

DC On-Line (Chiropractic Research)

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Human Guinea Pigs

Have you ever wondered about the people who volunteer to be guinea pigs when a pharmaceutical company needs to test its product? According to research done by a newspaper called the Cleveland Plain Dealer, it doesn't necessarily happen that way. They found that in 63 percent of government-backed research during the past nineteen years, patients may not have been aware that their treatment was experimental research. One incident you may recall from earlier this year involved the Edmonston-Zagreb (E-Z) vaccine that was given to children in Los Angeles county. The latest¹ is a British Hepatitis A vaccine given to American Indian children, sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control. According to the paper, there are still many research projects ongoing that have not received informed consent from their subjects.

1. Associated Press, December 21, 1996.

Other "Benefits" of Smoking: Less Hair and More Gray

As if cigarette smoke wasn't already bad enough, a researcher at the Leigh Infirmary in Lancashire, England, reports that it will also turn your hair gray -- if you get to keep any hair at all. He found a significant increase in hair loss and graying among smokers, reporting that they are twice as likely to lose your hair or be gray at a certain age. Combine this with previous research that indicates that smoking gives you wrinkles, perhaps vanity could be a good motivation to kick the habit.²

2. *British Medical Journal*, December 21, 1996.

Let the Sunshine In

According to *The Lancet*,³ sunshine is enough to kill a significant number of pathogenic microbes in drinking water. Research in Kenya shows that leaving drinking water out in the sun for a few hours decreases the incidence of diarrheal disease by one third. The water was collected from the usual watering holes and then placed in bottles on the roof from dawn until noon to expose it to ultraviolet radiation before consumption.

3. *The Lancet*, December 21, 1996.

Red Pills for Pep

An analysis of 12 studies on the psychological effects of pill color has found some interesting patterns. Researchers report that the color of a medication has its own therapeutic effect. It seems that a red, yellow, or orange tablet will cause patients to report more alertness, while blue, green and purple make the patient feel sleepy. Apparently, many manufacturers are already taking this effect into account when designing their products.⁴

4. *British Medical Journal*, December 21, 1996.

Bypass Surgery and the Brain

A new study of over 2,000 patients⁵ suggests that previous research citing strokes as one possible consequence of cardiac bypass surgery may have underestimated the problem by a factor of 10. This work says that 3% of patients experience a stroke or fatal brain injury. Another 3% have seizures, memory loss, or a decreased IQ afterward. One of the members of the research group says that the actual effects may be much worse, since this study did not take into account the minor memory loss and disturbed concentration seen very frequently before the patients are released from their hospital stay. One of the causes is thought to be fat deposits dislodged from the aorta by surgical clamps.

5. *New England Journal of Medicine*, December 19, 1996.

Alzheimer's Disease and Electromagnetics

Research at the University of Southern California⁶ finds that workers exposed to high electromagnetic fields are three to five times more likely to suffer from Alzheimer's disease later in life. The levels studied were much higher than those that would be created by a nearby power line - - these workers were in constant proximity on-the-job to an electrical motor such as a power tool or a sewing machine.

6. *Neurology*, December, 1996.

Sugar Keeps Cereal out of Assistance Program

The federal government's Women, Infants, and Children's Program feeds more than seven million people each year. The Agriculture Department disallows certain foods from the program based on certain properties such as sugar content. That locks out one of the Kellogg Company's more popular cereals, and so the company is petitioning the Secretary of Agriculture to reconsider the restriction. According to one agricultural economist,⁷ the company wants to get the product to children so they will acquire a taste for it that will last into adulthood. A large rival cereal company is working with a number of smaller concerned organizations to oppose the change. The product? Kellogg's Raisin Bran. The excessive sugar is the natural sugar contained in all those raisins.⁸

7. Purdue University's John Connor.

8. Associated Press, "Cereal War," December 21, 1996.

Amalgam and Antibiotic Resistance

Researchers from the University of Georgia and University of Calgary, Alberta contend that increasing bacterial resistance to antibiotics is due, in part, to the wide prevalence of amalgam fillings. They have discovered that the genetic material that increases resistance to mercury poisoning found on the same plasmid as that which allows microbes to survive antibiotic onslaughts. They say that mercury from fillings kills off the non-resistant bacterial flora, which allows an increase in number of the stronger varieties, which are also more resistant to popular antibiotics.⁹

9. Presented by Anne Summers of the University of Georgia to the annual meeting of the American Society for Microbiology.

Anesthesia-Induced Infections

Propofol, a popular anesthesia (sold under the brand name Diprivan) has been blamed for an outbreak of hospital infections in a number of states since 1990. At least six people have died from infective organisms that grew in the drug before it was administered. Propofol is apparently a good culture medium for a number of microbes, and the manufacturer specifies that any unused amount be discarded six hours after the vials are opened. An editorial in the *New England Journal of Medicine*¹⁰ suggests that the problem is actually much worse because of under-reporting.

10. *NEJM*, July 18, 1996.

Marijuana: How Addictive?

Research from the Medical College of Virginia suggests that marijuana is more addictive than many think. Rat studies there produced bizarre symptoms when the drug was withheld, such as arching backs, walking backwards, and what they call "wet-dog shakes."¹¹ Another study has found late effects on children whose mothers smoked marijuana during pregnancy. At age 4, the children began showing signs of impairment of verbal reasoning and memory. Attention spans suffered by age 7, and by their pre-teen years they were less able to do strategic planning.¹² Marijuana use in the United States was declining until 1992; it has been steadily increasing since then.

11. Presented at the National Institute on Drug Abuse's Conference on Marijuana, July 19, 1996.

12. Peter Fried from Carlton University in Ontario, presenting at the same conference.

Mast Cells Save Lives

Mast cells, responsible for many immunological reactions and often considered to be a nuisance at best, are a very important component of the body's defense mechanisms, report researchers in Munich.¹³ In one experiment, mice specially bred to produce fewer mast cells all died after acquiring an infection that killed only 25 percent of normal mice. The researchers believe that mast

cells are a crucial part of the body's anti-bacterial defenses.

13. *Nature*, May, 1996.

Selenium May Inhibit Cancer

A report in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*¹⁴ tells of a study of over 1300 skin cancer patients that tested selenium supplements against a placebo. Selenium didn't help the skin cancer, but there were 50 percent fewer deaths from other types such as colorectal, prostatic, and lung cancers. The study lasted a little less than four years, and the average age of the subjects was 63. The amount of selenium used was three times the RDA.

14. *JAMA*, December 25, 1996.

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