



Editorial

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Editor, Hawaii Medical Journal

Mold Contamination Continued

A symposium "Understanding Mold Contamination issues" was conducted in Waikiki on August 16, 2002. It was sponsored by "Mold University-Honolulu" and produced by Mold Pro International and the Environmental Microbiology Lab. Two hundred fifty attendees included insurance agents, architects, building managers, contractors, and other industry representatives as well as six attorneys and two physicians, George Ewing MD and your Editor.

The editorial in the June 2002 issue (pages 116 & 117) of the Hawaii Medical Journal commented about the growing problem of molds in Hawaii and worldwide.

Because of the recent closure of the year-old Kalia Tower at the Hilton Hawaiian Village Hotel complex and previous problems at the Fort DeRussy Hotel, local media have alerted us to the ubiquitous mold problem. Recently, a judge's chamber and courtroom in the Prince Jonah Kuhio Federal Building were also closed because of mold contamination.

Randy Herold, president of Mold Pro International, introduced the seminar by discussing the three driving forces about indoor Air Quality, the troika of legal, regulatory and insurance aspects. Herold warned that their industry must start regulating "mold authorities" or else the politicians will do it. Sound familiar?

The most significant speaker from a medical viewpoint was Harriet Burge PhD, an Associate Professor and Director of the Microbiology Laboratory, Harvard School of Public Health. Considered the leading authority on indoor Air Quality for 30 years, she confessed that she had been staying in a bed & breakfast accommodation in Manoa. But because of her asthma and the mold problem in Manoa, she had to move to a hotel in Waikiki!

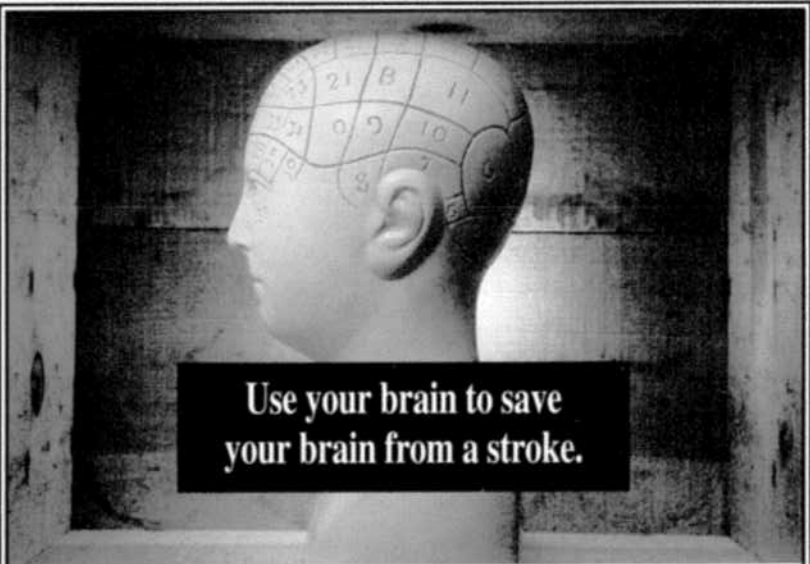
Some of her pearls included:

- Antifungal chemicals also destroy human cells, because fungal elements are similar in structure and function to many human cells.
- Some spores have melanin and are resistant to ultraviolet, considered by some to be sporicidal.
- *Stachybotrys* is actually very common. Probably all the people in the conference room have *Stachybotrys* in their homes.
- The stories about *Stachybotrys* causing illness are still anecdotal. There is no proof (Koch's postulates) to date.

- Farmers have the greatest exposure to fungus, more than any other occupation. She was not sure of pineapple and sugarcane workers, but they probably fit into the same category as other farmers.
- High temperature does not kill fungi.
- High temperature is not a major factor in fungus propagation, but condensation; i.e. water is the important stimulus.
- Even ethylene oxide used for sterilization of surgical instruments does not kill all molds.
- Recommendations to remove mold include:
 1. Vacuum the surface
 2. Use soap and water to wash the surface
 3. Get the mold and stains off with Clorox, but not full-strength
- Avoid natural peanut butter if you are mold-sensitive. Peanut butter contains *aflatoxin*.
- Because molds are ubiquitous, she advises "Be healthy and eat right" in order to be less susceptible to molds.

There were other knowledgeable speakers on the program, most of them involved with the air and room monitoring risk analysis remediation of mold problems, the construction industry, and allied aspects of "IAQ" Indoor Air Quality.

We will try to get Dr. Burge back to Hawaii to make a presentation to Hawaii physicians in the future.



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