INDICATIONS

Obesity, From Tops to Bottoms

We've got some good news and some bad news about obesity. Here's the bad news: Big Macs are not brain food. Using tensor-based morphometry, researchers found that the brains of overweight people were 6% smaller and those of obese people were 8% smaller than those of normal-weight subjects (Hum. Brain Mapp. 2009 Aug. 6; doi:10.1002/hbm.20870). "The brains of overweight people looked 8 years older than the brains of those who were lean, and 16 years older in obese people," senior author Dr. Paul Thompson told New Scientist. And the good news? Canadian researchers reported that the country's hip fracture rate has dropped 32% in women and 25% in men since 1985 (JAMA 2009;302:883-9). So, what's that got to do with obesity? The researchers suggest that obese Canadians' padded rear ends may protect them when they fall. We may have spoken too soon. For some people, maybe—and we're talking about Canadians here, eh, not Americans—Big Macs *are* brain food.

An Eye for an Eye, a Tooth for an Eye

In case you haven't heard, MOOKP has come to the United States. MOOKP, or modified osteo-odontokeratoprosthesis, is a surgical procedure meant to restore vision. Here's the scoop: Doctors at the University of Miami (or Miami-eye) removed one tooth—an eye tooth, naturally—from a nearly blind patient, sculpted the tooth into a table-shaped platform, drilled a hole in the middle to hold a 1/8-inch cylindrical lens, and then implanted the whole package into a pouch in the patient's skin for several months to allow it to fuse into one unit. Surgeons then removed the scar tissue surrounding the patient's cornea, which had been damaged by Stevens-Johnson syndrome. Then they used a layer of oral mucosa from the patient's cheek to cover the dry surface of her eye. Finally, the tooth/lens prosthesis was extracted from its skin pocket and inserted into the cornea. The new lens protrudes slightly from the eye surface, allowing light to enter and the patient to see. So now you know that MOOKP is not just the sound of a cow hiccuping.

—Richard Franki