

DC On-Line (Chiropractic Research)

Brian Sutton, DC

Blood Warning

The World Health Organization is issuing recommendations that people at risk for Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (CJD), the human version of bovine spongiform encephalopathy or Mad Cow Disease, should not donate blood. The decision is based largely on the findings of a study by researchers at the U.S. National Institutes of Health. The study suggests that blood may act as a carrier. The WHO says that at-risk persons are: those who received human growth hormone shots during the 1980s (made from pituitary extracts; some of which have shown signs of the disease); people related to someone who has died of CJD (a genetic component is suspected); and persons who have received dura mater transplants during neurosurgery.¹

1. Reuter, March 27, 1997.

Blood Donors Who Lie

A study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*² finds that there are a number of blood donors that lie about risky behavior that would otherwise eliminate them from the blood pool. About one in every 50 subjects queried admitted that they had been less than truthful when responding to the screening questions asked of them before giving blood.

2. *JAMA*, March 26, 1997.

Debunking Circumcision

Research conducted at the University of Chicago challenges the belief that circumcision reduces a man's risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases. This study of more than 1,300 men found that those circumcised actually had a somewhat greater incidence of most bacterial and viral STDs. The most striking difference though was the incidence of chlamydia: 26 men of the surgically altered group reported having the infection, none were reported in the uncircumcised men.³

3. *JAMA*, April 2, 1997.

Genetic Therapy for Iatrogenic Disease

Scientists from the National Institute of Dental Research in Bethesda, Maryland, report that they are making progress in genetic therapy that will benefit cancer patients. They are genetically altering salivary duct cells to produce saliva so they may take over for salivary glands destroyed by

radiation treatment.⁴ They hope the procedure will help patients better live with the results of their medical care.

4. United Press, Health Notes, April 1, 1997.

Another Reason to Drink Red Wine

France's National Institute of Health and Scientific Research has published a study that suggests moderate amounts of red wine reduce the chance of senility and Alzheimer's disease. Researchers say the incidence was about 75 percent less among subjects who drank 2-4 glasses each day compared to non-drinkers. According to this study, more is not better -- heavy drinkers gained less of a benefit.⁵

5. Associated Press, March 27, 1997.

Cancer Treatment Causing Cancer

Researchers from the National Cancer Institute, following up on patients treated for cancer, have found that the treatment itself seems to produce cancers of its own years later. This work looked at bone marrow transplant, a technique that uses chemotherapy and radiation to kill the patient's bone marrow before transplanting cells from a donor. After 15 years, seven percent had developed cancers unrelated to the original. At highest risk were children, while older patients seemed to fare better.⁶ The cancers are similar, notes one commentator, to those seen in post World-War II Japan and attributed to atomic radiation.

6. *NEJM*, March 27, 1997.

New Diabetic Guidelines Considered

The American Diabetes Association and a number of international health organizations are considering new guidelines for the diagnosis and treatment of diabetes. The difference is in a broader definition, meaning that millions more people will be classified as diabetic, most of whom are now considered "borderline." The diagnostic blood glucose level will drop from 140 to 125 if these new guidelines are implemented. Proponents hope the change will stimulate earlier preventive measures and treatment. A decision is expected by the end of this summer. About 160,000 Americans die from diabetic complications each year.⁷

7. United Press, March 25, 1997.

Exercise to Reduce Colon Cancer

A Harvard study of more than 121,000 women finds that exercise reduces the risk of colon cancer. As little as a half-hour each day of walking reduced the incidence by 17 percent, but more strenuous exercisers cut their risk in half. The findings were reported at a press briefing by the

American Cancer Society in March.⁸ It appears that the exercise can be spread out into numerous short intervals during the day instead of one daily exercise period.

8. United Press, March 24, 1997.

Massage Eases Symptoms of Dermatitis

Researchers presented a study in March to the American Academy of Dermatology⁹ that looked at massage for treatment of dermatitis in children. The found that massage significantly reduced the symptoms of atopic dermatitis, including itching, scaling, redness and scratch marks. The study finds both clinical improvements and psychosocial benefits of the treatment.¹⁰

9. The American Academy of Dermatology meeting in San Francisco, March 21, 1997.

10. Presented by Dr. Lawrence Schachner of the University of Miami.

Gamma Form of Vitamin E Better

A new study at the University of California, Berkeley,¹¹ suggests that the popular form of vitamin E, alpha-tocopherol, does an incomplete job as an antioxidant by itself. Another form, gamma-tocopherol, neutralizes substances such as peroxynitrite (a nitric oxide radical associated with inflammation) that is not affected by the alpha variety. In fact, it appears that large doses of alpha-tocopherol inhibit any gamma-tocopherol that may be present. The researchers speculate that doses larger than 100 iu per day may be counterproductive.

11. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, April 1, 1997.

Short Workouts Help with Depression

Short, vigorous workouts can have a dramatic effect on the mind, say researchers at Duke University.¹² As little as eight minutes of exercise seems to decrease symptoms in patients with clinical depression. Most of the subjects reported an increased vigor after the workouts, which consisted of walking at a fast rate on a treadmill. The findings are expected to have an important impact on patients who would like to improve their condition while avoiding or decreasing medication.

12. Kathleen Moore, in a presentation to the Annual Meeting of the Society of Behavioral Medicine in San Francisco, April 18, 1997.

Redux on the Brain

There is rising concern the popular anti-obesity drug Redux, approved just over a year ago by the FDA, may have some untoward neurological effects. Patients taking the medication have already been shown to have a much higher risk of pulmonary hypertension; animal studies show that the

drug can damage nerve cell structures that produce serotonin. The drug is supposed to be used only on severely obese patients, but of course that doesn't mean it won't be prescribed indiscriminately.

An Associated Press researcher found one case of a 120 pound, 38-year-old woman who "died inexplicably"¹³ after two months on the drug, and a high percentage of patients weighing below the government guidelines who were given prescriptions. A number of deaths have been blamed on Redux, including at least three suicides. The FDA had approved the drug on the condition that the manufacturer further investigate the neurological effects, but so far (after a year) no studies have started.

13. Associated Press, April 18, 1997.

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