Medical Tidbits...
Highlights of the Annual November Meeting of the American Heart Association in Anaheim, California.

Statins: 25 million people worldwide take STATIN drugs. The largest statin drug study was ZOCOR which lowered the risk of heart attacks and strokes by one-third in high risk patients (e.g., in diabetes); even when the cholesterol levels were normal. Unfortunately, the antioxidants Vitamins C, E, and Beta carotene apparently do not have a similar effect.

Leg Clots: Researchers report that “compression stockings” that fit the tightest around the ankles dramatically reduce the risk of dangerous blood clots on long air flights. Those with a history of high risk for clots benefit from a shoot of heparin one or two hours before flying.

FOSAMAX Once a Week: Fosamax was approved in 1995 as a breakthrough for women with osteoporosis, but patients often stopped their prescriptions because of the rigid instructions i.e., to be taken upon wakening, 30 minutes before eating with plenty of water. So scientists tried a week’s dose at once to 1,255 post menopausal women in a two-year international trial and found that one pill a week protects bone as well as women are more likely to stick to the once a week schedule (Fosamax has now been approved for once weekly dosage by the FDA).

Headaches: Dr. Seymour Diamond of the Diamond Headache Clinic in Chicago writes that a dose of caffeine helps tension headaches. In a study of 301 sufferers, the researchers found that a combination of IBUPROFEN and CAFFEINE worked better than either drug alone and one hour sooner than ibuprofen alone.

Hope for Kidney Cancer: Kidney cancer is so virulent that once it spreads, half the victims die within a year. Stem cells collected from a sibling can be transplanted and once they generate a new immune system, can fight off the cancer.

Richard Childs of the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) has tried the technique on 38 terminal patients, 11 died (two from the treatment) but 20 patients have seen their malignancy shrink and completely disappear. Additional trials have been started at cancer centers nationwide.

Eye to Eye: A government report shows that high doses of antioxidants slow the progress of macular degeneration, the nation’s leading cause of blindness—(200,000 people have macular degeneration) what to take?

- Vitamin C (500 mg)
- Vitamin E (400 I.U.)
- Beta carotene (15 mg) plus Zinc (80 mg) in daily doses

Second Opinions: A new book, “Second Opinions” by Dr. Jerome Greepman of Harvard Medical School endorses second opinions: “Dealing with uncertainty is difficult for everyone, including doctors...we all want to believe in the perfect solution.”

“A second opinion should include a second physician and a review of the original pathology slides and other tests...”

Greepman also says, “Don’t overdo your search. Sometimes if you find yourself looking for a third, fourth, fifth, or sixth opinion, what you’re really doing is running away from the truth...”

Gulf War Syndrome: PB (Pyridostigmine Bromide), an anti-nerve gas antidote is being investigated as a source for Gulf War Syndrome...The Defense Department reported that an estimated 750,000 troops were administered...”and cannot be ruled out” as the contributor to the dizziness and weakness reported by 100,000 men and women who served during the 1991 war.

PB has been used since 1995 to treat myasthenia gravis. It inhibits the nerve regulating enzyme acetyl cholinesterase and cause muscle spasms, weakness, and other symptoms, but the effects are considered reversible according to stuffy author Beatrice Golomb of the San Diego VA Medical Center.

Stay Fit: A 16-year study of 85,000 nurses published in the Archives of Internal Medicine shows that women who spend seven hours/week or more of moderate exercise lower their risk of breast cancer 20%. Researchers feel that exercise lowers the body estrogen which stimulates breast cell growth.

Digital Mammogram: The FDA approved a new GE manufactured digital mammogram which is easier to manipulate. Suspicious areas can be enlarged or reduced to enhance the contrast.

Lyme Legacy: A ten-year follow-up study of Lyme Disease indicates that the tick borne illness can sometimes cause debilitating pain, but the majority of Lyme sufferers don’t wind up with any more numbness, fatigue or neck pain than those not afflicted with the disease.

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Oral Hygiene: HIV can be transmitted through oral sex. A San Francisco study of men who engaged only in oral sex showed an 8% incidence of new HIV infections.

Wee Ones: Infants born less than 5.5 pounds at 40 weeks are less likely to hold managerial or professional jobs and on average earn 10% less than those weighing more at birth.

