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TO YOUR HEALTH

Daily Journal staff report

Classes teach smokers how to break habit

• St. Francis Hospital & Health Centers will offer a seven-week Freedom from Smoking class beginning Jan. 17. The class will meet from 6 to 8 p.m. Tuesdays at St. Francis Community Relations, 3145 E. Thompson Road in Indianapolis.

The cost of the seven-week program is \$50. The cost may be reimbursed by insurance.

Freedom from Smoking, a program developed by the American Lung Association, offers individuals a step-by-step plan to break the habit of smoking.

Information: 782-7999

• Smoking-cessation classes will be conducted from 5 to 7 p.m. Wednesdays through Jan. 25 at Johnson Memorial Hospital in Franklin.

Johnson County residents who complete the free program will receive a nicotine replacement voucher redeemable at the Franklin Kroger pharmacy.

Information: 346-3728

Pilates can alleviate pain in lower back

Library Park Rehabilitation Center, 637 S. State Road 135, will offer a pilates exercise class for adults from 4 to 5 p.m. Mondays through Feb. 13.

Pilates is an entire body workout that balances strength and flexibility, improves posture and enhances body awareness.

The workout targets the core stabilizing muscles, including the deep abdominal and spinal muscles, improving stability of the lower back to prevent and alleviate low back pain. People of all ages, fitness levels and abilities can benefit. Cost is \$59.

Information and reservations: 865-1110

Training program to help with mini-marathon

Mount Pleasant Christian Church in Greenwood will offer a 16-week training program for the annual Indianapolis 500 Festival mini-marathon.

Training begins Jan. 17, and the race is May 6.

Advanced registration costs \$50 and includes weekly training clinics, scheduled group runs/walks and a pasta dinner on May 5.

Advanced registration closes Sunday.

Information: 881-6727, Ext. 238

Men with prostate cancer wanted for IU research

Men are needed for an Indiana University study of a minimally invasive procedure that uses sound waves to destroy tissue of the prostate gland for people with recurrent prostate cancer.

Participants must be between 40 and 80 years old and have previously had radiation or brachytherapy to treat prostate cancer.

To qualify, participants must also have cancer stage T1 or T2 confined to the prostate gland and have a Gleason score of seven or less.

Tissue in the prostate gland is rapidly heated in a few seconds with ultrasound energy. The treatment usually is performed as an outpatient procedure.

Information: 278-3434

Health-care issues to be discussed at university

Health-care disparities, a growing problem in minority communities nationwide, will be highlighted from Jan. 15 to 20 during Indiana University School of Medicine Diversity Week activities.

Speakers will discuss current issues as well as propose solutions to be integrated into health-care training and delivery.

Presentations will begin each day at noon in the Emerson Hall auditorium, 345 Barnhill Drive in Indianapolis on the campus of IUPUI.

All sessions are open to the public as space allows. Lunch will be provided.

Topics include:

- Jan. 17: "Health-Care Disparities for Women"
- Jan. 18: "Medical Injustice"
- Jan. 19: "Access to Health Care"
- Jan. 20: "Access to Health Care: A Patient's Perspective."

The week begins with the IUPUI 36th annual Martin Luther King Jr. dinner Jan. 15 in the ballroom at the Indianapolis Marriott Downtown.

For information or to purchase dinner tickets, call 274-3931 or visit life.iupui.edu/culture/mlk_dinner.asp.

Old way of treating strep throat isn't working

New drugs stop infection better than penicillin

By LEE BOWMAN

SCRIPPS HOWARD NEWS SERVICE

When it comes to treating strep throat, older types of antibiotics are increasingly less likely to kill the germ that causes millions of sore throats, fevers and missed school days for children each year.

Yet recent studies show that as many as 90 percent of children treated for strep still get amoxicillin or penicillin rather than newer antibiotics known as cephalosporins.

One study presented at a recent scientific meeting on antimicrobials found that taking the newer drugs even for a few days is

more effective against strep than the traditional 10-day course of the older antibiotics.

Pediatricians at the University of Rochester Medical Center found that 25 percent of children treated for strep with penicillin ended up back in the doctor's office within three weeks of treatment.

Children treated with amoxicillin returned 18 percent of the time. But repeat visits fell to 14 percent for youngsters who got older-generation cephalosporins and to just 7 percent for newer types of the drugs such as cefpodoxime and cefdinir, which can typically be given for just four or five days.

The study reviewed treatment of 11,426 children. The research was an expanded version of another study that looked at the experience of about 7,000 children.

"Most doctors are shocked to learn of the high failure rates of the older medica-

tions," said Dr. Michael Pichichero, a professor of microbiology and immunology at Rochester and co-author of the study.

"The paradigm for treating strep sore throats has been changing slowly, and endorsing the use of cephalosporins as a first-time treatment is something that needs to be seriously considered," Pichichero said.

Treatment guidelines for strep issued by the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Heart Association and the World Health Organization all call for penicillin or amoxicillin as first drugs of choice, despite evidence that resistance to those drugs may be on the rise.

