

## DC On-Line

Brian Sutton, DC

### Circumcision Teaches Boys about Pain

Doctors at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto have been comparing indicators of pain sensitivity in young boys receiving their childhood vaccinations. They have found that post-inoculation crying time and other pain sensitivity scores are significantly higher in circumcised boys.

The only explanation they can come up with is that the intense pain associated with circumcision primes an infant's neurological circuitry. The nervous system "learns" pain responses at an accelerated rate because of the intense stimulation, much the way other types of stimulation enhance development of different brain functions.

---

### Radioactive Particles Found in Automotive Emissions

British researchers have discovered elevated levels of polonium-210, a radioactive particle, close to motorways and in nearby children's teeth. The research is reported in *The Lancet*.

The compound tends to associated itself with lead, so there is concern that it will gravitate towards bone tissue, causing higher exposure of the marrow to radiation. The researchers also note that it can be transferred to a fetus.

This comes at a time when officials in Great Britain are trying to decide which type of gasoline to ban - - leaded or unleaded. The lead in leaded gasoline affects neurological structures, of course, but unleaded gasoline contains benzene which is a carcinogen.<sup>1</sup>

---

### It Looks Like Child Abuse, but ...

Doctors at the Children's Hospital in New Orleans say that about five percent of children brought to them as victims of suspected sexual abuse actually suffer from various unrelated health problems.<sup>2</sup>

Such conditions seem to cause a problem all around the country. Sometimes children are taken from their parents or a parent is jailed before the diagnosis is made.

For example, in New York a father was not allowed near his family for a year before his young daughter was finally diagnosed with bullous pemphigoid, an auto-immune condition that causes blisters in and around the vagina.

Then there was the girl with bruise-like marks on her face that turned out to be an allergic reaction to celery soup.

Lice can cause lesions on the skin similar to marks caused by pinching, some bowel infections can enlarge the anus, and of course diaper rash can mimic scaldings.

A father was arrested after the death of his son when bruises were found on the boy's body. The death was later found to have been due to influenza and the skin marks created by a Vietnamese folk remedy called "cao giu," but not before the father killed himself in jail.

---

#### Lack of Folic Acid and B Vitamins Contribute to Stroke

A three-year study of over 1,000 men and women suggests that the risk of carotid artery occlusion is elevated when dietary folic acid and some B vitamins are deficient.

Researchers at Tufts University in Boston studied the levels of homocysteine in elderly people and drew the conclusion that persons with low dietary intakes of B12, B6 and folic acid are twice as likely to suffer a stroke compared to persons with a proper intake of those substances.

Jacob Selhub, the lead researcher in this study, remarks that the government has recently lowered its recommendations for intake of B vitamins. He says that 30 percent of the general population has an inadequate vitamin intake.<sup>3</sup>

An article in the same recent issue of the New England Journal of Medicine calls for randomized clinical trials of the effects of such vitamins.

---

#### Medical Malpractice Kills More People than Traffic Accidents

Using statistics from the 1984 Harvard Study, the National Safety Council and other sources, the Campaign to Protect Consumer Rights says that more people die from medical negligence than any other accidental cause.<sup>4</sup>

If these statistics are valid, medical errors kill more people than the combined total accidents involving automobiles, falls, drownings, fires, choking, guns, and poisons.

The group's study finds that anyone admitted to a hospital faces a 1 in 400 chance of dying as a result of medical negligence or malpractice: one every six minutes.<sup>5</sup>

---

#### Placenta Size Related to Maternal Protein Intake

A study at Balor College of Medicine has found that restricting protein intake during pregnancy can decrease the size of the placenta by 21 percent, at least in pigs. This decreased size seems to have

impaired the transport of nutrients to the fetus, stunting fetal growth.<sup>6</sup>

When protein intake was increased later in the pregnancy, the diminished nutrient transportation problem persisted, suggesting that the stunting is irreversible.

---

### Muscle Tension Irritates Nerves, Causing Headaches, Says Neurosurgeon

Cadaver studies at the University of Maryland have found what is called an "undocumented tissue" connecting upper cervical muscles with the dura mater. Dr. Walker Robinson, reporting at a neurosurgery conference in Phoenix in February, said that muscle tension could tug on nerves, irritating them and producing a tension headache.

This may be big news to the medical and pharmaceutical professions who have long been looking for an explanation for tension headaches. However, Dr. Seymour Diamond, executive director of the National Headache Association, says that there is still a "cult group" of doctors who feel that tension headaches are really just misdiagnosed migraines.<sup>7</sup>

---

### Pesticides in Your Produce

According to a review conducted of FDA files by the Environmental Working Group, illegal pesticides are finding their way into the U.S. fruit and vegetable supply. The group found that 66 compounds were detected in the agency's pesticide monitoring program during 1992 and 1993 that were illegal or above allowable limits. Nearly half of these findings had been ignored by the FDA.

