

Aggressive blood sugar treatment an ICU danger

BOSTON (Reuters)—The widespread practice of aggressively controlling blood sugar levels in intensive care unit patients may be helping kill some patients, researchers reported last week.

Medicating patients to bring down their blood sugar levels may raise the overall death rate by 10 percent, the researchers reported in the New England Journal of Medicine.

"Our results should be incorporated into practice guidelines as a matter of urgency," Dr. John Myburgh of the George Institute for International Health in Sydney, Australia, who led the study, said in a telephone interview.

"There's been debate for many years as to what level of control is appropriate. What we have done is to determine that a very low level is, in fact, harmful."

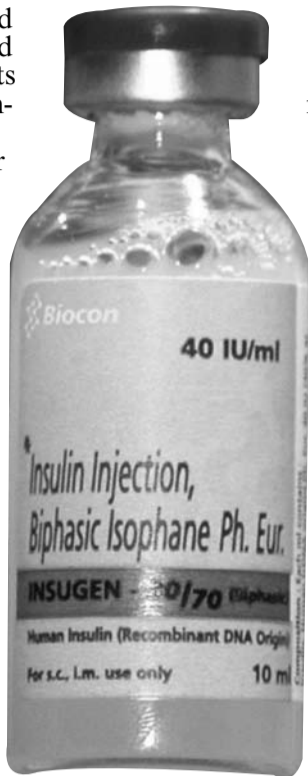
The researchers in the NICE-SUGAR study estimated that for every 38 ICU patients aggressively treated for high blood sugar, one would die.

In general, doctors believe that tight blood sugar control is beneficial. Among diabetics, it reduces the risk of kidney disease, blindness, and other complications. But the question is more complicated for critically ill patients, who often only develop high blood sugar under the stress of their illness.

Hospitalized patients with high blood sugar levels tend to fare worse than other patients.

But it was never clear if the high blood sugar levels, called glycemia, were a symptom or a cause of the most dangerous conditions, wrote Silvio Inzucchi and Mark Siegel of the Yale University School of Medicine in Connecticut in a commentary on the findings.

Stress response



INSULIN: Using insulin in patients with acute illnesses has been found dangerous. INDRANIL MUKHERJEE/AP/GETTY IMAGES

Myburgh believes they are a symptom. "High blood sugar levels are a common phenomenon in sick people. It is part of the normal response to stress and illness," he said.

Myburgh said the new study, involving 6,104 people in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the United States, only 20 percent of whom had a history of any type of diabetes, is the largest to look at high blood sugar in acutely ill patients, and should make it clear that doctors need to be less extreme.

Ninety days after being admitted into intensive care, 27.5 percent of those whose sugar levels were kept below 108 milligrams per deciliter of blood had died, compared to 24.9 percent whose sugar levels were kept under 180. The group with tighter glucose controls suffered more fatal heart attacks.

In addition, dangerously low blood sugar was seen in 6.8 percent of the patients who received aggressive treatment, compared to 0.5 percent for those who had less aggressive control. Both groups had their glucose levels controlled with intravenous insulin.

Inzucchi and Siegel said doctors should still control blood sugar in their ICU patients. However, "there is no additional benefit from the lower of blood glucose levels below the range of approximately 140 to 180," they said.

The concept of tight control over diabetes is being revised as new studies suggest that it may not be as beneficial for some people as once believed.

Last year, the so-called ACCORD study of adult-onset diabetics with a high risk of heart disease found that lowering their blood sugar to levels regarded as normal did not prevent heart attacks and strokes.

In fact, people whose blood sugar levels were brought down to the lowest level were more likely to die if they did have a heart attack.



Amala fruit are mostly in demand during the winter season. Extracts from the fruit have a high vitamin C content. Amala is one of the most often used herbs in Ayurveda. SAM PANTHAKY/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Ayurveda Aims to Restore Balance

BY SHAR ADAMS
Epoch Times Staff

It is time for people to reclaim their bodies and take more control over their own health, says Farida Irani, because "It is their birthright."

