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TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Health-related articles:
1. 5-HTP (Hydroxy-L-tryptophan)
2. Kava-kava updates
3. Can wearing a bra kill you?

Humor & philosophy:
1. Mildly amusing one-liners
2. The real truth about doctors

HEALTH-RELATED ARTICLES

1. 5-HTP (Hydroxy-L-tryptophan)

What do depression, insomnia, anxiety, suicide, migraines, PMS, obsessive/compulsive behavior, stress, obesity, and addiction have in common? All of these conditions are manifestations of low levels of serotonin. Many of the new prescription drugs that have become available since the absence of L-tryptophan are designed to regulate brain serotonin levels (called selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors or SSRIs).

Now, a natural and safe alternative to these drugs is available in the form of 5-hydroxy L-tryptophan (5-HTP). 5-HTP, a compound synthesized in the body from the amino acid tryptophan, is ten times more active than L-tryptophan and is the immediate precursor to

"Argue for your limitations, and sure enough, they're yours."
From "Illusions," by Richard Bach
serotonin (5-Hydroxy-tryptamine or 5-HT) which is found in the brain, blood platelets and duodenal mucosa cells of the gastrointestinal tract. Since serotonin is found in the brain and central nervous system, it has many implications on mood, behavior and sleep patterns.

The function of Prozac and many other antidepressant drugs, is to increase the availability of serotonin in certain brain synapses. Unfortunately, these drugs can produce many unpleasant and dangerous side affects. Since 5-HTP cannot be patented, drug companies have no interest in supplying this compound to the public.

Now that tryptophan is restricted by the FDA, researchers have clinically investigated 5-HTP in comparison to antidepressant drugs. The results of these studies were astounding. Using the standard depression scale, both the drug and 5-HTP groups displayed identical reduction in depression. Furthermore, depressed patients who received 100 mg of 5-HTP, three times daily, showed at least a 50% improvement in their symptoms, without any reported side effects. Similar studies with depressed children demonstrated equal benefit.

Subsequent studies were performed using 5-HTP for anxiety, panic disorder, sleep difficulties and obesity. In his research R.S. Kahn observed an obvious decline in anxiety symptoms when supplementing with 5-HTP and patients with panic disorder noticed a feeling of relief after receiving 5-HTP. Melatonin, which helps regulate our sleep/wake cycle, is a metabolite of serotonin. Early research studies show that supplementing with 5-HTP may have positive effects on sleep patterns. In a six week clinical study with obese patients, those supplemented with 5-HTP were able to reduce carbohydrate intake and experienced a feeling of early satiety, which contributed to significant weight loss. 5-HTP is a natural extract from grafonia seed and is not from fermented tryptophan.

Natural Sleep Aid

Depressed levels of serotonin are also associated with sleep problems, low threshold for pain and anxiety. Tryptophan was used by millions around the world for this purpose. We can now increase serotonin levels by supplying more of the the raw materials for the manufacturing of serotonin, namely L-tryptophan and 5-Hydroxytryptophan (5-HTP) which the body uses to make 5-Hydroxy tryptamine, also known as serotonin.

Natural Anti-depressant

Depression results, in part, from the lack of serotonin, a brain nuerotransmitter. The leading antidepressants are selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors. By blocking the reuptake of serotonin, they increase the serotonin available to stimulate serotonin receptors. These include Prozac, Zoloft, Paxil, and Effexor. While they may be very effective for the treatment of depression, they can have many side effects, including decreased sex drive. They are also expensive, and only available by prescription. Studies indicate that 5-HTP, a serotonin precursor, may even work better for depression than tryptophan. Beta-endorphins, the “feel-good” hormones, were also significantly elevated after consumption of 200 mg of 5-HTP by patients with severe depression.

Natural Weight-loss Aid

Weight loss products such as Redux and Fenfluramine (“Phen-Fen”) work by the same serotonin reuptake inhibiting mechanism, resulting in increased serotonin levels. Beta-endorphins seem to fool people into feeling fuller, therefore, individuals eat less and lose weight.
If you are unhappy with the results or side effects of your current diet program, 5-HTP may be an effective alternative for you! 5-HTP should not be used with MAO inhibitors or other antidepressants.

**Whatever happened to good ol' Tryptophan?**

If you’re one of the 14 million people who previously took L-tryptophan to obtain relief from sleeping difficulties, premenstrual syndrome, obsessive/compulsive behavior, stress and depression, a newly available nutritional supplement, 5-HTP, may be of special interest to you.

