

DC On-Line

Brian Sutton, DC

Nice Guys Last Longer

A study published by the American Psychomatic Society¹ concludes that personality traits are related to longevity. Researchers from the University of California say that men who monopolize conversations and interrupt others have a greater chance of dying young. They theorize that stress hormones are responsible.

1. *Journal of the American Psychomatic Society*, January 23, 1997.
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Erroneous Prescriptions Raise Hospitalization Costs

A number of studies published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*² highlight the problem of improper prescriptions given to hospital patients. One study at a Salt Lake City hospital found that death rates doubled in patients whose medications were prescribed improperly. The costs associated with bad prescriptions have been calculated at about \$5 million a year per typical teaching hospital. The mistakes typically prolong the hospitalization by two days and cost from \$2,500 to \$5,000. Common doctor errors were the result of lack of understanding of the prescribed drugs, failure to take into account a patient's age, weight or allergies, and interactions with other drugs.

1. *JAMA*, January 22, 1997.
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Hearty Oats

By now you have probably heard that the Food and Drug Administration has decided to let food manufacturers say that oats are good for your heart. Oatmeal and whole oat flour, products that contain soluble beta-glucan fiber, have enough research to back up claims that they lower cholesterol levels, says the FDA. A minimum of .75 grams of fiber per serving must be present in a product for the manufacturer to take advantage of the decision.³

1. United Press, January 21, 1997.
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Parents Help Medical Student Bone Up

One medical student from Greece has received a little extra support from his family back home. It seems his parents raided the local cemetery and sent the bones of a deceased neighbor to their son to help with his studies at medical school. According to the parents, who were sentenced to four months

in prison after charges were filed by the neighbor's widow, their son intended to return the remains after finishing his studies.⁴

1. Associated Press, January 20, 1997.

U.S. Health Service Recommends Skinny Dipping

Sea lice, microscopic jellyfish that cause stinging skin irritations to many Florida swimmers from March through August each year, can be thwarted by a rather simple means. According to the editors of the Public Health Reports, a publication of the U.S. Health Service, "... skinny dipping might go a long way to reducing the occurrence of this disease."⁵ The problem arises when the tiny creatures are trapped in clothing, then hit by a fresh water source such as a post-swimming shower, causing them to burst and release toxins. It takes about a day to feel the full effect. Vinegar or meat tenderizers are said to neutralize the irritants.

1. Associated Press article by Dr. Paul

Diet Drug and Pulmonary Hypertension

Concern is rising about the drug fenfluramine after a French study found pulmonary hypertension was a serious side effect. The drug has recently become available by prescription in the United States and is becoming quite popular as an appetite suppressant. The study found an increase of up to 23 times of the usually fatal condition in patients taking the drug, compared to a control group.⁶

1. Associated Press article by Dr. Paul Tunick of New York University School of Medicine, January 17, 1997.

Clogged Arteries and Alzheimer's

The *Lancet* medical journal reports a clear link between clogged arteries and Alzheimer's disease. This study of nearly 2,000 patients found that atherosclerosis and levels of the blood protein apolipoprotein-E both were related to the condition. The findings are not entirely surprising since atherosclerosis can reduce oxygenation of the brain, thereby inducing different types of dementias. However, this study specifically targeted the relationship to Alzheimer's disease.⁷

1. *Lancet*, January 18, 1997.

Sick Building Syndrome

Canadian researchers, in an effort to quantify the effects of "sick building syndrome," undertook a five-year study of 1,300 office workers that concluded in 1995. The study, published in the journal *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*,⁸ should be a strong motivator to companies to provide a good work atmosphere for their employees. After improvements were made to the work environment,

environment-related symptoms were cut nearly in half. The benefits were maintained during the last three years of the study, even though job noise and stress had increased.

The significant changes that occurred when the company moved to a new building were: fresh air intake increased 6-10 times; humidity was increased; smoking areas were designated; photocopiers were placed in separate rooms; and each floor was independently ventilated.

1. *OEM*, January, 1997.
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Don't Be Anxious for Hypertension

Researchers from the National Centre for Health Statistics, part of the Centres for Disease Control, report that people who are anxious or depressed are more than twice as likely to develop hypertension. The study followed 3,000 people for seven to 16 years. The results were found even after the effects of smoking, alcohol, body mass, and education were taken into account.⁹

1. *Archives of Family Medicine*, January/February 1997.
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Hormone Injections for Short Kids Vilified

The American Academy of Pediatrics has come out against hormone injections for children whose pituitary glands are functioning normally. According to the National Institutes of Health, in 1994 8,000 children were given the \$50,000 per year injections because they were "short." The children's hormonal levels were normal. The injections are not known to have any impact on final adult height in such cases.¹⁰

1. Associated Press, January 14, 1997.
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FDA May Pull Seldane

The Food and Drug Administration is talking about withdrawing its approval of the allergy medication Seldane because of its potentially deadly side effects. More than six million prescriptions for the drug are written each year for the drug that the FDA says is no longer safe, in view of cardiac problems that have come to light in patients with liver disease or who take antibiotics or certain other drugs.¹¹

1. Associated Press, January 13, 1997.
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Sleeping with Your Infant

Two new reports published in the journal *Sleep* support previous research in finding that infants that sleep with their mothers are less likely to die from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. The researchers theorize that these babies do not fall into as deep a sleep, allowing them to wake easier when their blood oxygen falls to low levels.¹² Most of the world's infants sleep with their mothers; the practice of

putting infants into a separate bed became widespread in industrialized countries only about 200 years ago.¹³

1. *Sleep*, January 10, 1997.
2. United Press, January 10, 1997.

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