Farida is a qualified Ayurveda practitioner and an organizer of The Second International Ayurveda and Yoga Conference in Sydney in early April, one of the largest of its kind seen in Australia.

Ayurveda, considered to be one of the oldest medical systems in the world, uses a combination of oils, herbs, diet, meditation, and exercise to restore equilibrium to an individual's system.

Ill health, or "disease," is created by imbalances within the body's system, which Farida says is common in today's modern world.

"It's all about balance. There is such stress on people's systems today as they juggle family life, personal life, [and] hectic corporate life. They need to balance their lives," says Farida.

"Yoga is incorporated to unite mind, body, and spirit." According to Farida, present concerns about the environment parallel life in India 5,000 years ago, when it is likely there was also an environmental crisis. At that time, a conference was held to address the imbalance. Ancient Indian texts describe how the old wise ones, rishis, vaidyas, and yogis, came out of their retreats to share their knowledge about life and the human condition.

"Ancient texts document this conference, which was called because mankind had moved away from harmonizing with the envi-

ronment," she explained.

The term "Ayurveda" combines the Sanskrit words ayur (life) and veda (science or knowledge). Thus, Ayurveda means literally "the science of life."

Knowledge from the ancient conference was passed down through word of mouth and spanned eight different branches of medicine, including surgery, psychology, gynecology, toxicology, and pediatrics. These were then compiled around 2,000 years ago into two main Vedic texts, which form the basis of Ayurveda today.

"Ayurveda teaches that humans are made of the same elements as the universe—air, earth, ether, fire, and water, and so we are interdependent on nature. ... We have to respect the environment."

"It's all about balance. There is such stress on people's systems today as they juggle family life, personal life, [and] hectic corporate life. They need to balance their lives"

Ayurveda treatment involves determining the root cause of an ailment through pulse evaluation, physical analysis, and observation of an individual.

Much of the practices, however, are based on prevention and maintenance, particularly through yoga, meditation, daily routine,

and diet.

"If people follow the principles, it will keep disease away. You can use simple herbs and oils that will keep coughs and colds and flu away. You will then be less taxing on the medical system," Farida added.

Ayurvedic medicine continues to be practiced in India where about 80 percent of the population uses it either exclusively or in combination with Western medicine. It is also widely used in Europe, and in the United States is classified as complementary and alternative medicine (CAM), or both complementary (to Western medicine) and alternative.

"We are not trying to take over conventional medicine. We want to complement it," Farida said of the impetus behind the Australian conference.

The conference will bring together over 35 international and local leaders in the field of Ayurveda and yoga, including the founder of Yoga in Daily Life, author, and speaker H. H. Paramhans Swami Maheshwarananda and Dr. P. H. Kulkarni, the founder of the Ayurveda Academy in India and the inspiration behind the inaugural conference in Australia in 2006.

Topics of discussion include the ayurvedic approach to cancer, the healing power of mantra and yoga therapy, and the impact of physical space on well-being.

Also of interest will be teacher of Aboriginal bush medicine Noel Butler, a Budawang man from the south coast of New South Wales.

"Ayurveda can after all be everywhere. The Aborigines in Australia hold the teaching of the Ayurveda of Australia," said Farida of Mr. Butler's contribution.

Cancer risk for men

Dr. Gifford-Jones asks young men, 'Has anyone examined your testicles lately?'

By W. GIFFORD-JONES, M.D.
Special to The Epoch Times

How many women will have their breasts examined this year? I don't know the exact figure, but it will be in the millions. But how many men will have their testicles examined during 2009? Again, I don't know the exact number, but it will be minuscule compared to that of the fairer sex.

Is this sexual discrimination? If so, we need a class-action lawsuit to protect men's rights or, more to the point, our testicles. But more important, an increase in testicular self-examination (TSE) would increase the survival rate of testicular malignancy.

Testicular cancer is the number one malignancy in young males. Worldwide there are 48,500 males diagnosed with this disease, and 9,000 will die of it. This is a tragedy because early detection and treatment make a huge difference in the outcome of this malady.

