Ah, The Joys Of Geezerhood!

Well, duh! The Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) published a study to evaluate the effect of cataract surgery on the frequency of auto accidents recorded for senior drivers. To no one’s surprise, they found that removing the cataracts resulted in a superior (fewer crashes) rate for those who had their cloudy lenses exchanged for clear implants. Interestingly correlating is that while drivers over age 60 have the lowest accident rate per licensed driver, when they are compared on miles driven, they are as likely to crash as the most dangerous group, drivers under age 25. So, all of you in God’s waiting room, be careful out there.

Government Is A Device By Which A Few Control The Actions Of Many.

After two weeks of debate the Senate of the United States killed the last attempt to provide a Medicare drug bill until sometime (if ever) after the fall election. As a sop, they passed a minor piece of legislation providing for a more rapid entry of generic drugs onto the market. As usual, both sides of the aisle blamed the other. Republicans claimed that the plans presented were too costly. Democrat majority leader Senator Daschle said the Republicans would not support a drug benefit under Medicare, but his position was undercut since five Democrats voted against the final proposal. It’s easy to understand why so many people just shrug and don’t bother to vote. Meanwhile, the pharmaceutical houses are continuing to reap very large profits, with a major portion coming from America’s elderly. Without shame, they provide Europe, Asia, Canada and Latin America the same drugs at less cost.

A Smart Woman Would Wear Coffee As A Perfume.

And now, at last let’s hear a rousing cheer for coffee. Studies for years have tried to implicate caffeine in various diseases from cancer to heart disease, but without success. A study done by scientists at Massachusetts General Hospital found that low levels of caffeine given to mice, affected the A2A receptor located on the neural cells next to those that degenerated in Parkinson’s Disease. The study supports an epidemiological study by Harvard researchers who found that men who regularly drank four to five cups of coffee a day had significantly decreased risk of developing Parkinson’s. In women, the incidence of Parkinson’s Disease among those who drank one to three cups a day was less than half that of those who drank less than a cup. The Harvard study appears on the Web site for the Annals of Neurology. No Sanka, You’re welcome.

Be Careful Reading Health Books. You Could Die Of A Misprint.

Another blow struck against alternative medical therapy was reported in JAMA when a controlled, double blind, six week study of ginkgo biloba determined that no cognitive differences were found between the placebo and ginkgo groups. Outcomes were measured using standardized tests of memory, expressive language, learning, attention and concentration, and mental status. “Alternative” medical care is too often folk lore or testimonial, without measurable scientific parameters which are required to establish validity. And sadly, patients seem much more likely to listen and respond to Auntie Belle’s curative tales than follow the sometimes complex (and expensive) program laid out by the family doctor.

Thanks A Lot, But We Don’t Need Bigger Butts.

Scientists reporting in the journal Genome Research have finally found the gene for big butts. No, not fat butts, but big muscular butts — in sheep. Yes, sheep with big muscular butts. Scientists at Duke University have found a mutant gene which converts food into muscle into the hind regions, 30% more efficiently than normal. Sadly, the extra muscle makes for lousy meat. It is tough and tasteless. The mutation does not increase the number of muscle fibers, but instead causes the fibers to double in thickness. So far, the gene has not been demonstrated in certain members of Congress, even those who have been known to baaadly follow the party line.

Every Man Needs Some Particle Of Madness In Him.

In times past, to put away 20 frankfurters in the time allowed was considered outstanding at the annual Nathan’s Hot Dog Contest held at Coney Island on the 4th of July. This year 5’7”, 131 pound Takeru Kobayashi of Nagano consumed 50 hot dogs in 12 minutes to blow away the competition. Then Kobayashi went on to wipe out the gastronomic jocks in Fox’ Glutton Bowl by eating 10 pounds of calves brains, among other taste treats. In Japan gluttony is considered somewhat of a sport, and they have competitive eating shows on TV. Events are held in which the piggy entrants have trained by gradually increasing food and water intake for about a month before the contest. Kobayashi likes to train on tofu because it is soft and watery, unlike steak which is hard and not moist. He claims he does not vomit after eating, but sometimes feels sick after eating greasy food.


The practice of direct to consumer (DTC) advertising has become an ugly drug-pushing tsunami. In 1997, the pharmaceutical industry spent $372 million on such ads, but in 2001 that figure had increased by 750% to a total of $2.8 billion. Gullible, unsuspecting patients believe that the Food and Drug Administration regulates DTC advertising and only permits drugs that are completely safe and proven effective. As physicians we have an ethical duty to educate our patients about false and misleading claims made by DTC ads, but doctors pressed for time and trying to satisfy their patients, frequently just comply with the request. A survey reported in the Journal of Family Practice found that 46% of patients would try to persuade their doctor if he or she did not prescribe the desired drug. In addition, 24% said they would try to get the drug from another doctor, and 15% said they might change doctors if the request was denied. Without doubt, this process has gone completely nuts, and it is past time for the American Medical Association and other medical professional organizations to demand a return to the prohibition of DTCs.

Be Careful! Don’t Step In Any Of The William Morris.

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