



I've Enjoyed As Much Of This As I Can Stand.

Since it has been established that the daily intake of two ounces of alcohol is associated with a decreased risk of coronary artery disease, it has been postulated that a beneficial effect may also be occurring in regard to retinal circulation. By further extension, perhaps a little booze may have some positive effect by causing a choroidal blush thus decreasing the risk of age-related macular degeneration (AMD). Harvard University conducted a prospective study over an eight year period using 32,764 female nurses and 29,488 male health care workers aged 50 years and older. Beer intake was not related to AMD, but wine consumption of two drinks or more per day produced a higher (not lower) risk of AMD in both men and women.

Two Other Places Air Travel Has Brought Closer Together Are This World And The Next.

About 20 minutes before landing in Salt Lake City, Jonathan Burton, age 19 years, became agitated aboard Boeing 737 Southwest Airlines flight 1763 last August 11th. He began acting wildly and kicked through the center of the cabin door into the cockpit. Unable to control him, the two female flight attendants asked the aid of passengers. At least six to eight people helped subdue Mr. Burton, and in their zeal, they killed him by suffocation! Authorities ruled the death a homicide, but called it a case of self-defense. A Southwest spokesman called it an attempted hijacking, and not "air rage." Stephen Luckey, chairman of the Air Line Pilots Association security committee, said "Fear is a great magnifier. No one wants to see a 19 year old die, but certainly no one wants the plane to go down." In 1996, the FAA issued an advisory suggesting increased training for such events, but many airlines have done little, and some nothing at all. With only two pilots aboard, the FAA said that it would be dangerous for a pilot to become involved in subduing a disruptive passenger. "At times, it may be wise to involve passengers," the FAA noted in its advisory. Flight attendants receive extensive training in how to handle crash landings, but when faced with a passenger crisis, they often have little training to fall back on. It's about time to include such education.

Letting The Cat Out Of The Bag Is Much Easier Than Putting It Back In.

The sporozoan *Toxoplasma gondii* is widespread in areas where cats are found. Experts tell us that 60% of Hawaii's adults have been infected with *T. gondii*. Devastating toxoplasmosis infections can occur in AIDS patients or transplant patients on immuno-suppressive therapy, and pre-natal fetal infection can lead to blindness, mental retardation, or death. For some time it was believed that infections were caused by consuming raw or undercooked meat from infected animals, but in 1970 it was found that *Toxoplasma* oocysts were present in cat fecal material. Subsequent study demonstrated that the oocysts could remain infective for as long as a year in a warm-humid environment. Hawaii is an ideal endemic area. The relationship between cats and many intermediate hosts, e.g., birds, chickens, goats, sheep, pigs and even filth flies, cockroaches, snails, slugs, geckos, can provide avenues for human exposure. Prevalence of infection varies between ethnic groups, due to variations in human factors like hygiene, cooking habits and sanitation. Outbreaks have occurred in Hawaii involving soldiers who drank contaminated water, patrons of a riding stable, and pre-school aged children.

Knowledge Is No Prerequisite For Authority.

The New England Journal of Medicine reported a study on the value of routine preoperative medical testing before cataract surgery. In a prospective, randomized study from nine participating centers, 18,189 patients were assigned to a group that had routine lab testing or one that had no such testing. History and physical exams were performed on both groups, and half of the group also underwent EKG, CBC, serum electrolytes, BUN, creatinine, and glucose. The authors of the study found no significant differences in the rates and types of intra-operative and post-operative adverse medical events between the two groups. The report indicates that specific testing is only valuable if the history or physical exam indicates such need, but otherwise the routine testing has no value and adds significantly to the cost of cataract care. Estimates are that more than \$100 million could be saved annually if appropriate guidelines were established.

Nothing Is More Hopeless Than A Scheme Of Wealth And Merriment.

The venerable Nalle Clinic in Charlotte, North Carolina, oldest medical group and the city's only multi-specialty clinic decided to call it quits in June. The straw that broke the 79 year-old clinic's back was the mass resignation of one-fourth of the clinic's physicians. Since 1990 the clinic has been managed by the Nashville, Tennessee, practice management company, PhyCor. The 36 Nalle physicians sold the practice assets and accounts to PhyCor 10 years ago, and agreed to pay 12% of its profits in exchange for management services. In the past two years the clinic began feeling financially strained and payments slowed and physician's pay fluctuated. Then physicians pay declined, some by as much as 80%, and the exodus was underway. Several prominent physicians left last summer, and this year the staff collapsed in departures. Considering what has happened on Maui with PhyCor's problems with the Maui Medical Group, plus their other multiple malfunctions on the mainland, one wonders just how much damage has been done to medical groups with the so-called medical management companies. Of course, the real genesis of the practice management disorders, as well as many HMO headaches, relates to many physicians' inability to say "no thanks" when someone waved some cash before their eyes.

According To My Calculations, The Problem Doesn't Exist.

The Food and Drug Administration has approved the controversial abortive drug RU-486 (mifepristone) for prescription use. Most of the nation's large insurers have stated that the drug will be covered, and it is predicted that physicians will gradually include use of the drug in their practices if they will not be subject to harassment. Coming at a time when Governor Bush and VP Gore are pounding into the last days before the Presidential election, the matter is one of large political impact. Unfortunately, the AMA policy that such matters are between the doctor and the patient, and should not be political, matters very little. Democrats are already using the issue as a matter of a woman's right of freedom and privacy, while the Republican advisors are not pushing Bush, and would like not to alienate the women's vote.

Seen It All. Done It All. Can't Remember Most Of It.

When Governor Cayetano signed the medical marijuana bill, Hawaii became the first (We're number one !!) state in which the legislature prepared and passed such legislation. All other marijuana states, Alaska, Arizona, California, Maine, Oregon and Washington, passed the law through ballot initiatives. Under the tightly worded measure, patients must register annually with the Department of Public Safety. Patients will be allowed to use the drug to relieve symptoms of cancer, glaucoma, HIV, AIDS, multiple sclerosis, epilepsy and Crohn's disease and also those suffering from cachexia, pain, nausea, seizures and muscle spasms. On the downside of the issue is a recent study in the *Journal of Immunology* reporting that cannabis can promote tumor growth by reducing immunity and can also lower resistance to bacterial and viral infections.

Ah, Sweet Mystery Of Life!

When Mary Sue Stowe broke up with her husband, Junior Davis, she claimed custody of seven frozen embryos that had been fertilized by Junior's sperm. Davis wanted them brought back to room temperature. The case went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court where the Court sided with Junior. Her lawyer said that Mary Sue was "devastated" but would try to talk to her ex-husband and persuade him to change his mind. Maybe it was better when God (nature) planned all these things.

ADDENDA

- ❖ Loss of one eye reduces the visual field by about 20%.
- ❖ During the decade of the 1980's 230 companies (46%) disappeared from the "Fortune 500."
- ❖ Most vegetarians look so much like the food they eat, that they can be classified as cannibals.
- ❖ Alcohol and calculus don't mix. Never drink and derive.
- ❖ I've been around so long, that I remember when music was clean and sex was dirty.

Aloha and keep the faith —rts■

Contents of this column do not necessarily reflect the opinion or position of the Hawaii Ophthalmological Society. Editorial comment is strictly that of the writer.