

Focus on Health

June 2007

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Gynecologic Endocrinology

How Doctors Think

A new book, "How Doctors Think," by Dr. Jerome Groopman of Harvard Medical School, is a must read for all doctors and medical students. However, all of us are potential patients and should also read it. The book reached number 4 on the New York Times' best seller list after only 2 weeks.

Time to Stop Treatment

A metaanalysis from several large medical centers on the use of Actonel to treat osteoporosis showed that discontinuing the drug after 5 years did not cause any loss of benefit as to bone strength. Continuation of Actonel after 5 years conversely did not prove to be harmful either. Therefore, to summarize: If you have been on Actonel (or Fosamax or Boniva) for five years, you should stop.

As part of the professional services I feel should be provided by me to my patients, screening of the voluminous medical literature has become more and more important. Please read this now. Perhaps you have seen a new item that I have not included in this newsletter or have not seen myself. If so, feel free to bring it to my attention.

Arterial Tests

Three simple tests can potentially save thousands of lives by early detection of arterial problems that lead to stroke, such as carotid artery blockage, aortic aneurysm, etc. These three tests (ultrasound of the neck and abdomen, and an ankle-brachial blood pressure measurement) are all readily available. Screening should be done initially between ages 55 and 65. Detection of plaque buildup or arterial wall bulging which can lead to catastrophic cardiovascular events is detected early enough to prevent these from happening.

TWIST SENSUOSITY

DHEA topical cream, trademarked as TWIST 25 cream and as SENSUOSITY cream, has many benefits. These include improved female sexual response, improved muscle to fat ratio, decreased osteoporosis, improved skin integrity, sense of well being, increased energy, and stronger libido. It can be ordered off a website that will soon crosslink with this one. Try it for yourself for 2 months. Success rate in a limited clinical trial was 77%. Further studies are in progress in Australia and planned at Yale Medical Center for the near future.

Serum Ferritin Levels

Iron overload (a serum ferritin level higher than 40) contributes more to heart disease risk in premenopausal women than abnormal blood lipids (cholesterol, triglycerides). Most laboratories have not recognized "iron overload" as a problem and thus their purported normal ranges are wildly misleading and totally incorrect. That includes the lab I use (LabCorp) in spite of having had that pointed out to them repeatedly.

Just A Note. . .

Botox plus muscle surgery can produce dramatic relief for migraine sufferers. Several plastic surgeons in the U.S. are doing this.

Anyone who has silver fillings in their teeth should have a blood test for mercury. The fillings may contain amalgam (and thus mercury may be leaching into the bloodstream).

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Rethinking Thin, The New Science of Weight Loss

A must read is Gina Kolata's new book, Rethinking Thin, The New Science of Weight Loss. Then, read my newsletter to complete the story after she stopped. If you are not familiar with the two neurohormones, leptin and ghrelin, both of which originate in the arcuate nucleus of the brain, read on. Seventy percent of the variation in people's weight is more strongly inherited than nearly any other condition, including mental illness, breast cancer, or heart disease. Those who tend to be fat will have to constantly battle their genetic inheritance if they want to reach and maintain a significantly lower weight. Each person has a comfortable weight range to which the body gravitates. The range might span 10 or 20 pounds. Going much above or much below the natural weight range is difficult, however. The body resists by increasing or decreasing the appetite and changing the metabolism to push the weight back to the range it seeks. The message is at odds with the popular conception of weight loss – the mantra that all a person has to do is eat less and exercise more.

Dr. Jeffrey Friedman at the Rockefeller University has an apt analogy. The analogy, for those who doubt the power of basic drives, is that although one can hold one's

breath, this conscious act is soon overcome by the compulsion to breathe. The feeling of hunger is intense, probably no less powerful than the drive to drink when one is thirsty. This is the feeling the obese must resist after they have lost a significant amount of weight. The best hope at present is a drug named Acomplia, available all over Europe and in Canada, but not FDA approved in the U. S. A. (the same old story). This drug, taken as one tablet each morning, blocks ghrelin production by the arcuate nuclei of the hypothalamic area of the brain and increases leptin production in the same area. Remarkable sustainable weight loss can result, but a maintenance dosage thereafter has not yet been established and the drug must be continued long term. Potential side effects include hiccups and depression. Some studies have shown it doubles the risk of suicide. **If you take it, do so at your own risk.**

Good Reading
Highly recommended as well is Dr. Leon Speroff's delightful book, A Slow Pitch Summer (<http://www.arnicacreative.com>). The foreword of his book was written by Dr. Peter Snell. Dr. Speroff is a world-renowned expert in the field of gynecologic endocrinology, but also faces the same ageing

authors. Both of them are aggressively attacking the challenge of ageing, as we all must. They have both provided great inspiration for me. I hope their books will do the same for many others.

As a part of the anti-ageing plan which I call "The Provin Plan" and which is described on this website, Drs. Speroff and Snell are a welcome addition to the scientists world wide who are attacking this new medical specialty. If you could meet and know them personally as I have been privileged to do (Leon and I did our OB-GYN training together at Yale and Peter's wife Miki has been my patient for almost 20 years), you would see that they practice what they preach. I do, too.

Women's Libido

German researchers have found that a woman's libido begins to drop once she's in a secure relationship. After 4 years together, less than half of the study's female participants wanted sex as often as their partners did. The average frequency of intercourse that men say they want is 3-4 times per week.

The head of the clitoris contains approximately 8,000 nerve endings, the greatest concentration in the entire body. Sorry, men. The penis only has about 4,000.