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***Wholistic News Reviews
Traditional, Complementary, Alternative, and Psycho-Social
Modalities of Treatment***

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Menopausal Women and Herbal Product Utilization

Dr. Rhonda Dailey and her colleagues report that out of 397 women, 24.9% report taking at least one of four herbal products [phytoestrogens, St. John's wort, Ginkgo biloba or ginseng] 6 months prior to seeing their primary care physicians for symptoms of menopause. Dr. Dailey goes on to report that those women who used herbal products tended to report more menopausal symptoms and that 68% of the herbal product users reported that the herbs did improve their symptoms. Another 56.4% stated that their primary care physicians knew about the herbal product usage. Dailey and colleagues conclude, "Primary care patients experiencing common menopausal symptoms are likely to use herbal products that are purported to provide menopause symptom relief... Inquiry of herbal product use is another way for physicians to learn about patient self-medication of bothersome symptoms."

Journal of Women's Health 2003: 12(7), 633-641

Use of CAM in Largest U.S.-Mexico Border City

Dr. Jose O. Rivera and colleagues at the University of Texas at El Paso and the University of Texas at Austin, conducted a 6 month prospective observational study of complementary/ alternative medicine usage in El Paso, Texas. Out of 547 participants, 77% were using complementary and/ or alternative modalities such as massage, herbs, multivitamins, ginseng and ginkgo biloba. Dr. Rivera concludes that the results indicate that Hispanics in the El Paso area use CAM at a higher rate than the national average. He also states that many of these therapies can adversely affect a variety of disease states and standard drug therapies, having found 599 examples of this in his studied population.

Pharmacotherapy 2002: 22(2), 256-264

Having Cancer May Alter Your Brain

Dr. Joan Arehart-Treichel reports that Japanese researcher Yutaka Matsuoka, head of the adult mental health division at the National Center of Neurology and Psychiatry has found that cancer patients who have one or more symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder have been found to have a small left amygdala, suggesting that the stress of having cancer may alter brain structure. The article cites previous research that showed smaller hippocampi than normal in patients diagnosed with PTSD. The same has been found in patients who are depressed. Matsuoka concludes by saying, "I think that the left amygdala may become a possible target for the development of a treatment strategy against intrusive recollections in cancer survivors." Commenting on these preliminary findings, noted Stanford Psychiatrist Dr. David Spiegel says, "This is an interesting study. It is novel to have differences in amygdala volume related to PTSD symptoms in cancer patients."

Psychiatric News 2003; 38: 20, 21

Reduction in Smell Discrimination Precedes Development of Schizophrenia

Dr. Warrick Brewer of the Orygen Youth Health Clinic in Parkville, Victoria, Canada, reports that out of 22 patients who later became psychotic, those who developed schizophrenia had significantly poorer smell discrimination ability than other psychotic patients or those who developed non-psychotic psychiatric disorders. Dr. Brewer concludes by saying, "The incipient onset of schizophrenia compromises normal frontal lobe development and therefore interferes with the development of neuropsychological functions mediated by these regions."

American Journal of Psychiatry 2003;160:1790-1794

Left Sided Strokes More Likely To Cause Death

Dr. Ale Algra, lead researcher at the University Medical Center In Utrecht, Netherlands, reports that contrary to earlier animal studies, stroke patients' risk of sudden death is increased with left hemisphere strokes but not with right hemisphere strokes. When Dr. Algra and his team controlled for other risk factors such as previous myocardial infarction or hypertension, risk of sudden death with left hemisphere stroke was 45% higher than right hemisphere stroke and mortality rates within a 24 hour period were approximately one and a half times greater in left hemisphere ischemic infarctions versus lesions in other parts of the brain or brains without any lesions. Dr. Algra concludes by stating, "The use of beta-blockers which lower the risk of sudden death, may be considered for patients with left-sided lesions....[but] such should be sorted out in further clinical trials."

Stroke, December 2003

Depression Reduced with Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation

Dr. P.B. Fitzgerald and colleagues report that in a double blind, placebo-controlled trial using two different repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation techniques... after 10 sessions, treatment-resistant depressive patients experienced a significant decrease in their depressive symptoms based upon self-report on the Montgomery-Asberg Depression Rating Scale, as compared to equally treatment-resistant depressed patients who received sham treatment. The researchers conclude that both [techniques] were effective in the treatment of medication-resistant depressed patients and that at least 4 weeks of treatment were necessary to achieve a clinically significant response.

Archives of General Psychiatry 2003; 60(10)

Treating and/or Preventing Hypertension By Weight Loss

Dr. Johanna M. Geleijnse of Wageningen University in the Netherlands, reports that following a meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials on the effect of weight reduction on blood pressure in 4, 874 subjects, she and her colleagues found a net weight reduction of – 5.1 kg as a result of energy restriction, increased physical activity, or both — leading to a systolic and diastolic reduction of – 4.44mm Hg and –3.57 mm Hg respectively. Dr. Geleijnse and her team concludes that, “Given the increasing prevalence of obesity, weight control is of the utmost importance.”

Hypertension 2003, 42, 878-884

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