

"DC" On-Line

Brian Sutton, DC

HIV Resistance

Researchers writing in the Nature Medicine¹ journal report that in some people, CD4 cells are very resistant to HIV virus infection. Volunteers from some members of a very high risk group, those having had repeated sex with known carriers of the virus associated with AIDS, are testing negative for infection. In the laboratory, their CD4 cells are 200 times more resistant to the virus than expected, possibly due to a highly elevated production of chemokines. Chemokines are thought to inhibit the virus.¹

1. Nature Medicine, April, 1996.

Prescription Foods

A new field is emerging in medicine that promises to infringe on the turf of your local health food store. "Medical foods" are food concoctions soon to become available at your neighborhood pharmacy, with advertising directed at medical professionals. One example is Cardia Salt Alternative, a reduced sodium salt substitute fortified with other minerals, now being sold in Florida and Pennsylvania. CSA is being pushed as an adjunctive treatment for hypertension and many pharmacists stock it behind the counter, emphasizing the label's warning, "For use under medical supervision." The FDA is writing new regulations that define medical foods. Claims for such items will most likely need to be backed by some kind of formal testing. It appears that food products, in order to fall into this category, will need to be "necessary to fight disease" or something similar. The new regulations are due in October.²

2. Associated Press, April 7, 1996.

Vitamin C Instead of Ritalin

A company that sells nutritional supplements is suggesting that most cases of Attention-Deficit Disorder are due to a deficiency of good nutrition, especially vitamin C -- not a deficiency of methylphenidate (Ritalin). Alacer Corporation offered in April to give the first 500 parents of any child currently on Ritalin therapy a 33-day supply of their Super Gram III supplement, asking only that the parents report the results to the company. The president of the corporation says that it is "a national disgrace that one million or more children are given a drug during their formative years when probably most of them need only good nutrition."³

3. OTC Businesswire, April 4, 1996. ALACER can be reached at (800) 225-2030 or AlacerCorp@aol.com.

Going from Malnutrition to Obesity

The Chinese News Service reports that a major health problem for that country's children has changed from malnutrition to obesity. In the past 10 years the number of overweight children has increased about 400 percent. Also on the increase are the number of cavities and children needing eyeglasses. On the positive side, increased nutrition has added an average of nearly one and one-quarter inches to the height of the children. The Ministry of Health is concerned, though, that children are not getting enough exercise, have poor nutritional habits (though not wanting for food), and are being pushed too hard at home to perform academically. The current percentage of overweight Chinese children is said to be just under nine percent, still much lower than the US percentage, depending of course on how the two countries define "overweight."⁴

4. Reuter, March 27, 1996.

Black Tea Decreases Strokes

According to the AMA's Archives of Internal Medicine,⁵ black tea seems to offer protection from strokes. Researchers think that flavonoids are responsible for the effect. They found a 69 percent decrease in strokes in men drinking about five cups of tea each day. The study involved over 500 men, ages 50-69.

5. Archives of Internal Medicine, March 25, 1996.

Calcium to Fight Pre-eclampsia

A study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association⁶ suggests that mothers-to-be can reduce their risk of pre-eclampsia by consuming 1,500 mg of calcium per day during their pregnancy. The study was done by McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, and involved over 2,400 women. Two to eight percent of American women show signs of pre-eclampsia during their pregnancy. The incidence of the syndrome was decreased by 62 percent in women who took the supplements.

6. JAMA, April 10, 1996.

Army Studies HIV Vaccine

The results of the first "successfully concluded HIV vaccine therapy trial ever performed with a genetically engineered vaccine"⁷ are out. The U.S. Army Medical Research and Material Command examined the vaccine, called pg160, at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research. "Successful" describes the fact that the project reached a conclusion, not a desirable outcome. The vaccine itself doesn't seem to work. Officials say that while an elevated immune response was generated in the inoculated volunteers, no clinical improvement in the course of the disease was detected. There were 483 subjects who completed the study.

7. Associated Press, April 17, 1996.

Antacid Triggers Atrophic Gastritis

In a study paid for by the manufacturer, the antacid Prilosec was found to trigger precancerous changes in the stomach lining in certain individuals.⁸ One third of those persons whose stomachs contained detectable numbers of *Helicobacter pylori* were found, after five years of treatment, to have atrophic changes in their stomachs associated with chronic inflammation and the initial stages of stomach cancer. The drug was being used for treatment of reflux esophagitis. Because *H. pylori* is present in about half of all Americans, researchers now suggest that antibiotics be used either before or in combination with this drug.

8. New England Journal of Medicine, April 18, 1996.

Fetal Membranes Ruptured? Don't Panic!

A Canadian study of over 5,000 women⁹ finds that there does not appear to be a significant benefit that would justify inducing labor just because the "waters break." The findings apply to normal-term pregnancies. Researchers found no difference in either infection rate or c-section rate between the two groups of women that had labor induced quickly after the rupture and the other that simply let labor begin naturally up to four days later. For years, it has been believed that once the membranes break, an infection is imminent. While this study indicates otherwise, many people still caution that the loss of the amniotic fluid decreases the protection afforded the baby and that in itself should cause the caregiver to be alert.

9. New England Journal of Medicine, April 18, 1996.

Malnutrition Affects the Well-Nourished

In a continuation of research that discovered an increase of virulent virus mutations in malnourished persons (as reported in this column in July of 1995), Dr. Melinda Beck of the University of North Carolina has discovered a bit more: these new viruses are harder for healthy people to resist. She found certain viruses consistently in mice deficient in either selenium or vitamin E. When these bugs were injected into healthy and well-fed mice, infections arose, even though these same mice were not fazed by the non-mutated strain of the virus.¹⁰ These findings suggest that when you're around certain sickly people, you may not only be exposed to higher concentrations of germs, but more virulent ones at that. So tell your friends to eat healthy.

10. Reported at the meeting of the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology meeting in Washington on April 17, 1996.

Lead and High Blood Pressure

In a preliminary study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association,¹¹ Harvard University researchers say that lead may be more of a risk factor for elevated blood pressure than either large amounts of sodium in the diet or a person's age. They found a high correlation between lifelong lead exposure and hypertension. This study of 590 men measured the amount of lead stored in their bones as opposed to the more transient blood levels.

11. JAMA, April 17, 1996.

No Sex before Prostate Test

Doctors reporting in Urology¹² say that the screening test for prostate specific antigen (PSA) can produce a false positive if the patient ejaculates a few hours before the test. They found that in many subjects, blood levels of PSA rose dramatically following sex and then gradually returned to normal during the following 48 hours. Another researcher reports the levels returning to normal in a more rapid six hour time period.¹³ The levels of post-sex PSA seem to go higher with age.

12. Urology, April, 1996.

13. United Press, April 16, 1996 -- Dr. William Catalon of Washington University in St. Louis.

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