Contamination rate of the samples as tested by the FDA was 3.1 percent for domestic produce and 7.4 percent for imports. The FDA contends that the levels of these chemicals in many samples were too low to be of concern. "Certainly, the known health benefits from eating these fruits and vegetables exceed the hypothetical risks associated with low-level residues," according to one official.<sup>8</sup>

---

### Depression: Teaching Patients to Solve Problems Works as Well as Drugs

A 12-week study of severely depressed patients has shown that counseling patients on how to use their own problem-solving skills can resolve depression symptoms as well as a common drug treatment. The counseling used can be delivered by a general practitioner in less than four hours total time and involves goal-setting and progress evaluation.<sup>9</sup>

---

### Average Medical Physician Ignorant about Breast-Feeding

A nationwide survey of physicians most likely to be treating pregnant and breast-feeding mothers has found widespread ignorance about the benefits associated with breast-feeding. Also apparent was a

lack of willingness to encourage nursing. For example, less than 20 percent of the respondents said they had taught new mothers breast feeding techniques.<sup>10</sup>

An amazing 25 percent said they did not believe that breast-feeding was the best feeding method for infants. This attitude is cited as the reason the U.S. has such a poor percentage of mothers that nurse their babies.

---

### Treats for Your Treating Physician

Researchers at Cornell University have found that when patients give their doctor candy, they get better treatment.

Not only did the doctors bedside manner improve, but they arrived at a quicker, more accurate diagnosis of the patient's health problem. The gifts seem to facilitate the doctors' attention and understanding attitudes toward the patients.

Psychologist Alice Isen, describing the results, says that "Caring and understanding may lead to more valuing of each individual, a tendency -- paradoxically -- that runs counter to some approaches being proposed for medicine today."<sup>11</sup>

---

### Optic Neuropathy Surgery Worse than Useless

A study of surgical treatment for nonarteritic anterior ischemic optic neuropathy (NAION) has been halted early because of an obvious lack of effectiveness. The procedure being tested was optic nerve decompression, which is performed over a thousand times per year. NAION is the most common form of sudden blindness in the elderly.

Of the volunteers studied, 33 percent who underwent surgery showed improvement while 43 percent of those without any treatment improved. On the other end of the scale, 24 percent of persons treated surgically lost a significant amount of vision within six months, while the control group's vision deteriorated at only half that rate.<sup>12</sup>

Previous studies showed that the surgery was effective for this type of optic neuropathy, but apparently only because it was not compared to doing nothing at all.<sup>13</sup>

---

### Migraines a Risk Factor for Stroke?

Brigham and Women's Hospital, studying over 22,000 males, finds that migraine sufferers have strokes 80 percent more frequently than those that reported no migraines. This works out to 1.3 percent of persons who have migraines suffering a stroke.<sup>14</sup>

However, the study was done on medical physicians so one doesn't know if part of the cause might be

due to medications which would obviously be readily accessible and frequently employed.

---

### Polio Infection from Vaccine Increases after Antibiotic Injections

Editors of the New England Journal of Medicine note a striking link between post-vaccine polio infections and antibiotic injections, referring to a paper published in the same February 23, 1995 issue of that journal. Researchers investigated the elevated rate of vaccine-related polio episodes in Romania, where one case of polio arises for every 178,000 doses of the vaccine. This is about seven times the rate of the average industrialized country.

They have concluded that it is due to the practice of giving multiple shots of antibiotics soon after inoculation to treat fevers.

While the medical profession can't seem to figure out why treating a post-vaccination fever in this manner could cause such a thing to happen, at least it's getting some investigation. Researchers found that children who developed polio received an average of 17 injections in the month following their inoculation. Healthy children averaged three.

The form of the antibiotic administration, i.e., injection, is being blamed for the results as oral antibiotics are not widely used in Romania.

---

### Pesticides and Children

A study of 477 children in Denver suggests that household pesticides trigger some types of childhood cancers. While the study was not airtight or particularly massive, it does correlate with a few others that show similar results.

Soft tissue sarcomas were four times the normal rate in families that used yard herbicides and insecticides. Fetuses exposed to hang-up pest strips during the last trimester were three times more at risk for leukemia, twice if only exposed after birth. Professional home extermination resulted in about a 70% increase in lymphomas.<sup>15</sup>

### References

1. The Lancet, Feb. 3, 1995.
2. Dermatology 'Abuse,' AP story, Feb. 5, 1995.
3. UPI News, Feb. 1, 1995.
4. How People Die: Malpractice is the Leading Cause of Accidental Death. Study by the Campaign to Protect Consumer Rights.

5. UPI News, Chicago, Feb. 10, 1995.
6. Health Notes by United Press science writer Lisa Seachrist, Feb. 16, 1995.
7. Associated Press, Baltimore, Feb. 16, 1995.
8. Associated Press, Feb. 16, 1995.
9. Oxford University study, published in the British Medical Journal.
10. JAMA, Feb. 8, 1995.
11. Presentation at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.
12. JAMA, Feb. 22, 1995.
13. Useless Surgery, AP, 21-Feb. 21, 1995.
14. Archives of Neurology.
15. American Journal of Public Health, Feb. 27, 1995.

*Brian Sutton, DC  
Tampa, Florida*

*E-mail: GENIE:B.SUTTON1  
CompuServe: 73160,676  
Internet: [B.SUTTON@GENIE.GEIS.COM](mailto:B.SUTTON@GENIE.GEIS.COM)*

APRIL 1995