

DC On-Line (Chiropractic Research)

Brian Sutton, DC

Antibiotics: Improper Treatment for Ear Infections

Another paper published in the *British Medical Journal*¹ reproaches doctors for prescribing antibiotics routinely for ear infections in their pediatric patients. It reports on an analysis of existing studies relating to such treatment and concludes that not only is the practice a waste of time and money, it appears to be harmful. Antibiotics don't speed recovery (in fact, at least one previous study suggests that they lead to more recurrences) and liberal use promotes proliferation of stronger germs. British researchers estimate that 97 percent of physicians routinely prescribe antibiotics for ear infections.

1. *BMJ*, July 23, 1997.

IV Food Supplements

Japanese officials investigating certain hospital deaths have so far confirmed that 41 cases were a direct result of intravenous food supplements. Since 1990, quite a number of deaths have been blamed on certain high-calorie, high electrolyte foodstuffs. Early danger signals include low blood pressure, memory failure, and loss of consciousness. The problems are thought to be due to a vitamin B1 deficiency. Japanese authorities recently ordered the major manufacturers to supply safety information with their product. A similar directive was issued in 1991, but was largely ignored.²

2. Reuter, June 23, 1997.

Preeclampsia and Calcium

In the largest study of its kind, a government-sponsored study finds that calcium supplementation has no effect on the incidence of preeclampsia. Researchers watched more than 4,500 pregnant women, some of who received 2,000 mg calcium supplements, the rest receiving placebos. There was no difference in preeclampsia rates. A few smaller, earlier studies had suggested there might be a benefit.³

3. *New England Journal of Medicine*, July 10, 1997.

Workaholics May Be Healthy

Most people, including clinicians, think of workaholism as being harmful to the individual.

However, a few experts in the field are suggesting that some types may actually be beneficial. They distinguish between workers who are obsessing because of a lack of other interests in their life, those who simply have a tremendous workload and feel out of control, and persons who really enjoy the work they're doing. The latter group may actually be happier working long hours than they would if forced into non-productive or otherwise "less enjoyable" activities.⁴

4. Reuter, reporting on work by Marcia Miceli, Ohio State University's Max Fisher College of Business, et al.

Hypertension and Brain Shrinkage

A study published in the journal *Stroke*⁵ finds that hypertensive individuals tend to exhibit atrophy in certain areas of their brain. The temporal and occipital lobes, responsible for such things as memory, language, and portions of the intellect, seem to be affected. The effect is more pronounced in older individuals, but it does not seem to be caused by aging alone -- only those with high blood pressure showed the atrophy.

The researchers noted that the degeneration was seen "despite drug therapy" for the condition. I would have liked to see a comparison to individuals that had no drug therapy. One could argue that some types of hypertension are caused by the body's efforts to keep an adequate blood flow to the brain; artificially lowering the pressure would therefore lead to chronic oxygen and nutrient deprivation.

5. *Stroke*, July, 1997.

San Francisco Breast Cancer Rates

You may recall that in the January 30, 1995, edition of this column, I reported on the fact that San Francisco Bay women have the highest rate of breast cancer in the United States and possibly the world. Many suspect a toxin of some kind, but Stanford University researchers now say they believe it's lifestyle-related. They report that San Franciscan women have fewer children and breast feed those children much less frequently. Onset of menses and menopause are also earlier and later, respectively, for some reason, and this too seems to affect cancer rates.⁶

6. United Press, July 4, 1997.

Healthy Diets for Longevity

A new study by European researchers concludes that a healthy diet helps you to live longer. The work examines 3,000 men over a 20 year time span, comparing Finnish, Dutch, and Italian citizens. Those in eastern Finland, where a high-fat diet is more typical, had an 18 percent increase in mortality compared to those consuming a more "mediterranean-type" diet.⁷ The study adjusted for smoking, age, and alcohol intake.

7. *British Medical Journal*, July 5, 1997.

Soy Milk Hormones

Researchers at Children's Hospital Medical Centre in Cincinnati say that babies being fed soy milk are getting a very large dose of estrogen-related compounds. They found that phyto-estrogens are very prevalent in the product. Blood tests revealed blood levels of the chemical up to 22,000 times higher than normal in the infants, but comparisons are difficult since the amount normally present is negligible. Experts are not sure what effects are likely from such intake, though the substance is thought to impact sexual and reproductive function.⁸

8. *The Lancet*, July 5, 1997.

Fat Babies, Happy Adults

According to British researchers, "fat babies" tend to develop into happier, or at least less frequently depressed, adults. They evaluated the history of 882 elderly people, including weights at birth, one year, and incidence of bouts of depression. They conclude that there is a marked difference that relates to birth weights, especially among boys. The study was done in Hertfordshire, north of London.⁹

9. Reported by Dr. Ian Rodie Bournemouth at the annual conference of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, July 1997.

Steroids Increase Cataracts

Another side effect relating to steroid inhalers (often used by medical physicians to treat asthma) has been uncovered: cataracts. This Australian study found that the risk of a serious form of the eye disorder among users increased proportionally to the frequency and longevity of use, up to six times normal. Looking at more than 3600 persons aged 49 to 97, they discovered that 27 percent of those who used the drug the longest had cataracts.¹⁰ This follows an earlier study that related use of such inhalers to glaucoma.

10. *New England Journal of Medicine*, July 3, 1997.

New Side Effect of Anxiety Drug: Car Crashes

Canadian researchers report that motorists who begin a course of benzodiazepine, the most commonly prescribed drug for anxiety and insomnia, are 45 percent more likely to be involved in an automobile crash involving injuries. The study looked at elderly drivers and also found that even after a year of treatment, accident rates were still 26 percent higher than those of non-medicated individuals.¹¹ The study author calls the drug-driver combination a "particular public health concern."

11. *JAMA*, July 2, 1997.

Waist Size and Heart Attacks

A large Canadian health study has correlated waist size with heart attack incidences. If your waist is 35 or above, and the same or larger than your hip measurement, you may have a doubled risk for heart attack over those who don't measure up to those standards. This long-term project looked at more than 29,000 men and women. The study, called the Canadian Heart Initiative, also estimates that obesity is the underlying factor in about 25 percent of heart disease and 60 percent of late onset diabetes.¹²

12. Reported to the Fourth International Conference on Preventive Cardiology in Montreal by epidemiologist Bruce Reeder of the Saskatchewan Heart and Stroke Foundation.

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