

## "DC" On Line

Brian Sutton, DC

### Suppressing the HIV Virus

A woman who was infected with the HIV virus during a blood transfusion in 1981 is puzzling researchers at John Hopkins University. They have been unable to culture the virus from samples taken from her body even though she has been creating HIV antibodies since 1985. So far, 30 attempts have failed.

She has also exhibited no symptoms of HIV-related diseases in the 13 years since infection. Dr. David Schwartz, the lead researcher, says that her body appears to have suppressed the virus. It is thought that about five percent of persons infected with the HIV virus show no signs of disease despite 12 or more years with the virus present in their body.<sup>1</sup> According to Dr. Jay Levy, a professor of medicine at the University of California at San Francisco who is investigating such cases, "It's as if it just hasn't been allowed to adapt and grow well in the blood."

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### Surgeon Says Carpal Tunnel Syndrome Related to Nerve Pressure

A professor of surgery at the medical school at Washington University in St. Louis has been thinking a lot about repetitive strain injuries such as carpal tunnel syndrome. Susan MacKinnon does not think surgery is the answer for a large number of these cases.

The high failure rate has caused her to rethink the causes of such disorders. She has noticed that even when extremity surgery improves the peripheral symptoms such as numbness in the hands, other associated problems like neck stiffness and shoulder pain persist.

She has written a paper published in a recent issue of the Journal of Hand Surgery that proposes this explanation for carpal tunnel syndrome: unnatural postures for extended periods of time create pressure on the nerves in the neck, leading to the neurological and other symptoms.

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### Mental Illness Successfully Treated by Discontinuing Prozac

A story in the January 24, 1995 issue of the Tampa Tribune relates the story of a fired data services supervisor for a local utility who filed an ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) lawsuit against his employer.

He charged that he was entitled to be treated as disabled because his mental problem was caused by a chemical imbalance. He was once a valued \$47,000 a year team leader, but in 1992 he began stealing

thousands of dollars from fellow workers. He was fired for bringing a loaded gun to work.

The lawsuit said that just as other employees are given time off to recover from major physical illnesses, his job should have been restored after his chemical balance was corrected. According to the Tribune, the suit said that he was a victim of mental illness, one quickly treated when doctors put him in a hospital and took him off the anti-depressant Prozac.

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### Maternal Alcohol Usage and Cerebral Palsy

An article in the January issue of the journal Pediatrics describes a study that finds a strong relationship between alcoholic consumption during pregnancy and brain damage in premature infants.

349 preemies underwent ultrasound evaluations of their brains. In the group whose mothers reported seven alcoholic drinks per week, brain hemorrhage increased five times, while white matter damage was nearly ten times as frequent. The white matter changes were similar to those seen in cerebral palsy.

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### Antibiotics and Birth Control Pills

Some antibiotics may interfere with the absorption of oral contraceptives leading to an increased risk of pregnancy, according to a Stanford University pharmacist. Also, breakthrough bleeding during the menstrual cycle may be increased by the drugs and metabolic changes can result in body temperature changes that work to counteract the action of the birth control pills.<sup>2</sup>

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### Low-Tech Bio-Surgical Technique Gaining Favor

It's not a new idea, but it's gaining renewed interest in Great Britain. It's called bio-surgery and is touted as a better way to clean out dead tissue and foreign bodies from wounds. The procedure requires no anesthetic and leaves less scarring than conventional surgery. It is being promoted by surgeon John Church in Oxford, England and will soon be tested in a hospital setting.

What is bio-surgery? It's the application of maggots to traumatic wound sites. The fly larvae selectively munch on the dead and decaying tissue, permitting the wounds to heal faster once they are stitched up.<sup>3</sup>

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### Electrical Workers and Cancer

A large study of electrical utility workers<sup>4</sup> has found increases in some types of cancer. Workers chronically exposed to high magnetic fields were 2.4 times more likely to die from brain cancer, though the risk was still less than 16 per 100,000 persons.

The study was not able to correlate an increase in leukemia to electromagnetic field strength exposure, but did find that the leukemia incidence increases with the number of years one works with electrical fields.

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#### D & C Study

A study published in the January 14th issue of The Lancet concludes that most women who suffer a miscarriage within the first 13 weeks of their pregnancy do not need the dilatation and curettage surgery routinely given. In fact, the surgery itself more than triples the rate of infection. Without the surgery, bleeding lasts for slightly more than a day longer, but some feel that this is part of the body's way of expelling remaining fetal tissue.

Miscarriage occurs in about 15 percent of all pregnancies.

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#### Cigarette Filter Fibers Inhaled

A Roswell Park Cancer Institute scientist has found that fibers from the filter portion of cigarettes are rather easily separated from the cigarette and are frequently inhaled or imbedded in the lips and tongue of the smoker. In a study published in the Journal of Cancer Research, he describes how the cellulose acetate fibers lodge in the body.