Tryptophan is a naturally occurring amino acid required by the human body for the production of melatonin and serotonin, two vital brain chemicals necessary for sleep and mood regulation. Once readily available as a nutritional supplement, tryptophan has been one of the most difficult substances to obtain in the U.S., since being banned by the FDA in November of 1990. The FDA's decision to remove all tryptophan-containing supplements from store shelves was in response to an outbreak of eosinophilia-myalgia syndrome (EMS) that was mistakenly linked to the use of tryptophan.

EMS is a dangerous and potentially deadly blood disease that is usually associated with parasitic infections or severe allergy. From July of 1989 to December of 1990, more than 1500 cases, resulting in 27 deaths due to EMS were reported in the United States. Then, in a report released by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in August of 1992, researchers revealed that tryptophan was not the cause of the EMS outbreak. The CDC, working with scientists from the Mayo Clinic, the Oregon State Health Division and the Minnesota Department of Health, traced the cause of the EMS crisis to a contaminant found only in batches of tryptophan manufactured by a single Japanese company, Showa Denko. Showa Denko, the source for up to 60% of all the tryptophan sold in the United States, had produced the tainted tryptophan after introducing an untested manufacturing process that reduced the amount of activated charcoal used to filter fermented raw tryptophan.

After tryptophan was cleared of any role in the EMS outbreak it was natural to expect that tryptophan supplements would soon reappear in health food stores. The reality is that tryptophan has been kept off of the market by the FDA, which has no plans for lifting the ban. This position is ironic, since the FDA feels that tryptophan is safe enough to use in infant formulas and parenteral (IV feedings) solutions. Still, it is doubtful that this unique supplement will ever be found on store shelves again. [Editor: I would suspect that we may see the ban lifted after most of the current batch of SSRI patents have expired.]

**Drug Substitutes for Tryptophan**

In the absence of access to tryptophan, several new prescription drugs designed to regulate brain serotonin levels (selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors or SSRIs) have been introduced. Drugs such as Prozac work through the selective enhancement of serotonin levels. Another drug, dexfenfluramine, used in Europe to reduce carbohydrate cravings and suppress appetite, works by mimicking serotonin activity in the brain. Unfortunately, Prozac can present unwanted and potentially dangerous side effects and the safety of dexfenfluramine is in question after a study found that it may cause brain damage in monkeys.

**5-HTP — The Safest Alternative**
Pure 5-hydroxy-L-tryptophan (5-HTP) is considered by many researchers to be the safest tryptophan alternative available. 5-HTP is an intermediate metabolite normally converted in the body from L-tryptophan. Then, it is further converted into melatonin and serotonin (5-hydroxytryptamine or 5-HT). And, while 5-HTP is more expensive than tryptophan was prior to the 1990 ban, it is also ten times as effective (a 50 mg. capsule of 5-HTP is generally regarded as the equivalent of 500 mg. of tryptophan).

Kava-kava updates

The German Federal Institute for Drugs and Medical Devices (BfArM) is considering a ban on the sale of products containing the herb kava-kava (Piper methysticum). Twenty-five cases of liver damage (hepatitis, cirrhosis and liver failure) linked to the herb have been reported in Germany and Switzerland, including one death and three patients who required liver transplants. As a result, Merck KGaA of Germany withdrew two kava-containing products, Kavadura and Kytta-Kava.

Meanwhile, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently sent a letter asking physicians to review cases of liver toxicity to determine if any might be related to the use of kava-containing products. http://www.fda.gov/medwatch/SAFETY/2001/kava.htm

Dietary supplements containing kava are promoted for a variety of uses, including relaxation (e.g., to relieve stress, anxiety, and tension), insomnia and postmenstrual syndrome (PMS). The products are marketed to all segments of the population, including men, women, children and the elderly. Kava Kava ranked ninth in retail U.S. sales in mainstream markets in 2000 based on its proven ability to relieve anxiety and tension.

Closer examination of the scant details available on the 25 European cases revealed that at least 21 of them involved the concomitant use of hepatotoxic drugs and/or alcohol. There is no significant evidence of hepatotoxicity from kava extract itself. More information on this issue is available at: http://www.healthy.net/asp/templates/article.asp?PageType=Article&id=2165

[Editor: Here is a good example of an effective botanical remedy that had been used safely by indigenous peoples in the South Pacific for thousands of years. However, somebody in our culture taking substances that already pose a risk to the liver, such as alcohol or certain pharmaceuticals, cannot handle a normally safe and efficacious herbal remedy. With normal usage, Kava kava is just as effective as most anxiolytic drugs (i.e. Paxil, Valium, Librium, etc.) and with fewer side effects.]