Nearly all drugs fail some of the time, Pichichero noted, and doctors often accept some risk of failure as a tradeoff for other things like convenience, cost for families and the likelihood that a less

powerful drug will kill a bug as readily as a more powerful one.

On the other hand, various studies in recent years have shown that only about 15 percent to 35 percent of youngsters who come to a doctor's office with a sore throat actually have strep; most sore throats are caused by viruses, which aren't vulnerable to antibiotics.

And truth be told, strep itself isn't all that dangerous in a child with a healthy immune system. Most kids get over it without help in about a week.

More to the point in the age of day care, two working parents and the general fast pace of life, kids with strep who have been on antibiotics for 24 hours are no longer considered contagious and are allowed back in class or child care.

And kids who get antibiotics also feel better within a day or two of starting them.

Headphones giving eardrum experts headaches

People addicted to iPods could be budding hearing-aid wearers

By LEE BOWMAN

SCRIPPS HOWARD NEWS SERVICE

All those ears ringing from newly gifted iPods and MP3 players may not be able to hear next year's Christmas bells as well if music lovers aren't careful, hearing specialists are warning.

"We're seeing the kind of hearing loss in younger people that's typically found in aging adults," said Dean Garstecki, an audiologist and professor at Northwestern University in Evanston, Ill.

The culprits aren't the devices themselves but the tiny ear-bud style headphones the music players use.

"Unfortunately, the earbuds are even more likely to cause hearing loss than the muff-type earphones that were used on Walkman and portable CD players," Garstecki said.

In a study published in the Journal Ear and Hearing, researchers at Harvard Medical School looked at a variety of headphones and found that, on average, the smaller they were, the higher their output levels at any given volume-control setting.

And other studies have shown that because the tiny phones inserted into the ears are not as efficient at blocking outside sounds as the cushioned headsets, users tend to crank up the volume to compensate.

A study done by Australian researchers during the summer found that about a quarter of iPod users between 18 and 54 years of age listened at volumes sufficient to cause hearing damage.

Moreover, having music players with longer-lasting batteries and more storage capacity encourages people with portable players to listen longer, not giving the ears a chance to recover.

Hearing advocates are pressing for people to turn down the volume. The rule of thumb suggested by researchers at Boston Children's Hospital is to keep the volume of a music player no higher than 60 percent of the maximum and use it for only about an hour a day.

Ear-bud users should turn down the volume on iPods, pictured above, to reduce hearing loss, experts say. The devices can cause premature hearing loss.

LIQUID LIBRARY PHOTO



AP PHOTO ILLUSTRATION

Say what?

Signs of possible hearing loss

- Muffled quality of speech and other sounds
 - Difficulty understanding words, especially against background noise or in a crowd of people
 - Asking others to speak more slowly, clearly and loudly
 - Needing to turn up the volume of the television or radio
 - Withdrawal from conversations
 - Avoidance of some social settings
- SOURCE: mayo clinic.com

Research mice grow human brain cells after stem cell injections

Scientists hope to better study ailments of brain

By PAUL ELIAS

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SAN FRANCISCO

Add another creation to the strange scientific menagerie where animal species are being mixed together in ever more exotic combinations.

Scientists announced recently that they had created mice with small amounts of human brain cells in an effort to make realistic models of neurological disorders such as Parkinson's disease.

Led by Fred Gage of the Salk Institute in San Diego, the researchers created the mice by injecting about 100,000 human embryonic stem cells per mouse into the brains of 14-day-old rodent embryos.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Researchers injected human embryonic stem cells into the brains of 14-day-old rodent embryos. The mice are not humanized, scientists behind the study said.

Those mice were each born with about 0.1 percent of human cells in each of their heads, a trace amount that doesn't remotely come close to humanizing the rodents.

"This illustrate that injecting human stem cells into mouse brains doesn't restructure the brain," Gage said.

Still, the work adds to the growing ethical concerns of mixing human and animal cells when it comes to stem cell and cloning research. After all, mice are 97.5 percent genetically identical to humans.

"The worry is if you humanize them too much you cross certain boundaries," said David Magnus, director of the Stanford Medical Center for Biomedical Ethics. "But I don't think this research comes even close to that."

Researchers are nevertheless beginning to bump up against what bioethicists call the "yuck factor."

Three top cloning researchers, for instance, have applied for a patent that contemplates fusing a complete set of human DNA into animal eggs in order to manufacture human embryonic stem cells.

One of the patent applicants, Jose Cibelli, first attempted such an experiment in 1998 when he fused cells from his cheek into cow eggs.

"The idea is to hijack the machinery of the egg," said Cibelli, whose current work at Michigan State University does not involve human material because that would violate state law.

Researchers argue that co-mingling human and animal tissue is vital to ensuring that experimental drugs and new tissue replacement therapies are safe for people.

Others have performed similar experiments with rabbit and chicken eggs while University of California-Irvine researchers have reported making paralyzed rodents walk after injecting them with human nerve cells.

Doctors have transplanted pig valves into human hearts for years, and scientists have injected human cells into lab animals for even longer. But the brain poses an additional level of concern because some envision nightmare scenarios in which a human mind might be trapped in an animal head.