

INDICATIONS

Government Gone Wild

If you're like us, and we know you are, you've been spending a lot of your waking hours wondering how the recent reorganization at the Food and Drug Administration's Office of Epidemiology—known inside the Beltway as "Animal House"—was going to turn out. Wonder no more. After an extended weekend "conference" (if you know what we mean) of drinking in the elixir of cooperation, dealing the cards of consensus, and sharing the naked truth of bureaucracy, the bleary-eyed and staggering survivors announced the results. The Division of Medication Error Prevention is now the Division of Medication Error Prevention *and Analysis* (new motto: "DMEPA Rocks!"), and the Division of Adverse Event Analysis I and II becomes the Division of Pharmacovigilance I and II. No wonder somebody called the cops.

The Speed of Drinking

Now, if there's one thing that the head-bangers at the Division of Pharmacovigilance love more than pharmacovigilance, it's loud music. And now we know why: Loud music leads to faster drinking. French researchers visited bars on three Saturday nights and observed 40 men, aged 18-25 years, who ordered a draft beer. By previous arrangement with the bar owners, the investigators manipulated the volume of the music and discovered that louder music led to increased drinking in a shorter amount of time. In their report, scheduled to appear in the October issue of *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research*, they offer two hypotheses: Loud music causes higher arousal, which leads to faster drinking—or loud music makes it hard to communicate, so people drink more and talk less. And, as any self-respecting epidemiologist will tell you, drinking more and talking less is what pharmacovigilance is all about.

The Ultimate Party Animal?

Drinking more and talking less does not seem to be a problem for the Malaysian pen-tailed tree shrew. These tiny mammals about the size of small rats are, according to a new study in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, the heaviest drinkers in the world. They live on the fermented nectar of the flower buds of the bertam palm, which can have an alcohol content of up to 3.8%. Investigators used radio collars to follow the shrews' movements and measured blood alcohol concentrations much higher than in humans with similar alcohol intake. "The amount of alcohol we're talking about is huge—it's several times the legal limit in most countries," researcher Marc-André Lachance told *LiveScience*. Amazingly, the shrews showed no signs of intoxication, suggesting that any one of them could drink a pharmacovigilant epidemiologist under the table.

Tumors and Towels

And now, because Kmart does not have a monopoly on the blue-light special (or on pharmacovigilance), we present dental research from the Medical College of Georgia, Augusta. Investigators there have found that tumor growth was slowed by nearly 80% in mice exposed to the blue light used to harden dental fillings. Tissue analysis also

showed that tumor cell apoptosis increased by 10% in mice receiving 90 seconds of daily blue-light treatment for 12 days. This is great news for cancer patients, to be sure, but it's not going to help those with one particular type of tumor—the kind that turns out to be a 25-year-old surgical towel. A patient at Asahi General Hospital in Chiba, Japan, was undergoing an operation to remove what was thought to be a 3.2-inch tumor, but the surgeons instead found the remnants of an operation performed in 1983 at the same hospital to treat an ulcer. The patient is not planning to sue, but a

hospital spokesman shared this important information with Agence France-Presse: "The towel was greenish blue, although we are not sure about its original color."

Where No Spa Has Gone Before

Finally, just when you thought that physical fitness was the goal in medicine, a new kind of fitness rolls into town. Actually, that would be "phit"ness. Phit (pelvic health integrated techniques) is the brainchild of Manhattan gynecologist Lauri J. Romanzi, who recently opened what is probably the world's first gyno spa. According to her Web site, www.theperfectphit.com, vaginal rejuvenation services include Lip Sync

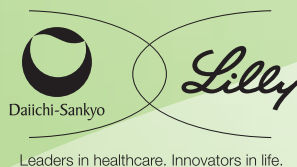
("labiaplasty for asymmetric and elongated inner labia"), Lazy Susan ("electrical stimulation for an effortless Kegel muscle workout"), and Kegel Phitness ("learn how to Kegel like a champ"). Dr. Romanzi is a big supporter of Kegel exercises. "If you can vote and you have a vagina, you should do these," she told the *New York Times*. "It's the dental floss of feminine fitness." This latest twist in the medical spa saga has the Bureau of Indications scratching its collective head, and we're definitely going to give it some more thought after we get back from our monthly nasal irrigation and Brazilian mustache wax.

—Richard Franki



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