2. Can wearing a bra kill you?
   By William Thomas

The Singers became breast cancer sleuths in 1991. On the day Soma discovered a lump in her breast, the husband-wife team was studying the effects of Western medicine on Fijians. In the shower, Syd noticed that Soma's shoulders and breasts were outlined by dark red grooves. He remembered a puzzled Fijian woman asking his wife about her brassiere: "Doesn't it feel tight?" "You get used to it," Soma had replied.
Could bras be constricting breast tissue, Syd wondered, hampering lymph drainage and causing degeneration? Soma decided to stop wearing hers. But when Syd searched the medical literature he found no known causes of breast cancer, which rarely appears before a woman’s mid-thirties, most often after 40.

The highest death rates from breast cancer are in North America and northern Europe, with the developing world catching up fast. The World Health Organization calls chemical toxins the primary cause of cancer. But poisons accumulating in breast tissue are normally flushed by clear lymph fluid into large clusters of lymph nodes nestling in the armpits and upper chest. The Singers found that "because lymphatic vessels are very thin, they are extremely sensitive to pressure and are easily compressed." Chronic minimal pressure on the breasts can cause lymph valves and vessels to close.

"Less oxygen and fewer nutrients are delivered to the cells, while waste products are not flushed away," the Singers noted. After 15 or 20 years of bra-constricted lymph drainage, cancer can result. Looking at other cultures, Soma and Syd were struck by the low incidence of breast cancer in poorer nations awash in pesticides dumped by northern nations. They didn't find peasant women wearing push-up bras. Instead, they discovered that the Maoris of New Zealand integrated into white culture have the same rate of breast cancer, while Australia's marginalized aboriginals have virtually no breast cancer. The same trend held for "Westernized" Japanese, Fijians and other bra-converted cultures.

In Dressed To Kill: The Link Between Breast Cancer and Bras, the researchers also observed that just before a woman begins her period, estrogen floods her system, causing her breasts to swell. If she continues wearing the same bra size, life-saving lymphatics will be even more tightly squished. Had they found the "estrogen link" to breast cancer? Childless women never fully develop their breast-cleansing lymphatic system. Nor do women who have never breast-fed. Working women who wear bras everyday and postpone having children could be at higher risk, the Singers warn. Even worse, a young woman's coming of age is often "marked" by her first bra.

Like the ancient Chinese practice of foot-binding, "breast-binding" at puberty can eventually lead to severe medical complications. Could bras be the "missing link" in a growing epidemic of breast cancer?

Beginning in May, 1991, Soma and Syd Singer's 30-month "Bra and Breast Cancer" study interviewed some 4,000 women in five major US cities. All were Caucasian of mostly "medium income" ranging in age from 30 to 79. Half had been diagnosed with breast cancer. Almost all of the women interviewed were unhappy with the size or shape of their breasts. Women who chose a bra for appearance, ignoring soreness and swelling, had twice the rate of breast cancer of those who did not.

But the most startling statistic was that "three out four women who wore their daytime bras to sleep contracted breast cancer." So did one out seven women strapped into a bra more than 12 hours a day. Bra-free women have just a one in 168 chance of being diagnosed with breast cancer, says Singer. In other words, the same as bra-free men. "Don't sleep in your bra!" Syd Singer pleads. "Women who want to avoid breast cancer should wear a bra for the shortest period of time possible -- certainly for less than 12 hours daily."

Syd also submits that some 80% of bra-wearers who experience lumps, cysts and tenderness will see those symptoms vanish, "within a month of getting rid of the bra." Not everyone is ready
to hang up her halter. As one woman told the team, "My tits will sag all the way to my navel without a bra."

But Surgeon Christine Haycock at the New Jersey College of Medicine says that inherited traits - not ligaments or breast size - are the reason some breasts give in to gravity. Bouncing bosoms help clear the lymphatics.

Well aware that their findings were "explosive," the Singers sent their survey results to the heads of America's most prestigious cancer organizations and institutes. None responded. Like the cancer business, the bra business is huge. Multiply how many worldwide women buy several $25 bras every year and you end up with a multiple of the $6 billion-a-year US bra business. Syd Singer says that establishment censorship of the bra-breast cancer connection is killing women.

