

"DC" On-Line

Brian Sutton, DC

Variety Key to French Paradox

The people of France, who score very low when judged by American dietary guideline concepts, nonetheless have much lower than expected heart disease rates. Various studies have tried to explain this, most recently attributing the difference to a protective effect by wine consumption. A new study though casts a different light on the situation by examining the variety of foods in their diet. This study by the U-M School of Public Health and the Institut Scientifique et Technique de l'Alimentation in Paris suggests that a diverse diet may have a dramatic influence on your health. Even though the French consume relatively high amounts of saturated fats, a definite no- no according to American wisdom, about 90 percent consistently partake from the five food groups each day and have better cardiovascular health. Only one third of United States citizens have that variety in their diet.¹

1. Journal of the American Dietetic Association, June 28, 1996.

New Cerebral Palsy Data

Medical researchers at Valley Children's Hospital in Fresno, California, want to get the word out about the causes of cerebral palsy. Many people blame the doctor's delivery technique, but according to this study, the doctor isn't to blame -- well, a third of the time anyway. In those cases, such things as bad chromosomes or nervous system malformations are to blame. The other two thirds of course may have something to do with the birth management, though studies are sparse in this area. By the way, this study only examined children who survived at least three years, so the really severe cases were excluded.²

2. Unpublished study by Dr. Cynthia Curry, director of medical genetics at Valley Children's Hospital.

Smoking and SIDS

Another study reports on smoking's contribution to sudden infant death syndrome. Not just any ordinary increase in risk, according to this work published in the British Medical Journal,³ but a major cause. This government-funded study concludes that 60 percent of SIDS cases are due to tobacco smoke during pregnancy and after delivery. The results "astonished" the researchers, who apparently didn't expect the effect to be quite so dramatic. Previous studies have linked smoking to miscarriages and birth defects as well.

3. BMJ, July 27, 1996.

Magnetic Therapy for Depression

Spanish researchers have demonstrated dramatic improvements in severe, drug-resistant depression patients by using transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS) -- or magnetic therapy. After five days of treatment with the technique, they were able to produce improvements lasting two weeks. They hope the procedure will soon replace electroconvulsive therapy (shock treatments) as the treatment of choice for severely afflicted patients.⁴

4. The Lancet, July 27, 1996.

Mothers Prefer Midwives

A team of doctors at the Glasgow Royal Maternity Hospital in England compared the pregnancies and outcomes of nearly 1300 women. They compared moms treated solely by midwives to a similarly matched group treated by a team that included doctors and nurses.⁵ The researchers could find no difference in physical outcome of the pregnancies except that the midwife- attended women had fewer episiotomies and did not require pharmaceutical labor induction as often. What they did find, however, was that the women were clearly more satisfied with midwifery care.

According to the lead researcher, the study showed that "a midwife was the best choice."⁶

5. The Lancet, July 26, 1996.

6. Reuter, July 25, 1996.

Mercury from Beauty Cream

A Mexican skin care product called Crema de Belleza is not only moisturizing, but mercurizing users in the southwest United States, according to health officials in Arizona, California, New Mexico and Texas. They found mercury levels as high as 50 times normal in a study of 104 people who were using the product and are issuing warnings about the cream.⁷

7. United Press, July 25, 1996 "Beauty cream causes mercury poisoning."

The Beneficial Side of Helicobacter Pylori

The bacteria H. Pylori that has made the news lately as being the cause of stomach ulcers and cancer was the subject of another study published in the New England Journal of Medicine.⁸ This study of 58,000 patients found that while gastric cancers doubled in infected individuals, the bacterium seems to offer protection from duodenal carcinomas--they were down 40 percent. The researchers have no explanation for these findings, which are sure to be discussed and investigated in great detail for many months to come. The bacterium is present in about half the population and is currently blamed for about 1/3 of the cases of stomach cancer that occur.

8. NEJM, July 25, 1996.

Folacin Fortification Not Enough

A pediatrics researcher from the University of British Columbia⁹ says that the FDA's decision to fortify grain products with folic acid will not have a significant impact on birth defects. The FDA set the requirements on the low side because of concern that too much could mask B-12 deficiencies in the elderly and vegetarians.¹⁰ Even with folic acid in the news recently, very few women take the folic acid supplements during the short period before conception that many researchers think could prevent half of all neural tube defects. The researcher estimates that the normal American diet supplies only half the necessary amount of the nutrient.

9. Dr. Judith Hall.

10. United Press, July 24, 1996.

ADD Guidelines

Various medical groups interested in pediatric and adolescent medicine are starting to formulate guidelines to help doctors evaluate patients for attention deficit disorder, which they say is a popular but often mistaken diagnosis. A spokesman for the National Attention Deficit Disorder Association says that many doctors use Ritalin as a diagnostic tool: they prescribe it, and if it works the patient is diagnosed with ADD. Most organizations developing guidelines will be urging doctors to consider psychological factors and consider alternatives to drug therapy.¹¹

11. Associated Press, July 22, 1996.

Baby Massage

The Touch Research Institute at the University of Miami says that massaging your baby will produce some very definite benefits. Infants massaged for 15 minutes a day fall asleep in less than half the time, are more alert during waking hours, suffer less from colic, have more efficient immune systems, and a greater sense of well-being. Also, massaged preemies tend to put on weight faster and cut their hospital stays by six days.¹²

12. Reuter, July 18, 1996.

Latex Reactions

There is rising concern over reactions to latex products that some allergists say could affect 1 in 10 medical workers with effects ranging from mild itching to anaphylactic shock. At even more risk of a dangerous reaction are children with spina bifida, about half of who seem to be sensitive. A report in the *Annals of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology*¹³ looks at the problem. A 1994 study of blood donors suggests that about six percent of Americans are sensitive. Foods such as bananas, avocados, chestnuts and peaches seem to heighten the sensitivity.

13. AAI, July, 1996.

Tea Lessens Strokes

A Dutch study of 552 middle-aged men finds a sharp reduction in stroke incidence with regular consumption of black tea.¹⁴ The researchers think that flavonoids are responsible for the effect. Studies of other flavonoid-rich foods have suggested similar cardiovascular protective properties of the compound.

14. United Press, March 27, 1996.

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SEPTEMBER 1996