

"DC" On-Line

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Cord Injury Urgency

It has been a common belief that the major permanent injury in cases of spinal cord damage occurs at the time of the trauma. The bulk of medical interventions after such injuries, other than first aid and life support measures, are geared toward stabilization and prevention of further insults, as opposed to interventions to restore neurological function, most of which are done a few days after the initial trauma.

A new study suggests that there is a one-hour window of opportunity to lessen the damage resulting from spinal cord trauma. Researchers found in animal studies that up to 85 percent of neurological function can be restored if decompression of the neurological components is performed within one hour of the injury. But when no action was taken during the first hour, no recovery was observed.¹

Cinnamon Ulcers

Patients who present with complaints such as burning sensations and ulcers in the mouth may be reacting to the common spice cinnamon, says a professor of oral medicine.² The symptoms may be frequently misdiagnosed as an effect of diabetes, anemia, lupus, cancer, or other conditions. Apparently, the increased usage of cinnamon in products such as candies, mouthwash, gum, toothpaste, and some lip balms is making the reactions more and more common. It is estimated that oral disease specialists average at least one patient per week suffering from cinnamon-related complaints.³ The symptoms may arise from excessive contact or a suddenly developed sensitivity.

Sewing Machines and Leukemia

Some Canadian doctors report that mothers-to-be who spend a lot of time at the sewing machine may be increasing their babies' risk of leukemia.⁴ Researchers noticed a high rate of leukemia in the children of female sewing machine operators, originally blaming organic dust and synthetic fibers for the finding. But prompted by studies linking leukemia to electromagnetic power sources, they found that the seamstresses were exposed to higher levels of the radiation than any other professionals, including power station operators and electrical linemen. This is probably due to the constantly changing current flow through the rotating motor and electrical contacts typical of the stop-and-go routine inherent in sewing machine operation.

Early AIDS Treatment May Lead to Earlier Death

A study involving 436 AIDS patients, many of whom did not know they were infected with the HIV virus before symptoms appeared, looked at overall survival rates relative to treatment onset. Researchers found that while AIDS symptomatology might be postponed briefly by medication during the latent phase, those patients tended to die sooner than the group that delayed treatment until AIDS symptoms appeared.⁵ One physician, observing HIV treatment procedures in San Francisco, remarked that he was "amazed at the amount of over medication he saw in AIDS patients."⁶

Drug Testing Halted Prematurely

Not long ago, a clinical test of the drug amiodarone⁷ on patients with severe heart failure was halted prematurely because the drug worked so well it seemed unethical to withhold it from the control group. Amiodarone reduces irregular heartbeats, which are assumed to increase heart failure and lead to earlier death. Undoubtedly, many doctors began prescribing the drug to their patients with congestive heart failure upon hearing this news.

However, a recent study finds no benefit in mortality among patients who use the drug. The two-year survival rate for amiodarone patients was 69 percent, while those receiving placebos realized a 71 percent survival rate.⁸ Apparently, the regulation of heart rhythm is not a good indicator of efficacy for heart failure medication.

Acne Drug and Birth Defects

Back in 1988, after Accutane (isotretinoin) was suspected of causing dozens of birth defects, the drug was nearly banned. However, the manufacturer agreed to implement an extensive program, concurrent with their marketing plan, to eliminate the chance that women taking the drug might become pregnant. While the program has been very effective, there are still a lot of women who don't realize the possible implications of having the drug in their system when they conceive a child. Also, many physicians are not following required federal guidelines when prescribing the drug, according to a study published in the New England Journal of Medicine.⁹ For example, the FDA requires a pregnancy test before administration of the drug, but about one-third of women surveyed reported no pregnancy test before initiation of the regimen.

Tobacco High in Abrasion

The Baylor University School of Dentistry in Texas reports that it has discovered the reason behind the tooth-enamel wear that dentists observe in patients who chew tobacco and cigar stubs. Silica, also known as silicon dioxide and the main component of the mineral quartz, made up about one-half of one percent of the tobacco samples tested. When mixed with saliva, these tiny particles form a highly abrasive paste that scratches the tooth enamel with each chomp.¹⁰

Marlins' Pitcher Credits Chiropractic

Florida Marlins Pitcher Chris Hammond has been improving his performance lately, thanks to his chiropractor. "I think I found the chemistry to stay off the disabled list," he said in an Associated Press interview.¹¹ In the period after the All-Star break this year he's done better than any other year during his career. According to the AP report, his chiropractor and stretching exercises have kept his back in better health.

Childhood Respiratory Infections and Smoking

A study published in *The Lancet*¹² says that tonsillitis, laryngitis, bronchitis and middle ear infections occur three times more frequently in households where the parents smoke. Researchers measured a urinary by-product of nicotine in samples from children one to five years old for the study, correlating the results to their respiratory health.

Pesticides Detected in Baby Food

The Environmental Working Group (EWG) analyzed random samples of eight types of baby food early this year. EWG assayers were able to detect in about half the samples residues of pesticides classified as carcinogens, several neurotoxins, some endocrine disrupters, and a number of other highly toxic chemicals. However, all levels were far below the amounts permitted by federal agencies. In fact, levels were lower than those often found in fresh, unprocessed food,¹³ if that's any comfort.

Concussions Heal Slowly

Many medical professionals assume that concussions resolve in a few days or so, but according to Dr. Michael Alexander from Boston University School of Medicine, the minimum healing time for a typical concussion is six to eight weeks. While many neurological tests may be negative, patients will still experience problems with their thought processes. He says that 85 to 90 percent of patients are back to normal within a year, but that the rest have residual problems.¹⁴ Many physicians feel that patients who complain of symptoms for more than a year after mild head trauma are malingerers, but Alexander is convinced that this is true in only a few cases.

Sleepers Learn Better

Researchers at the Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit are finding that persons suffering from sleep apnea do poorly in learning and other mental skill tests, including memory. They attribute the difficulties to lack of sleep caused by frequent waking from episodes of breathing stoppages.¹⁵

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