

"DC" On-Line

Brian Sutton, DC

"New" Theory: Fevers Are Beneficial

A new book, *Evolution and Healing*,¹ promotes some "radical"² health concepts. The authors, a psychiatrist and an evolutionary theorist instructor, say that fevers are an adaptation by natural selection specifically to fight infection; that treating fevers with aspirin may be doing the patient harm. The authors go on to say that "we should respect the evolved wisdom of the body," and make other statements reminiscent of a philosophy course at a chiropractic college, such as the need to know when to act and when to leave the body alone. The authors also note that modern medicine uses drugs mainly to treat symptoms instead of causes.

In addition to some basic concepts taught to every chiropractic student, the book also explains a great deal about how modern lifestyles make us prone to problems such as heart disease and nearsightedness, and help to create deadlier bacteria and viruses. Virulence among pathogens, the authors say, will increase as populations become denser. Germs are less virulent if transmission avenues are few, since they will not reproduce if the host dies. But increased avenues caused by poor sanitation, sexual promiscuity, shared needles, confined living and working quarters, etc., allow much deadlier forms to survive and prosper.

The authors base their theories on a large number of studies relating to various causes of illness.

Chiropractor Seen as Health Expert by News Media

It seems that the news media is gradually giving chiropractors a little more respect. In the not-too-distant past, any reference to a doctor of chiropractic you saw in a national or international news service was most likely in a negative light. Most writers would insist on addressing the doctor as "Mr." so-and-so, a chiropractor.

Now, a Reuters news story reporting on the hazards of prolonged laptop computer use refers to "British health experts" when quoting Dr. Chris Turner of the British Chiropractic Association. Dr. Turner was the only person quoted in the story.³

Antidepressants Elevate Heart Attack Risk

A New England study⁴ has linked the use of a particular class of antidepressants called tricyclics to an increased frequency of heart attacks. The study involved 6,000 people over a 10 years, none of whom exhibited signs of heart disease at the onset.

Researchers found that those using the drug were nearly six times more likely to suffer an attack. The popular antidepressant Prozac was not included in the study. Some doctors are quick to note

that this study did not attempt to isolate the effects of depression itself on the heart. Some studies have shown that depression sufferers have a heart attack up to three times the norm, though it's possible that medications may have had an effect on those subjects as well.

DDT "Emasculating" Men

A paper published in the journal *Nature*⁵ relates a new-found mechanism of DDT's influence on males. It has long been thought that the chemical mimics estrogen in the body, creating problems for men such as malformed sexual organs, undescended testicles, as well as some very dramatic feminization effects. However, this new study finds that DDT instead attacks male hormones such as testosterone. There has been quite a lot of concern in the scientific community lately about increasing fertility problems and mounting evidence of widespread DNA damage in the general population. One study in France recently found that male fertility has decreased about two percent each year for the past 20 years. DDT is still widely used in many developing countries.

Stay in School to Live Longer

A report⁶ released by the National Center for Health Statistics says that death rates for persons who attend at least one year of college are half that of high school dropouts. Just finishing high school seems to decrease your risk of dying by about 23 percent. Female dropouts are also eight times more likely to smoke during pregnancies.

Respiratory Inefficiency Caused by Glaucoma Medication

Many persons as they grow older find that normal physical activity becomes more difficult, with simple tasks such as walking up stairs leaving them breathless. A new study finds that in many cases the cause may be not old age, but eye drops. Researchers have found that the glaucoma medication timolol, long known to aggravate respiratory problems in asthmatics, decreases lung function in otherwise normal persons as much as 15 percent. Many patients taken off the medication during the study found that they no longer suffered from the fatigue and lack of stamina that plagued them while they took the eye drops, though few had made the connection to the drug therapy.

Researchers feel that many elderly persons using the eye drops will blame the resulting breathlessness and inability to exercise on old age. They concluded that "for many patients there may be a clinically significant benefit" to discontinuing that particular medication.⁷

Smoking Decreases Fertility

A study from the University of California School of Public Health finds that compared to non-smokers, women who smoke one to nine cigarettes per day take twice as long to become pregnant after stopping contraceptives. The study was done on over 1,300 first-time mothers.⁸

Breast Feeding Statistics Rising

In 1994, 57.4 percent of new mothers were breastfeeding in the United States, up for the fourth consecutive year. Almost 20 percent breastfeed longer than six months. The rates are highest in the mountain and Pacific regions of the country and among higher-educated, above-average income women.⁹

Patients Perceive Managed Care Plans as Inferior

A poll conducted by the Harvard School of Public Health and the Harris polling firm finds that patients on managed care plans complain about their care two to four times more frequently than those using traditional fee-for-service medical programs. The poll queried 2,374 people over approximately one year.

The managed care patients felt that they received inappropriate treatment, had to wait too long, and that their examinations were not very thorough.¹⁰

Cocaine and Deaths from Injuries

A study published in the New England Journal of Medicine finds that one quarter of all people who died from accidents or other injuries in New York City over a three year period had used cocaine during the preceding hours. Besides overdoses from the cocaine itself, frequent deaths related to the drug included homicide, suicide, traffic accidents, and falls. The findings suggest that cocaine is a major cause of death in males between the ages of 15 and 24.¹¹

References

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4. Epidemiology, July 1995.
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Brian Sutton, DC
Odessa, Florida
Email: BSuttonDC@aol.com
73160.676@compuserve.com

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