Pointing to the biggest commonality among breast cancer patients, he is emphatic that it's bra-squeezed lymphatics. Going bra-less for all occasions, Soma began dressing to de-emphasize her breasts. She also began regular breast massage and bicycle riding, vitamin and herbal supplementation, and drinking only purified water. Two months later, her lump disappeared. At the first frightening sign of a lump, an angry Syd Singer says, "women should take their bras off before they take their breasts off." Why wait, when you can liberate your lymphatics now.

**If you must wear a bra:**

Push-up and sports bras are out. Choose loose-fitting cotton bras. Make sure you can slip two fingers under the shoulder-straps and side-panels. The higher the side-panels, the more severe is the restriction of major lymph nodes. Don't wear this disastrous device to sleep. Take it off at home. Massage your breasts every time you remove your bra. Sing your lymphatics into health--or at least breathe deeply.

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**HUMOR & PHILOSOPHY**

1. **Mildly amusing one-liners**

The closest I ever got to a 4.0 in college was my blood alcohol level.

I live in my own little world, but it's OK, they know me here.

If carrots are so good for the eyes, how come I see so many dead rabbits on the highway?

I saw a woman wearing a sweatshirt with "Guess" written on it. I said, "Implants?"

I don't do drugs anymore, cause I find I get the same effect just standing up really fast.

Sign in a Chinese pet store: "Buy one dog, get one flea."

Money can't buy happiness, but it sure makes misery easier to live with.

I got a sweater for Christmas...I wanted a screamer or a moaner.
If flying is so safe, why do they call the airport "the terminal"?

I don't approve of political jokes...I've seen too many of them get elected.

The most precious thing we have is life. Yet it has absolutely no trade-in value.

There are two sides to every divorce: Yours, and shithead's.

I love being married. It's so great to find that one special person you want to annoy for the rest of your life.

Every day I beat my own previous record for number of consecutive days I've stayed alive.

Isn't it funny how the mood can be ruined so quickly by just one busted condom?

How come we chose from just two people to run for president, and 50 for Miss America?

Isn't having a smoking section in a restaurant like having a peeing section in a swimming pool?

Marriage changes passion...suddenly you're in bed with a relative.

Why is it that most nudists are people you don't want to see naked?

Snowmen fall from the sky........ unassembled.

Every time I walk into a singles bar, I can hear mom's wise words: Don't pick that up, you don't know where it's been."

There's always a lot to be thankful for if you take time to look for it. For example, I am sitting here thinking how nice it is that wrinkles don't hurt.

When I'm feeling down, I like to whistle. It makes the neighbor's dog that barks all the time run to the end of his chain and gag himself.

If you can't be kind, at least have the decency to be vague.

A penny saved is a government oversight.

The older you get, the tougher it is to lose weight, because by then your body and your fat are really good friends

If you can smile when things go wrong, you have someone in mind to blame.

The sole purpose of a child's middle name is so he can tell when he's really in trouble.

How long a minute is depends on what side of the bathroom door you're on.

Ever notice that the people who are late are often much jollier than the people who have to wait for them.

If ignorance is bliss, why aren't more people happy?
If Walmart is lowering prices every day, how come nothing is free yet?

Some mistakes are too much fun to only make once.

Everything should be made as simple as possible, but no simpler.

A truly happy person is one who can enjoy the scenery on a detour.

Once over the hill, you pick up speed.

If not for STRESS I’d have no energy at all.

Whatever hits the fan will not be evenly distributed.

Dogs have owners. Cats have staffs.

If the shoe fits......buy it in every color (YES!)

2. The real truth about doctors

The psychology instructor had just finished a lecture on mental health and was giving an oral test. Speaking about manic depression, she asked, "How would you diagnose a patient who walks back and forth screaming at the top of his lungs one minute, then sits in a chair weeping uncontrollably the next?"

A young man in the rear raised his hand and answered, "A basketball coach?"

Neurotics build castles in the clouds.
Psychotics live in the castles in the clouds.
Psychiatrists charge both of them rent.

How many gynecologists does it take to change a light bulb?

"Why don't we just take out the socket? You're not using it any more, and it'll only cause you more problems later on!"

Basic Definitions:

A General Practitioner is a doctor who keeps knowing less and less about more and more areas until he knows nothing about everything.

A Specialist on the other hand, keeps knowing more and more about less and less until he knows everything about nothing.

An anesthesiologist has a stock answer to the usual question asked by presurgical patients: "How much will the anesthesia cost?" "Oh, about $100. $1 to go to sleep and $99 for waking up. Most patients buy the whole package."