Cause unknown

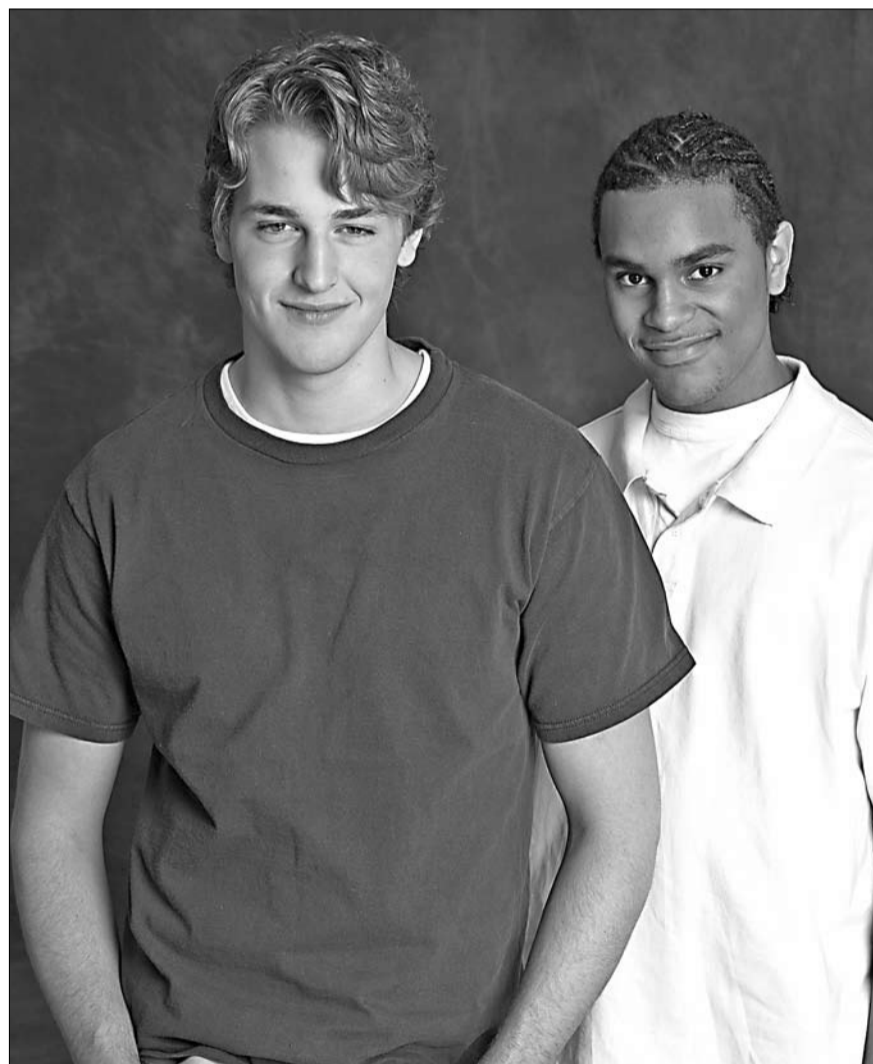
We don't know what triggers testicular cancer. Males at greatest risk are those between the ages of 15 to 35. Risk is increased if the testicle has failed to descend into the scrotum, or if one testicle is significantly smaller than the other, or if there's a family history of this disease. This malignancy is rarely seen in black men.

A myth exists that being kicked in the groin during sports triggers testicular cancer. There is no evidence this is true. More likely, the resulting soreness causes men to examine the scrotal area and then discover the cancer.

Few symptoms

Like cancer of the breast, early testicular malignancy has no symptoms. This may be the case even when cancer has totally replaced the testicle. But as the malignancy develops, men may complain of weight or a pulling sensation in the scrotal area. Pain may also occur when the cancer bleeds into the scrotal area or there's a blockage of blood to the testicle.

