

## DC Online (Chiropractic Research)

Brian Sutton, DC

### Staph Infections May Soon Become Unstoppable

Japan has the honor of being the first to report cases of a strain of staphylococcus aureus that can resist vancomycin, the only antibiotic effective against the bacteria. One young hospitalized patient remained infected with the organism after a month of treatment. The new strain demonstrated an "intermediate level of resistance."

Officials at the Centres for Disease Control will now be closely watching for the inevitable cases to appear in the U.S. Staphylococcal infections are particularly worrisome to health officials because they are so easily spread on the hands of health care workers.<sup>1</sup>

1. Common infection may become untreatable, CDC says. Reuter, May 28, 1997.

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### ICU Bugs

While bacteria are becoming increasingly untreatable by conventional medical means, none are evolving so fast and furious as those in your local hospital's intensive care unit. A drug- resistance expert at New York's Rockefeller University<sup>2</sup> says that ICU units are the "single most infectious place in the world when it comes to antibiotic-resistant bacteria."<sup>3</sup> A study published in the CDC's Clinical Infectious Diseases<sup>4</sup> blames excessive use of antibiotics, liberal amounts of medical tubing, and other factors for the problem. In the case of some species of bacteria, those living in the ICU's are twice as likely to be resistant to antibiotics as those found in other areas of the hospital.

2. Dr. Alexander Tomasz.
3. Associated Press, May 25, 1997.
4. Clinical Infectious Diseases, February, 1997.

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### Communion Health

Researchers from Felician College in Lodi, New Jersey, took up a question that has been debated in churches for years. Does participating in Holy Communion increase the chance of illness for parishioners? According to their study, the answer is no. Looking at 681 people over a 10 week period, they found no difference between people who take communion as frequently as every day, versus those who never even attend church.<sup>5</sup> An earlier study by the same group that found bacteria living on communal vessels.

5. Reported to the annual meeting of the American Society for Microbiology in May by Anne LaGrange Loving.

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## Vitamin E for Immunity

A Tufts University study concludes that vitamin E helps fortify the immune system in the elderly. In a small, placebo-controlled study among persons aged 65 and older, researchers found that four months of 200 mg supplementation (about 286 IU of natural forms of vitamin E) increased T-cell activity by 65 percent. The response of these same volunteers to a hepatitis B shot was elevated six-fold. Two other daily dosages were tried, 60 mg and 800 mg. The highest dose didn't seem to produce any additional benefits. The authors conclude that 200 mg is the optimum amount.<sup>6</sup> They will next investigate how this may translate into protection from illness. The current RDA is 10 mg.

6. *JAMA*, May 7, 1997.

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## Guidelines Say Doctors Should Stop Routine Annual Testing of Breast Cancer Patients

Guidelines published in the *Journal of Clinical Oncology*<sup>7</sup> say that doctors should stop routinely ordering expensive annual tests such as chest X-rays, bone scans, liver and other blood chemistry for their patients who have had breast cancer. The authors say the tests do not affect survival and probably waste about \$1 billion a year.<sup>8</sup> Breast self-examination, mammograms, and physicals will detect a problem just as easily, they contend. The study examined clinical trials over the past 20 years, and while sophisticated tests were able to detect new cases of cancer, "It wasn't any earlier than if you just examined the patient and took a history."

7. *Journal of Clinical Oncology*, May, 1997.

8. Associated Press interview with Dr. David Schapira, May 2, 1997.

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## Ideal Weight

A study of nearly 8,000 British men concludes that the ideal body mass index (BMI) of an adult male, at least for optimum health and longevity, is 22. The BMI is calculated by dividing your weight, in kg, by the square of your height in meters. An index of 22 is somewhat below the norm. This work examined death rates in men aged 40-59.<sup>9</sup>

9. *British Medical Journal*, May 3, 1997.

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## Arthritic? Exercise

You can add new research done at the University of Missouri, Columbia to the growing number of studies that conclude exercise is good for patients with arthritis. In a study of about 200 arthritis patients averaging 49 years old, those who stayed with the program significantly improved their general physical condition over the two-year study. Exercises included walking, stretching, stationary biking, aquatics, or aerobic dance. By comparison, non-exercisers tended to get worse as time went on.<sup>10</sup>

10. Preliminary results presented at a news conference by Marian A. Minor; Associated Press, May 4, 1997.

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#### Bundle up for Life

The Eurowinter Group, a European research coalition, finds that the people most likely to die from a heart attack, stroke, or respiratory illness during a cold snap are those that live in warm climates.<sup>11</sup> In Athens, the death rate increased 2.15 percent for every drop of 1.8 degrees Fahrenheit below 64. In Finland, a much colder climate, the increase was only .27 percent. Researchers blamed the findings on unpreparedness for cool weather, including lack of warm clothing and home heating.

11. *The Lancet*, May 10, 1997.

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#### Virus/Cancer Link

A new study at the University of Nebraska Medical Center adds credence to the idea that certain reproductive cancers may be related to an underlying viral infection. Researchers studied tumors from more than 1,000 women suffering from breast and uterine cancer. They found that 95 percent of the tumors contained compounds called RAK proteins, which are not manufactured by human cells. They are, however, produced as a result of a number of virus infections, including HIV, leading to speculation that many of these cancers are related to sexual activity.<sup>12</sup>

12. Reported to the American Society for Microbiology in Miami, Florida, May 10, 1997 by Eva Rakowicz-Szulczynska.

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#### Breathing Mask Cures Snorer/Bedwetter

A letter published in *The Lancet*<sup>13</sup> describes the case of an elderly man who, after undergoing prostate surgery, began wetting the bed twice each night. He also had a snoring problem, which annoyed his wife so much that they sought treatment. Doctors prescribed a pressurized breathing mask during the night to keep his airways open. To everyone's surprise, the bedwetting stopped, as well as the snoring.

13. *The Lancet*, May 31, 1997.

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#### War on Cancer: a Qualified Failure

A University of Chicago researcher who follows cancer trends says that research has failed to make any significant progress in cancer treatment. This study, which examined cancer mortality from 1970 through 1994, comes to a similar conclusion as an earlier one by the same author. In 1986, Dr. John Bailar concluded that "some 35 years of intense effort focused largely on improving treatment must be judged a qualified failure." Bailar says his latest study is just as disheartening. He urges that efforts be redirected into prevention. Even though certain types of cancers have

declined somewhat in recent years, he says treatment has little to do with the improvement. Instead, decreases in smoking and other factors seem to have more of an effect.<sup>14</sup>

14. *New England Journal of Medicine*, May 19, 1997.

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### Retinoic Acid for Emphysema

Doctors working with laboratory rats at Georgetown University School of Medicine say they have been able to reverse some of the effects of emphysema. A derivative of vitamin A, retinoic acid, restored the lung's air sacs to normal size and number, they say. The research will be published in an upcoming edition of *Nature Medicine*.<sup>15</sup>

15. United Press, May 28, 1997, reporting on the work of Drs. Gloria De Carlo Massaro and Donald Massaro.

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