

## DC On-Line (Chiropractic Research)

Brian Sutton, DC

### Outbreak of TB Blamed on Ignoring Sterilization Guidelines

Researchers at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta have tracked down one contributor to the resurgence of highly resistant tuberculosis organisms in the United States. Using high-tech DNA fingerprinting to trace the origin of infections, they identified the culprit in an eight-person outbreak in South Carolina in 1995: a hospital bronchoscope.<sup>1</sup> The device was apparently not properly sterilized, and in fact, investigators found that many hospitals routinely ignore sterilization guidelines.

Another study at Johns Hopkins University revealed a similar transmission to a woman whose lungs were being examined for cancer. One commentator estimates that perhaps 2,300 patients are exposed to TB in this manner each year.<sup>2</sup>

1. *JAMA*, October 1, 1997.
2. *Ibid.* Editorial by Drs. Wenzel and Edmond.

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### Post-Vaccination Hair Loss

Doctors from the Food and Drug Administration, prompted by a report of a 12-year-old girl who began losing her hair after her second hepatitis-B injection, have been looking into the relationship of vaccines to hair loss. They have found a significant correlation, especially among women. They found that vaccine-related hair loss can occur at any age (from infancy to the elderly) soon after their inoculation. Half the victims in this study suffered extensive hair loss.<sup>3</sup>

3. *JAMA*, October 8, 1997.

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### Smoking and Hip Fractures

A report in the *British Medical Journal*<sup>4</sup> contends that in the elderly one of every eight hip fractures is attributable to metabolic changes caused by cigarette smoking. This study of over 11,000 people finds that smoking speeds age-related bone loss, which in turn makes fractures much more likely. In women nearing the age of 90, smoking increases their risk of a hip fracture from 22 percent (for a non-smoker) to 37 percent.

4. *BMJ*, October 4, 1997.

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## Impotence Acumen

Researchers at a recent meeting of the European Society for Impotence Research in Madrid reported their five-nation survey that yielded some interesting results. They found that males suffering from impotence could obtain more useful treatment information from the news media than they could from their physicians. In fact, quite frequently patients would educate their doctors about currently available treatments by bringing in newspaper clippings or relating information gleaned from television news stories. The study was conducted in Germany, France, Italy, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.<sup>5</sup>

5. United Press, October 2, 1997, reporting on the Erectile Dysfunction in European Nations (EDEN) survey.

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## St. John's Wort Research

Three agencies of the U.S. National Institutes of Health say they will soon begin testing the herb St. John's wort on clinically depressed patients to see if they can reproduce some of the favorable results seen in Europe. Researchers will test 336 people: one third will receive the herb, another will get a placebo, and the last group will receive the usual serotonin re-uptake inhibitor. The study will last eight weeks and is conducted by the Office of Alternative Medicine, National Institute of Mental Health, and the Office of Dietary Supplements.<sup>6</sup>

6. Reuter, October 2, 1997.

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## Restricted Diet for Prolonged Life

Two more studies have been published that support the idea that a lessened intake of food may lead to a longer life. Both studies were done on monkeys in an attempt to bring the results closer to what may occur in humans, compared to previous studies done on rats and fruit flies. Both reduced food intake by about thirty percent. Researchers in one project found that this raised levels of HDL cholesterol, lowered triglycerides, and lowered blood pressure readings.<sup>7</sup> The other research group measured DHEA levels, thought to be an indicator of the aging process. DHEA levels decline in later years, but when the diet is restricted, they appear to decline less.<sup>8</sup>

7. *American Journal of Physiology*, October, 1997.

8. *Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabolism*, October, 1997.

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## Diet Responsible for 40 Percent of Cancers

The American Institute for Cancer Research and the World Cancer Research Fund have released an analysis of more than 4,500 studies that concludes that diet has a profound effect on cancer risk. The report says that 20 percent of our current cancer incidence could be eliminated if everyone consumed five servings per day of fruits and vegetables. Another fifth, mostly digestive tract and breast cancers, could be trimmed if alcohol consumption were reduced.

The researchers, representing a number of large industrial countries, recommend that about half of total calories should come from starchy vegetables and grains, about 15 percent from fats, and maybe 10 percent from red meat. They also had cooking recommendations: low heat is best overall, meats and fish should be cooked over a direct flame, and smoked meats should only be consumed occasionally.<sup>9</sup>

9. United Press, October 1, 1997, reporting on the work of Dr. John Potter of the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle, et al.

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### Adult Whooping Cough

Statistics from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control suggest that a very large number of adults contract whooping cough each year, contrary to current medical wisdom. Several hundred thousand adults and teenagers each year suffer enough to seek medical treatment, though the condition is most often diagnosed as a cold or flu. After an initial bout of acute coughing spells, it normally then persists as a dry cough for about six to eight weeks. Pertussis seems to be most prevalent every three to four years for some unknown reason; the last surge was in 1996.<sup>10</sup>

This information is being used by some to argue for adult pertussis vaccination, and indeed the National Institutes of Health is beginning a study of booster shots in adolescent and adult volunteers.<sup>11</sup>

10. Presented to the American Society for Microbiology, October, 1997.

11. Associated Press, October 1, 1997.

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### Sertoli's in the Skull

Doctors hoping to find a better medical treatment for Parkinson's disease are investigating some rather unique approaches. The latest is implanting portions of a pig's testicle into the patient's brain. Researchers contend that Sertoli cells seem to improve neurological function in rats that had their dopamine metabolism disrupted by chemical toxins. Dangling the rats by their tails, they observed motion patterns and concluded that embedding testicular tissue to the rats' brains produced statistically significant improvements. One benefit to using these cells, they add, is that they suppress the immune response, thus limiting rejection from the host. The researchers aren't sure exactly how the results are produced.<sup>12</sup>

12. Nature Medicine, October, 1997.

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### Acne Antibiotics

British researchers at a meeting of the American Society for Microbiology<sup>13</sup> warned that antibiotic treatment of acne is producing some very hardy germs that spread quite easily to other members of the population. They have found that the majority of acne patients on antibiotics harbor highly resistant bacteria on the surface of their skin. These can be passed on to others by casual contact. Acne patients treated with antibiotics are typically on the drugs for 8-10 years. "Long-term

treatment with antibiotics is insane," one expert opines.<sup>14</sup>

13. American Society for Microbiology Meeting in Toronto, September, 1997.

14. United Press, September 29, 1997, quoting Marilyn Roberts, pathobiology professor at the University of Washington School of Public Health and Community Medicine, Seattle.

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### Latex Warnings

The FDA will now require manufacturers of latex devices that come into contact with people to put notices on their packaging to warn about potentially severe allergic reactions. The warnings should be in place by this time next year. An average of about 170 severe reactions to latex in medical devices are reported to the FDA each year. Sixteen children, all spina bifida patients, have died.<sup>15</sup>

15. United Press, October 2, 1997.

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### Infants Remember

The next time you think a baby isn't paying attention to its parents casual conversation, consider this experiment by Johns Hopkins researchers. They played tape recordings of children's stories to eight-month-old infants each day for about a week and a half. A couple of weeks later, many of the words used frequently in the stories were played back in list form, one word at a time. The babies were able to recognize the words, even though some were rather unusual (such as "peccaries") and were pronounced quite differently than they were in the story.<sup>16</sup>

16. United Press, September 27, 1997, reporting on the work of Peter Jusczyk of The Johns Hopkins University in Rochester, Minnesota.

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