The most common type of testicular cancer is called seminoma. This accounts for about 50 percent of cases. It spreads slowly and is easy to cure by surgery if diagnosed early. Slow-growing seminomas also respond well to radiation if they have metastasized to lymph



WHICH ONE? In one of these young men testicular cancer is very unlikely to occur. PHOTOS.COM

nodes.

Testicular cancer is almost always confined to one testicle. And there's less than a 5 percent chance a new tumor will develop in the other testicle.

Men on their own

Today, tens of millions of dollars are spent trying to persuade women to examine their breasts regularly and have annual mammograms. A pittance is spent trying to alert males to testicular cancer.

I don't see this changing. So men are on their own and must examine their testicles just as women examine their breasts, or they'll miss an early malignancy. Luckily for men, lumps in the testicles are easier to detect than those in the breasts.

So how does a normal testicle feel? It should be as smooth and firm as a hard-boiled egg without its shell. Besides, almost all of the testicle can be gently examined through the thin scrotal skin.

Like women, the prime time for men to examine testicles is while taking a warm shower. By gently picking up each testicle between the thumb and fingers, the surface can be explored for lumps.

Where to look

But here's an important point to remember, since most men have lit-

tle or no knowledge of their anatomy. The testicle has two parts, the testicle and the epididymis. The epididymis (which accumulates sperm and carries it to the outside) is situated at the rear of the testicle, and lumps are quite common in this structure. They may be the size of a pea and normally of little importance. But, to be sure, always report any lump or irregularity to your doctor. Then ultrasound and other tests can be carried out.

Prognosis

Treatment of testicular cancer depends on whether it's an early or late diagnosis. For early malignancies, the testicle is removed with excellent cure rates. But more advanced cancers require a combination of surgery, radiation, and chemotherapy.

Men may be the stronger sex physically, but a diagnosis of testicular cancer is psychologically devastating to young men. So all the more need for testicular self-examination every month, as it is highly unlikely anyone else is going to do this for them.

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The Mystery of Meridians

By China Research Group
Epoch Times Staff

The theory of meridians is a mystery to science. How did Chinese medicine discover the meridians? What is the function of meridians? What do recent studies on meridians tell us?

The meridian theory has a long history and has been continuously developed in classical Chinese medical practice. As early as 2,000 years ago, the Inner Canon of the Yellow Emperor (Huangdi Neijing) had systematically recorded the placement of the meridians.

Chinese medicine believes that meridians are what access the body's qi. Meridians are attached to viscera and spread throughout the body.

The meridian system has played an important role in physiology, pathology, and disease prevention. Ancient Chinese medical scientists believed that life is part of the universe, and a harmonious relationship should be maintained between heaven and all things on earth.

This view guided ancient Chinese medicine and was connected closely with physics, astronomy, geography, and philosophy. Modern medicine is unable to understand meridians.

Many express doubts about the



These lines can be demonstrated scientifically. PHOTOS.COM

existence of meridians and qi. In fact, all people have meridians, and although they cannot be seen or touched, under certain conditions they can be sensed. Chinese scientists have found that about 1 percent of people are meridian-sensitive.

Chinese scientists have tested

the objectivity of the meridian system using modern scientific experiments. A scientist from the Chinese Academy of Sciences devised a highly sensitive instrument and found that meridians are in the form of lines that give out luminescence. They emitted 2.5 times more photons than non-meridian points on the body.

Meridians are points, normally forming lines, on the human body where electrical resistance is lower than adjacent areas. When injecting a trace element into a meridian, the trace element will travel through the meridians into the body and then diffuse.

Professor Li Dingzhong, a famous Chinese skin scientist and expert on meridians, observed 305 cases of skin diseases where lesions occurred along a meridian line. The discovery caused a great shock to the international medical profession. His book Meridian Phenomenon was published in Japan.

Meridian research is still a phenomenological study, and it is far from being able to clearly show the meridians and qi. It is far from being able to reveal the meridians' mysteries.

Once these mysteries are solved, a new scientific revolution will be inevitable.