

## **An Occasional Medical Newsletter from The Blood Care Foundation**

Dear Member,

I would like to start by wishing you a Happy New Year and trust that you will not require the services of the Foundation. The requirement for our provision of properly screened blood was emphasised in a recent editorial in *Transfusion*, the journal of the American Association of Blood Banks. Simone Glynn and her colleagues state “The estimated residual risks of viral transfusion-transmitted infections .... are now very low in developed countries. However, this is not the situation in most developing countries faced with high transfusion-transmitted infection prevalence and incidence rates, and lacking the resources or the infrastructure to implement appropriate serological testing. The WHO estimates that at least 13 million of the 75 million units collected in the world each year are not completely tested using basic serologic assays, including up to 45 percent of blood donations in developing countries. Even when testing is performed, the sensitivity of assays may be poor and inadvertent release of test-positive units may occur.” (*Transfusion*. 2002;**42(8)**:966-72). The Foundation strives to ensure that our members receive only the safest possible blood.

### **Alcohol and Myocardial Infarction.**

The latest data on drinking and heart disease that people, who drink alcohol on at least 3 day (and up to seven) are a third less likely to have a heart attack than people who drink alcohol only once a week. (*New Engl.J.Med.* 2003;**348**:109-18)

### **High Dairy Diet and Parkinson’s Disease in Men.**

A recent epidemiological study has shown that men, who ate 2.9 or more servings of dairy products a day, had over twice the risk of developing Parkinson’s disease than men who ate less than one serving. No other food groups were associated with risk of Parkinson’s disease in men or women. (*Ann.Neurol.* 2002;**52**:793-801)

### **Burns from Campfires.**

If you are planning to camp out this summer remember to put out your campfire with water and not sand. Fire fighters in Australia have measured the temperature inside campfires extinguished with water or sand. Embers extinguished with sand, remain hot enough to cause full thickness burns, eight hours later. (*Med.J.Aust.* 2003;**178**:30)

### **Prevention of Cardiovascular Events.**

The ALLHAT trial has shown that thiazide-type diuretics reduce cardiovascular events as much as angiotensin converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors and calcium channel blockers in patients with hypertension. This study enrolled 33,357 people aged 55 years or older with hypertension, who were randomised to one of three anti-hypertensive regimes, thiazide diuretics, ACE inhibitors or calcium channel blockers. At the end of the trial there was no difference in the incidence of fatal and non-fatal myocardial infarction, but the cost of providing thiazide diuretics was considerably cheaper. (*JAMA.* 2002;**288**:2981-97)

### **Cannabis Use and Mental Health.**

Patton and colleagues followed a cohort of 1,600 Australian adolescents for seven years. Their survey shows that smoking cannabis at least once a week resulted in an increase in the incidence of depression and anxiety states. This was especially true amongst females. A Swedish study, in which 50,087 conscripts were followed up for 15 years, showed that the use of cannabis in adolescence increased the risk of schizophrenia in a dose-response relation. This is confirmed in a recent study in New Zealand by Arseneault and colleagues. (*BMJ*. 2002;**325**:1183-4, 1195-2002 & 1212-3)

### **Pulmonary Oedema as a Hazard of Skiing.**

If you are going skiing this winter, look out for signs of pulmonary oedema, even when you are not very high. A French group have reported on 52 skiers, most fit young men, who developed pulmonary oedema at heights of 1,400 – 2,400 m. (*Chest*. 2003;**123**:49-53)

### **NSAIDs and Diarrhoea.**

Another French study has shown a causal relationship between non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) and diarrhoea. Subjects showed a threefold increase in having diarrhoea after the recent intake of NSAIDs. (*Gut*. 2003;**52**:260-3)

### **Dipstick Test for Plague.**

A simple dipstick test, which will detect the F1 antigen of *Yersinia pestis* in less than 15 minutes, has been developed by scientists working in Madagascar. This test, which can be used by local health workers at the patient's bedside, allows rapid diagnosis and treatment of plague and will also help in the control of epidemics. (*Lancet*. 2003;**361**:211-6)

### **Snakebite.**

For those of you who might need to treat a patient who has been bitten by a snake, Gold et al have written an excellent review article in the New England Journal. (*New Engl.J.Med.* 2002;**347**:347-56)

### **The Prevention and Treatment of Jet Lag.**

Jet lag is a problem that those of us who have to travel to distant lands on business face as a regular hazard. There are many so called remedies but now these have been subjected to the scrutiny of a Cochrane review, which is available at *Cochrane Library* 2002; disc issue 4:CD001520.

### **Adolescents, Fizzy Drinks and Sleep Patterns.**

The average American adolescent, aged between 12 and 15, consumes 60mg of caffeine a day, mostly in fizzy drinks. The caffeine interferes with sleep patterns, making them sleepy in the day and interfering with their education. (*Pediatrics*. 2003;**111**:42-6)

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