Herbal Remedy: Herbal treatment for prostate problems: Saw Palmetto, a traditional herbal remedy began a modern comeback in the early 1990’s through word of mouth and news of European research (sales reached $140 million in 1999). Recommendations by CR (Consumers Research consultants) supplements containing 320 mg per day of saw palmetto extract may be worth trying in some men with mild symptoms. If symptoms do not improve in two months, it’s probably time to try another approach.

Potpourri...
“Where did you get that great motorcycle?” the engineering student asked his friend...“I was minding my own business when a gorgeous woman rode up on it, jumped off, threw the bike to the ground, took off her clothes and said, “Take what you want.”

The first engineer nodded his approval, “Good choice,” he said. “The clothes probably wouldn’t have fit.”

When three bodies turned up at the morgue, all with big smiles on their faces, the detective asked the coroner to find out why...

“Jones had a heart attack while making love to his wife...hence the smile.”

“I see...and the next one?”

“This guy, Smith, had just won the lottery when he was hit by a bus which he never saw coming.”

“OK, how about this one, though.”

“Yeah...the poor guy wasn’t too bright. He got struck by lightening repeatedly while climbing a tree.”

“So, why the smile?”

“He thought someone was taking his picture.”
There is knock on St. Peter’s door. He looks out and a man is standing there. St. Peter is about to start his interview when the man disappears. A short time later, there is another knock. St. Peter gets the door, sees the same man who opens his mouth to speak and disappears once again.

“Hey, are you playing games with me?” St. Peter calls after him.

“No,” the man’s distant voice replies… “They’re trying to resuscitate me.”

The old preacher was dying, so he sent for a lawyer and an IRS agent from his congregation. The lawyer and the agent were puzzled, since neither had been close to the preacher.

As the two men entered the dying man’s room, the preacher motioned for them to sit on either side of his bed. They grasped his hands, sighted contentedly and stared at the ceiling. No one said anything.

Finally, the lawyer asked the preacher, “Why did you ask the two of us to come to your death bed?”

The preacher answered, “Jesus died between two thieves! And that’s how I want to go too.”

As an obstetrician, I sometimes see unusual tattoos when working in labor and delivery. One patient had some type of fish tattoo on her abdomen.

“That sure is a pretty whale…” I commented.

With a smile, she replied, “It used to be a dolphin.”

Ray Norris MD

Finishing up our work at a trade show in San Diego, my co-worker Maureen and I decided to go sightseeing in Tijuana, Mexico. While there, we went shopping and bought a few pieces of clay kitchenware.

As we crossed back into the United States, a customs official asked us if we had anything of value to report…

“Not really,” Maureen replied, digging in her bag for the crock she had purchased… Everyone around us froze as she continued, “I only bought a little pot.”

I recently sent a patient who was at high risk for coronary artery disease to a local internist. The internist saw him and suggested the use of a STATIN drug to treat his high cholesterol...

Unfortunately, his spell checker must not have been working because he wrote: “This patient should be prescribed a SATANIC DRUG….”

Dr. Carl Janzen, B.C.

Cryptic Message: I’m a family doctor with a very busy group family practice. Our staff receives several thousand (or so it seems) phone calls each day, many of which require a message to be written down and given to the doctor. The staff therefore uses a great deal of shorthand and abbreviations in their messages.

Recently, I received one such message informing me that one of my female patients was about to undergo some dental surgery at the hospital, but I wouldn’t be required to assist. In shorthand, the message read as follows:

“Jane Doe
Oral Sx @ hosp on Fri
No Ass”

I asked for clarification which resulted in GC (generalized chewing).

Dr. Jon Mannsell

The Rebel: Claire, a young lady with chronic asthma had just turned 15. Although she’d outgrown several food allergies, her mother still strictly forbade her from ingesting any of these products, “just in case”.

After I’d seen Claire, her mother wanted a word with me in private.

“Claire has really started her teenage rebellion,” her mother confided in me.

“She’s drinking milk!”

Dr. Tom Kovesi, Ottawa

The scientist approached God and said, “Listen, we’ve decided we no longer need you. We learned to clone people, transplant hearts, and do all kinds of things that were once considered miracles…”

God patiently heard him out and then said, “All right. To see whether or not you still need me: why don’t we have a man making a contest?”

“Oh, that’s great!” the scientist said…

“Now we are going to do this just like I did back in the old days with Adam,” God said.

“That’s fine,” replied the scientist and bent to scoop a handful of dirt.

“Whoa!” God said, shaking his head in disapproval. “Not so fast, pal. You get your own dirt!”