He suspects that the smoke-coated fibers allow carcinogens to seep into the surrounding tissues, setting the stage for some types of cancer.

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#### Childhood Obesity More Related to Lifestyle

A study published in the January issue of Pediatrics finds that the biggest factor in childhood obesity is lifestyle, not genetics.

There were 146 children studied over a three year period. After accounting for age and family history, researchers attributed most of the excess weight gain to high-fat diets and physical inactivity. These conclusions go against popular opinions that these children are born to be overweight.

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#### Let Your Body Rest After Pregnancy

The report in the New England Journal of Medicine that describes increased risk of infant mortality with back-to-back pregnancies may shed some light on why infant mortality rate is so high among blacks in America.

The study found that black women tripled their risk of premature delivery if they became pregnant before nine months of their last delivery. White women however, for a reason not yet clear, needed only a three month interval. The study was conducted at an Army hospital where the economic status

and quality of prenatal care of the women were nearly identical.

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### A Three Week Exercise and Diet Program to End Diabetes

A couple of quotes from R. James Barnard, professor of physiological science at UCLA:<sup>5</sup> "People have been conned into thinking that the little pills they take -- vitamins and medications -- are going to solve all their problems. Pills are not a substitute for a healthy diet and regular exercise."

"The standard medications for diabetes -- oral agents and insulin -- do not reduce the risk for cardiovascular complications and, in fact, may increase the risk. Recent evidence links insulin to cardiovascular disease."

Barnard studied 652 patients with type II diabetes at the Pritikin Longevity Center in Los Angeles. His study found a 76 percent success rate in three weeks treating relatively newly diagnosed cases of diabetes, not yet under medication, with exercise and diet. Success was defined as normal blood glucose levels.

The diet consisted mostly of pasta in tomato sauces, rice, potatoes, beans, vegetables, salads, and fruit. About 10 percent of the caloric intake was from fats.

The exercise program was 90 minutes of daily walking, though researchers felt that 30 to 45 minutes would be sufficient.

Under the same program, patients who had been taking oral hypoglycemic drugs were able to discontinue their use in 70 percent of the cases. Thirty-nine percent of patients taking insulin were able to give up the injections in 26 days.

The study is published in *Diabetes Care*, available from the American Diabetes Association.

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### Cumulative Trauma Lawsuit

We all knew it was coming ... and now here it is:

A former high school secretary and her husband are suing IBM and Apple Computers for knowingly manufacturing a dangerous product: the computer keyboard. The companies are charged with trying to pass their keyboards off as safe, while allegedly knowing all along that people would use them for hours on end, leading to repetitive stress injuries.<sup>6</sup>

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### Health Benefits of Unhealthy Lifestyles

The magazine *Sports Afield* reports in their January issue the following benefits of decadent lifestyles:

Married men who spend significant effort in pursuit of recreational distraction with friends such as a

night out with the boys at the local sports bar live longer than single teetotaling vegetarian joggers.

Moderate amounts of alcohol, as has been much discussed recently, seems to increase both the span and perhaps quality of life. Red wine may even be anti-carcinogenic.

Many heart disease patients have been found deficient in essential fatty acids, presumably from avoiding fatty foods such as butter, pizza, and steak. Some think the heart disease is related to a lack of those compounds.

Parkinson's and Alzheimer's diseases, prostate, and endometrial cancers strike smokers only half as often as they do non-smokers.

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### Prozac Peddling

The drug company Eli Lilly has come under fire for turning a mental health awareness event at a high school into a Prozac promotion.<sup>7</sup> Sales representatives passed out note pads and pens advertising Prozac to the students, many of whom already consider it a status symbol to be on Prozac.

In the book *War on Children*, psychiatrist Peter Breggin says that the pharmaceutical industry and the psychiatric establishment are promoting more and more chemical treatments to expand their market and influence. He says that children are the new frontier. Maybe someone should call "20/20."

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### Mental Training and Physical Performance

Recent studies are confirming what most of us already knew (or have forgotten) -- that mental visualization and rehearsal improves our tennis, golf, and basketball game. Brain scans done at the Institute of Neurology in London by Dr. Richard Frackowiak have found that about 80 percent of the neurological activity involved in an activity is re-created when visualizing. This helps train the neural circuitry, reinforcing pathway connections and improving control.

Physical practice, of course, is still necessary for a good performance since the other 20 percent (such as muscle controlling circuits) are an integral part. Also, it is unlikely that mental rehearsal is of any benefit if that particular physical action has never been physically performed.

### *References*

1. Associated Press report, 06-Jan-95
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