

Study suspects fertility, farm chemicals linked

Lynn Franey
Knight Ridder Newspapers (KRT)

Men living in agricultural mid-Missouri are markedly less fertile than men living in New York, Minneapolis and Los Angeles, researchers at the University of Missouri-Columbia have found.

The researchers suspect that runoff from farm chemicals may be to blame.

The results "are important to couples that are trying to conceive. If we can find out what specific exposures were related to this reduced semen quality, we might be able to prevent delays in conception in the future," said Shanna Swan, the MU professor who led the study.

Swan said she hopes the study prompts further inquiry into how agricultural chemicals negatively affect people's bodies.

The study, conducted between 1999 and 2001, found that, on average, fertile men in Columbia produced 58.7 million sperm per milliliter of se-

men, compared with 80.8 million for men in Los Angeles, 98.6 million for men in Minneapolis and 102.9 million for men in New York City.

On another important measure, sperm mobility, fertile men in Columbia also lagged behind their urban counterparts.

On average, fertile men in Columbia produced just 113 million mobile sperm per sample, compared with 162 million in New York, 196 million in Los Angeles and 201 million in Minneapolis. Swan measured mobile sperm by the sample, not by the milliliter, as was used to measure the number of all sperm.

The mobility measure is important because so few sperm make it to the woman's fallopian tubes. After sperm have been deposited in the vagina, only a small percentage find their way into the cervix and then begin their journey through the uterus and into the fallopian tubes. That journey must occur to fertilize the woman's egg. Only 1,000 or

2,000 sperm usually make it.

"While it's true that it only takes one sperm to conceive a pregnancy, the length of time that it takes a couple to conceive is related to the sperm quality — how fast and directly the sperm swim, and how they are shaped," Swan said. "If you follow couples trying to become pregnant, those that have better semen quality do conceive more quickly."

The study recruited 512 men whose pregnant partners were visiting hospitals for prenatal care in Columbia and the three other cities.

Researchers noted where the men had lived before moving to Boone County, if they were not Boone County natives. Swan said even very recent exposure to farm chemicals, not just long-term exposure, could affect one's health.

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Iraq briefs

U.S. says Iraq ordered nerve gas antidote

Iraq has ordered large quantities of a drug that can be used to counter the effects of nerve gas, mainly from suppliers in Turkey, which is being pressed to stop the sales, according to senior Bush administration officials.

The officials said the orders far outstripped the amount Iraq could conceivably need for normal hospital use, and they said Turkey had indicated in talks with the State Department that it was willing to review the matter.

"If the Iraqis were going to use nerve agents," an official said, "they would want to take steps to protect their own soldiers, if not their population. This is something that U.S. intelligence is mindful of and very concerned about."

Iraq has ordered, mainly from a Turkish company, a million doses of the drug, atropine, and the 7-inch autoinjectors that inject it into a person's leg, the officials said.

— Judith Miller, New York Times

Gorbachev tells U.S. to find peaceful answer

The United States should find a way short of war to defuse the threat posed by Iraq, former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev said Monday, and he urged U.S. leadership to drop the U.N. embargo against Saddam Hussein and incorporate Iraq into the global economy if inspections find no weapons of mass destruction.

In fact, Gorbachev warned, America risks alienating crucial allies if it tries to establish unrivaled military power instead of consulting with other nations in critical areas like the Middle East and the war against terrorism.

"I don't think we can build a better world through military domination," Gorbachev, speaking through an interpreter, told a group of editors at The Boston Globe on the first day of a two-week tour of the United States.

The 1990 Nobel peace laureate criticized what he saw as America's failure to convince much of the world that it is more concerned about Hussein's weapons than about lucrative oil contracts.

— Thanassis Cambanis, The Boston Globe

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Presentation on Church and State and Just War Theory

Dante and Augustine on Church and State

Friday, November 15th
4:00 - 5:30 PM
Ben Linder Room, EMU, U of O

Dr. Brenda Deen Schildgen of UC Davis will offer a presentation on the dialogue between Dante and Augustine on Church and State.

Dr. Schildgen is the author of Pagan Tartars, Jews, and Moslems in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales and Power and Prejudice: Reception of the Gospel of Mark among other books.

She holds degrees in English, French, Comparative Literature, and Religious studies.



All students, faculty, and staff are invited to attend this presentation sponsored by the Christian Scholars Program of Notre Dame University and Catholic Campus Ministry. Co-sponsored by LCC Social Sciences, Episcopal Campus Ministry, and Koinonia.

www.newmanctr-uoregon.org

Discussion on Just War Theory

Friday, November 15th
6:30 - 9:00 PM
Newman Center
1850 Emerald St.

Dr. Schildgen will also facilitate a discussion on the "Just War Theory" dinner and discussion. All are welcome to the discussion, RSVPs are requested for the dinner. (Discussion will begin at 7:30 pm.)
RSVPs to 343-7021 by noon, November 14th, or stefani@newmanctr-uoregon.org

Bush

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terrorist network, enabling Osama bin Laden to escalate his terrorist campaign against the United States "a thousand times over."

"The time to confront this threat is before it arrives — not the day after," Bush declared.

Neither Bush nor other administration officials have produced evidence of any such link between Hussein and bin Laden.

Bush spoke a day after senior U.S. officials leaked word that the president had approved tentative Pentagon plans to invade Iraq with up to 250,000 troops if Baghdad failed to comply with U.N. terms for disarmament.

It was not clear whether Bush's

threats and leaked blueprints of war plans operations were designed to sharpen the pressure on Baghdad to comply with U.N. Security Council demands or to alert the American people to the possibility of war.

The U.N. Security Council resolution — adopted Friday — offered Iraq "a final opportunity to comply with its disarmament obligations" by accepting return of U.N. weapons inspectors to conduct "immediate, unimpeded, unconditional and unrestricted" inspections anywhere at any time accompanied by "sufficient U.N. security guards."

Officials in Iraq angrily condemned the U.N. demand as the Iraqi parliament prepared for a possible vote as early as Tuesday on whether to comply.

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