

DC On-Line

Brian Sutton, DC

Prozac Preemies

A study published in the New England Journal of Medicine¹ suggests that Prozac taken during a woman's pregnancy can lead to premature birth and a number of other complications in the infant. This study of 482 pregnancies found that mothers taking the chemical were many times more likely to not carry their babies to full term. Also, many of the Prozac babies had other problems that while not life-threatening, required admission to special care facilities. Prozac is taken by 12 million people world-wide.

1. NEJM, October 3, 1996.
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Smog Stunts Fetus Growth

Some scientists studying babies born in polluted areas of Europe have concluded that air pollution can have a stunting effect on fetal growth. Studies in Poland and Northern Bohemia found deformations such as small heads and bodies more prevalent in women exposed to very small-diameter particles. The work was done by researchers from Columbia University and the U.S.

Environmental Protection Agency.²

2. New Scientist, October 17, 1996.
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Diabetic Complications

While it has long been recognized that diabetics are at a high risk for amputations, blindness and kidney failure, a paper appearing in the Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabolism³ says there are many more important consequences that doctors may not think are related. According to this analysis of federal cost surveys, diabetics are hospitalized more often and for longer periods of time for conditions like liver disease, heart disease, depression, "blood poisoning", and a number of gastrointestinal problems. The researchers estimate that the costs of these conditions not normally associated with diabetes is twice as high as the amount spent on hospitalizations for chronic diabetes. Currently, 27 percent of the Medicare budget is spent on diabetes treatment.⁴

3. Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabolism, October, 1996.

4. United Press, October 16, 1996, quoting Dr. Robert Rattner of George Washington University Medical School.

Diabetics and Angioplasty

A paper published in *Circulation*⁵ reports that diabetics are twice as likely to die after undergoing balloon angioplasty than other patients. In this study of over 2,000 patients, more than one third of those with diabetes died within nine years of the procedure. This research is different from previous ones that had only compared short-term outcomes, which by the way are also worse for diabetics.

5. *Circulation*, October 15, 1996.

Eat Before Testing

A study by Israeli researchers finds that not only is it a good idea for children to eat breakfast before going to school, but also if they can manage to have it one half-hour before a test, the students will score higher. They found a significant improvement in test scores among children they fed sugared corn flakes and milk at school shortly before the test, compared to children who ate earlier at home or had no breakfast at all.⁶

6. *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine*, October, 1996.

Abortion and Cancer -- Again

A meta-analysis published in the *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*⁷ suggests that abortions may increase a woman's breast cancer risk. This work encompassed 23 studies on 60,000 women. One of the authors theorizes that the effect is caused by breast cells being stimulated to grow and replicate during pregnancy, but never having the chance to fulfill their ultimate function. He thinks that these immature cells, having nothing better to do, go bad and begin to cause trouble. That would seem to fit in with general patterns apparent in other areas of life ...

7. *JECH*, October, 1996.

Smokers Die Sooner

You may already have suspected this, but a British study reinforces the argument that tobacco use shortens life. This 15-year study released by the British Heart Association was done on 7,735 men by London's Royal Free Hospital School of Medicine. At age 73, 78 percent of men who had never smoked were still surviving. But only 42 percent of men who started smoking before they were 20 years old lived to see that age.⁸

8. *Reuter*, October 11, 1996.

Learn About Iron

A study of teenage girls in Baltimore suggests that, for some students, a small iron deficiency may inhibit learning. Subjects were selected for the study who were judged to have sub-optimal blood levels of iron, but not enough to be anemic. Iron supplementation produced better verbal learning and memory scores than was found in the placebo group. About twenty percent of the world's population is thought to have some extent of iron deficiency; this percentage may be somewhat higher in teenage American girls.⁹

9. The Lancet, October 12, 1996.

Cholesterol for the Embryo

Researchers investigating embryonic development in fruit flies have discovered a gene, also present in humans, that requires cholesterol when patterning normal infants in the womb.¹⁰ When insufficient cholesterol is available, birth deformities (such as a single eye or only one nostril) occur. While it is unlikely that a shortage would occur naturally in humans (cholesterol is manufactured by our bodies), there is a possibility that some cholesterol-lowering drugs could create a deficiency.

10. Science, October, 1996.

Back Supports Can Help

A UCLA study reports that a five-year study of Home Depot employees finds a very significant benefit from their strap-on back supports. While previous studies had found little real difference in injuries attributable to such devices, this work notes a 30 percent reduction in back injuries.¹¹

11. United Press reporting on the work of UCLA researchers released October 9, 1996.

Smoking and Sight

Two long-term studies published in the Journal of the American Medical Association¹² find an increased risk of vision loss in smokers as they age. The research projects examined smoking physicians and nurses over about a 12 year period. Macular degeneration was found more than twice as often in the smoking group. Smokers who had quit a number of years earlier were at nearly the same risk level. Macular degeneration is the leading cause of blindness in persons 65 years and older in the United States.

12. JAMA, October 9, 1996.

Jailhouse Diet

A professor from California State University's Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice¹³ researched the food service at 100 jails in the United States. He says that about half of inmate

violence can be blamed on the poor nutritional content of their diet. Shortages of up to 15 nutrients were evident in his study, deficiencies that can produce irritability and aggressive behavior. He suggested that it would pay the institutions to heed nutritional advice from the WHO, British health authorities, or the National Academy of Science. A reversal of juvenile delinquency trends is also possible, he believes, if more attention was paid to the foods eaten by 8 to 10 year old children.¹⁴

13. Professor Stephen Schoenthaler.

14. Reuter news service, October 15, 1996, reporting on a nutritional conference in London.

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