year. This is 10 times the number that die from breast cancer. The paper blames this mortality, in part, on being overweight, smoking, and lack of exercise.

1. *BMJ*, October 23, 1997.

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### Mouse Strain

Research at San Francisco State University suggests that computer operators who use a mouse frequently tend to suffer from increased tension in their necks and shoulders. They found twice the muscle spasm and tightness in these workers than in those who used a keyboard only. The problem appears to result from prolonged periods of time with the arm extended. Frequent breaks, as short as one second, and better ergonomics can greatly alleviate the problem.<sup>2</sup>

2. United Press, reporting on the work of Erik Peper of SFSU, October 20, 1997.

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### Fighting Bacteria with Bacteria

A researcher<sup>3</sup> from Griffin, Georgia has been tackling the public health problem of bacteria contamination in cattle by adding more germs. He cultured strains of normal animal intestinal flora that inhibit some of the more dangerous bacteria, and fed them to calves. In three weeks, *E. coli* 0157, a strain that is blamed for a number of ill effects in humans, was practically eliminated from the animals.<sup>4</sup>

3. Michael Doyle, of Georgetown University in Washington.

4. Associated Press, October 29, 1997.

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### Medicine Mouth

Speakers at a recent meeting of the American Dental Association<sup>5</sup> warned attendees that various prescription drugs can have profound effects on dental and oral health. One case discussed was that of a man who developed a large black hole on the outside of one of his front teeth, the result of

his habit of dissolving his nitroglycerin tablet under his top lip. About one in five patients taking calcium channel blockers develop gum swelling that can lead to periodontal disease or require surgery.

Anti-epilepsy drugs and anti-hyperactivity medications given to children can cause similar problems. One expert reported on an adult whose teeth could just barely be seen above the gum line. Cyclosporin can cause a massive gum overgrowth that mimics that seen in leukemia patients. About 400 drugs cause drying of the mouth; without adequate saliva, cavities develop much more rapidly, as do fungal infections and plaque.<sup>6</sup>

5. October 20, 1997, conference in Washington.

6. Associated Press, October 20, 1997.

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### Heavy Holidays

Here's a way to compare how much self-control you exerted this holiday season compared to the average U.S. citizen: Salisbury State University says the average American gains six pounds between Thanksgiving and New Year's. Some, I imagine, are fortunate enough to get rid of most of those by the following Thanksgiving.<sup>7</sup>

7. United Press, November 28, 1997.

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### Dry Cleaning and Miscarriages

British researchers report that women exposed to certain cleaning solvents, specifically those who work with perchloroethylene in dry cleaning establishments, have a miscarriage rate of about 20 percent. That is about twice the risk seen in other similarly matched women, according to a paper published in the journal *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*.<sup>8</sup> Other studies in Sweden and the United States have shown similar results.

8. *OEM*, November 1997; Dr. Pat Doyle, et al.

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### Osteoporosis from Arthritis Treatments

The president of the National Osteoporosis Foundation is recommending that older persons who are being treated medically for arthritis might want to be periodically tested for osteoporosis. Corticosteroids, quite often the drug used by medical physicians on these people, contribute to bone demineralization and may thus cause or accelerate a crippling osteoporotic condition in the patient.<sup>9</sup>

9. United Press, reporting on a statement by Dr. Robert Lindsay of the National Osteoporosis Foundation, November 25, 1997.

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## Sparse Sperm

A new analysis of 61 studies published since 1938 concludes that sperm counts are indeed declining worldwide, at least in industrialized countries like the United States and most of Europe. Researchers from the California Department of Health Services, publishing their report in the National Institute of *Environmental Health Sciences* journal,<sup>10</sup> report that the average U.S. sperm counts falls by about 1.5 percent each year; in Europe, the figure is just over 3 percent.

The work was prompted by controversy and charges that a similar earlier effort was biased or flawed, but investigators, some of who were also skeptical,<sup>11</sup> were unable to substantiate those contentions. They did note that a number of countries (Brazil, Israel, Thailand, India, and a few others) showed minimal or no decline.

10. *NIEHS Journal*, November 24, 1997.

11. United Press, November 24, 1997.

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## Leaky Breast Implants

The FDA has released a report that indicates that silicone breast implants do indeed rupture, and the rates are much higher than some would have us believe. Manufacturers say there may be a .2 to 1.1 percent failure rate. However, one study reviewed by the FDA put the leakage rate at over 60 percent. The problem seems to be time-related: at first, the implants are stable, but after 20 years, both implants are likely to be intact in only about 5 percent of women. Most of the ruptures had no obvious physical cause, but a few were the result of medical procedures such as mammography and scar tissue manipulation, gunshot wounds, falls, and other accidents. Silicone leakage turns up in lymph nodes, upper arms, chest, elbows, hands, and the liver.<sup>12</sup>

12. *The Lancet*, November 22, 1997.

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## Pregnancy Drug Warning

The FDA, prompted by the National Women's Health Network, has issued warnings against the use of at-home terbutaline pumps. These are devices used by thousands of pregnant women in the hopes of preventing premature labor. The device continuously pumps the asthma drug "terbutaline" into the women's system. This drug is not approved for such use, though many hospitals use it for that purpose routinely. The FDA says there is no evidence that it does any good, and quite a lot (including at least one woman's death) that it is harmful.<sup>13</sup>

13. Associated Press, November 19, 1997.

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## Nursing Home Drugs

A study by the U.S. Inspector General of the Department of Health and Human Services paints a sorry picture of medical treatment in Texas nursing homes. This work reports that one in five

residents receive drugs that are inappropriate for elderly citizens. Another 20 percent are getting at least two drugs with potentially dangerous interactions. The report was released by Senator Chuck Grassley of Iowa, who chairs the Senate Special Committee on Aging.<sup>14</sup>

14. Reuter, November 17, 1997.

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### Mexican Lead

Researchers from the University of California-Irvine have discovered some significant sources of lead in Mexican communities. The lead comes from not only pottery glazes, which they found quite prevalent, but also from traditional infant analgesics. They note that medicaments known as "greta" or "azaron" (also known as sleeping powders), which are used for colic and constipation, can be up to 90 percent lead.<sup>15</sup>

15. Associated Press, November 16, 1997, "Lead Poisoning."

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