

# From the Library

"In the longer-lasting visions induced by the 1944 infarct, he could not see the entire globe of the earth, only its contours, but his most vivid impression was the intensity of color. The earth shimmered as if outlined in silver. The Red Sea lived up to its name, the desert of Saudi Arabia was red-yellow, and dotted on the rest of land masses were various spots of dark green—like oxidized silver, very colorful. When he glanced left he saw the Mediterranean Sea, and when he turned right he saw the snow-covered Himalayas. In his delirium he thought how extraordinary and yet how "naive" it was to use the expressions "left" and "right" when he was floating in space. He remembered thinking, "I was on my way of taking my leave from earth." The thought of impending death was not frightening because he was experiencing "the most wonderful magical view of his entire life." He was grateful for such a vision and concentrated on enjoying it. (Bair Deirdre. *Jung. A Biography*. New York: Little Brown, 2003:497)

The health benefits of reducing fat consumption and lowering cholesterol intake has been well demonstrated. In the DASH-sodium trial it has now been demonstrated that the benefits of these dietary changes can be nullified or at least modified when inflammation is present. In this study increased C reactive protein was associated with less total and LDL cholesterol reduction. This appears to be evidence for another mechanism by which inflammation may increase cardiovascular disease risks. (*Circulation* 2003;**108**:150–4)

Diuretics are considered the first line of treatment for hypertension. One of their beneficial side effects is that they appear to prevent calcium loss from bones by decreasing urinary calcium excretion. In a prospective population based cohort study investigators from Rotterdam demonstrated that thiazide diuretics protect against hip fracture but this protective effect disappears within 4 months after diuretic use is discontinued. (*Annals of Internal Medicine* 2003;**139**:476–82)

Although there is concern about air pollution and its effects on health, scientific evidence for specific disease associations other than related to the lungs is relatively scarce. In a study from France a cluster of patients with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma was identified around a French municipal waste incinerator with high dioxin emissions. In this study the development of non-Hodgkin's lymphomas was 2.3 times more common among individuals living in the area with the highest dioxin concentrations. No increased risk was found for intermediate dioxin exposure categories. (*Epidemiology* 2003;**14**:392–8)

Vestibular hypofunction results in significant symptoms including reduced dynamic visual acuity. In a prospective randomised double blind study 21 patients with unilateral vestibular hypofunction were studied at Emory University. The use of vestibular exercises was demonstrated to result in recovery of the dynamic visual acuity in these patients. Exercises may promote the use of central programmed eye movements that could substitute for the vestibular ocular reflex. (*Archives of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery* 2003;**129**:819–24)

Oxidative stress has been indicated in the pathogenesis of age related macular degeneration. Increased concentrations of iron, which generate highly reactive hydroxyl radicals, may induce oxidative stress in the macula and be important in the pathogenesis of age related macular degeneration. Postmortem specimens of age related macular degeneration and healthy maculas were studied histologically at the Sheie Eye Institute. In this study maculas affected by age related macular degeneration had significant increases in the total iron level. Some of this iron was chelatable. The iron was present in retinal pigment epithelium and Bruch's membrane. (*Archives of Ophthalmology* 2003;**121**:1099–105)

Although Folkman discovered the angiogenesis dependent nature of tumours more than 30 years ago, clinical translation has begun in earnest only in the past

5 years. Scientists have now identified drugs which may help induce the body's own endogenous angiogenesis inhibitors. A recent animal study suggests that the administration of frequent low doses of several different anti-cancer agents induces gene and protein expression of thrombospondin-1 and endothelial specific inhibitor of angiogenesis. (*Proceedings of the National Academy of Science USA* 2003;**100**:12917–22)

Glial cells were once thought to be primarily the support cells for neurons with little other important functions. In recent years researchers have discovered that the glial cells do much more than support work. New evidence suggests that the glial cells are essential in building synapses. This study documents that glial cells (astrocytes) instruct neurons to make synapses and identify the first extracellular signals known to spur synapse formation in the brain. (*Science* 2003;**302**:1323)

In 1971 Linus Pauling published a paper analysing the constituents of the human breath. His study showed that it contained 200 different compounds. Recent studies have suggested that careful breath analysis may be useful in establishing medical diagnoses. Analysis of organic molecules, called alkanes, may be useful for evaluating heart transplant rejection. In other studies different alkane levels appear to be elevated in patients with lung cancer. (*Scientific American* 2003;**289**:26–8)

Devotees of full time occlusion therapy for the treatment of amblyopia have had a rough time of it of late. Firstly, the question of whether amblyopia is ever effectively treated was raised. Then a multicentre trial established that penalisation therapy was effective in treating most amblyopic patients. Now, data from the same trial suggest that 6 hours of occlusion therapy a day produces an improvement in visual acuity that has a similar magnitude as the improvement produced by full time occlusion therapy in patients with severe amblyopia. (*Ophthalmology* 2003;**110**:2075–87)



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