As a dental hygienist, I had a family come in one day for cleaning. By the time I was ready for the father, he informed me I had a lot to live up to.

His six year old daughter kept commenting that “a very smart lady” was cleaning their teeth today. The father said she kept commenting about her intelligence until he finally had to ask what she was basing her opinion on.

The little girl replied, “I heard people in here call her the DENTAL HIGH GENIUS”.  

Recently a poll of people in New York City showed that 80% of them wouldn’t want to live anywhere else in the world. Besides, it was reported, that it would be a violation of the “terms of their paroles.”

A University of Alabama football player met an attractive female student from an Ivy league school at one of the get acquainted parties, “Where do you all go to school?” the Alabama athlete drawled…

“Yale” she replied.

So the football player took a deep breath and shouted, “WHERE DO Y’ALL GO TO SCHOOL!”

Life’s Like That: One day my brother-in-law noticed an elderly lady slowly pushing a cart through the supermarket parking lot. Ever courteous, he insisted on taking over for her. The woman struggled along side, doing her best to keep up.

At the entrance, he said, “Here you go, ma’am,” and gave the cart back to her. Catching her breath, she said, “Thank you, but I was using it to lean on.”

Oops!

Harry who was 83 shoots a great game of golf. But his eyesight was going and he couldn’t see where the ball went. He was advised to take Sam with him. Sam could no longer hit the ball, but his eyes were perfect.

Harry hit the ball and turned to Sam, “Did you see where the ball went?” he asked. Sam said, “Exactly.”

“Well, where is it?” asked Harry. “I forgot,” replied Sam.

As a drama teacher, I often stay after rehearsals to help my students work on scenery. When I do, I change into coveralls. One night, my shirt and trousers were mistakenly stored away in a wardrobe.

One of my students was helping me search for them when the phone rang. “We’re all finished, Daddy,” I heard her say. “I’ll be home as soon as I help Mr. Charles find his clothes.”

Proof Reading: Last week my new speech recognition transcription system uncovered a problem in a patient I’d never suspected. My dictation: “The patient has alcoholic hepatitis and an aortic atherosclerotic bruit with preserved blood flow to his legs.”

The system regurgitated: “He has an enlarged liver and spleen related to his alcoholic abuse; with a loud brewery over his aorta that is still supplying good run off to bootleggers.”

Dr. Stuart Holthy, Ontario

Mr. N is well known in our community and has a reputation for being loud and flamboyant. He’s an entrepreneur who has had “brushes with the law”

Hawaii Medical Journal, Vol. 61, February 2002
in the past. He used to be a patient of mine, but had transferred to another physician in town. I recently encountered him in the lobby of our hospital. We started an animated and friendly conversation. The conversation was coming to a natural end when Mr. N turned to me and said, “Doc, I may need to come and visit you again.”

“Why is that?” I inquired. “You know those pills to get it up? My doctor will not give me any of them!”,

Surprising even myself, I managed to come back with this quick quip: “Mr. N, in my opinion, your doctor is right. You’re a big enough prick as it is.” Mr. N was unable to keep a straight face after that.

Dr. Edward Najgebauer, Ontario

The Butterfly: My mother-in-law Bonnie, suffered an ankle fracture and had an appointment to see the local orthoped whose second language was English.

As he entered the room, he was carrying a model of the human pelvis (an instructional aid for a later presentation to students) which he sat down on a table. My mother-in-law who didn’t have an clue what it was, felt it resembled a butterfly.

After examining Bonnie’s leg, he pronounced all was well and started for the door, forgetting the model pelvis.

Bonnie reminded him, “Excuse me Doctor, you forgot your butterfly”.

The venerable orthoped reached for his zipper, pulled it up firmly, stiffly thanked my mother-in-law and strode out the door.

Dr. George Burden

Medical School Hotline, continued from p. 33

the Donald J. Reynolds grant in medical education, the Department of Geriatrics at the John A. Burns School of Medicine will strengthen the geriatric curriculum within all medical departments and institutions, thus improving the educational experience for both students and residents. With the combined resources of the Departments of Geriatrics and Psychiatry, innovative curricula utilizing problem-based learning, standardized patients, geriatric outpatient/inpatient consultation teams, outpatient consultation clinics, and geriatric/geropsychiatry inpatient rounds will coalesce to provide a rich educational environment that will lead to improved multidisciplinary care of the elderly in Hawaii.

References