

Health & Science



Multiple Sclerosis Shows Trends Of Occurrence

According to officials from the Multiple Sclerosis Association of America, MS is the most common neurological disorder among young adults, striking as many as 500,000 Americans. The Association notes that although there is no known cause or cure for MS, researchers have identified many interesting trends and statistics.

- Most patients are diagnosed with MS between the ages of 20 and 40, with women twice as likely to develop the disease than men.

- The farther a person lives north or south of the equator during his or her first 15 years increases his or her odds of developing MS later in life. Those who spend their childhood in the northern half of the U.S. have three times the risk of developing MS as those in the southern half.

- Although MS does not qualify as being hereditary, genetic susceptibility does have much support. On the average, an American has a 0.1% chance of developing MS. For family members of an MS patient, the risk increases to between 2% and 5%. The risk becomes 26% for those with an identical twin brother or sister with MS.

- The highest incidence of MS occurs in the wealthiest, most sterile countries. Poorer, less sanitary countries have the lowest percentage of patients.

- Regardless of where they live, certain groups of people appear to be immune to MS. Gypsies and Eskimos are two such groups.

Study Indicates Black Girls Mature Earlier

Black girls tend to have more muscle and bone mass by age 6 than do white or Hispanic girls. Preliminary findings of a study at the USDA's Children's Nutrition Research Center at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston indicate that this trend progresses during puberty as black girls mature faster, said Dr. Kenneth Ellis.

Bright Smiles, Bright Futures



"Dr. Rabbit" Educates Atlanta's youth About Proper Oral Care: Atlanta's youth can look forward to a bright future with "Dr. Rabbit." Dr. Rabbit is part of Colgate-Palmolive's "Bright Smiles, Bright Futures" Program, a grass-roots multi-cultural oral health education program for youth from birth - age 12. On hand to help "Dr. Rabbit" were (from 1-r): Dr. Augustine McDaniel, Emma Hutchinson Elementary School, Dr. David Lamothe, North Georgia Dental Society, Cathryn Phillips, Colgate-Palmolive Company, Dr. Marsha Butler, Colgate-Palmolive Company and Dr. Anderson Kizzie, Local BS/BF Coordinator. "Bright Smiles, Bright Futures" was launched in Atlanta at Emma Hutchinson Elementary School.

Atlanta's youth can look forward to a brighter future because "Dr. Rabbit" is here to educate them about proper oral health care. With the help of "Dr. Rabbit", Atlanta's youth will have a bright smile and bright future. "Dr. Rabbit" is part of Colgate-Palmolive Company's "Bright Smiles, Bright Futures" program, a multi-cultural oral health education community program designed to reach inner-city youth from birth through age 12.

Now in its fourth year, "Bright

Smiles, Bright Futures" provides oral health screenings, parent education workshops and treatment referrals, providing children with a healthy start on a healthy smile. Colgate's customized "Bright Smiles, Bright Futures" Dental Van was present to give free dental screenings to kindergarten, first, second and third grade children from Emma Hutchinson Elementary School, who hosted a special presentation attended by Atlanta Mayor Bill Campbell.

Since 1991, "Bright Smiles,

Bright Futures" has reached 2.5 million children in more than 20 cities with important oral health information through its in-school curriculum, mobile dental van and community outreach programs.

In addition to Atlanta, the program is also fully operational in Oakland, CA, Philadelphia, PA and New York City. The program continues its national goal of providing important, exciting and fun oral health education for youth and their parents.

Photo Credit: Bill Hollins

AIDS Protection Survey

Multnomah County is involved in a program to help drug users protect themselves from AIDS. If you are a heroin, cocaine or methamphetamine user, health workers are asking for your help in answering some questions. All information will be kept confidential.

Persons qualifying for this program, will be paid for their time. To learn more, call 248-3651 and ask for Jack. The county's HIV Outreach Program and Risk Behavior Intervention Project are endeavors to assist people in the community who are at risk of contracting HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.

New Anti-Viral Drug Shows Promise

A new drug, MSL-109, is being tested to see if it can increase the amount of time between occurrences of cytomegalovirus (CMV) retinitis -- a major cause of blindness, particularly among people with AIDS.

MSL-109 is undergoing mid-phase study as part of the Monoclonal antibody CMV Retinitis Trial (MACRT). The drug uses a human CMV-specific monoclonal antibody to target an outside receptor on the virus, making it more difficult for the virus to attach itself to cells. Once attached, the virus is nourished, allowing it to reproduce.

"We hope that this window of time between CMV recurrence can be increased," said Dr. Richard A. Lewis, a professor of ophthalmology at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, one of the national sites for the MACRT.

Lewis said that in earlier stud-

ies, the drug demonstrated virtually no side effects among several hundred patients.

"The beauty of this treatment so far is that there appear to be no adverse responses, no complications," Lewis said. "We are encouraged that this next phase will prove further information in its favor."

According to Lewis, the average "window" of CMV activation in the early stages of infection is about every three months.

"However, the time between activation lessens as the illness progresses," he said. "Virtually all patients with CMV retinitis will 're-activate' as time goes on."

MSL-109 is produced by Protein Design Laboratories of California and is under evaluation in a multi-center clinical trial program sponsored by the Studies of the Ocular Complications of AIDS Research Group.

Kaiser Permanente Offers Health Education Class In North Portland

The following class is open to the public and is being offered in North Portland this fall through Kaiser Permanente. For registration information, call Kaiser Permanente's Health Education department at (503) 286-6816.

"Breastfeeding for Working Mothers" Class provides information on breast pumps, milk storage and other practical tips for mothers

choosing to continue breastfeeding after returning to work. The workshop will be from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. on Monday, Dec. 11, at Kaiser Permanente's Education and Conference Center (Town Hall), 3704 N. Interstate Ave., Portland. Cost is \$10 for families who are Kaiser Permanente members, \$20 for the general public. Please register at least 10 days before the class.

Ways To Help Youngsters Avoid Smoking

To discourage teens smoking, use three tactics: start early, don't nag and "get them thinking."

Parents can begin early to get across the message about smoking's dangers, said Dr. Larry Laufman of Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. He advocates a family environment that encourages open discussion.

"That may not stop them from smoking, but it will pave the way for

honest talk when the time comes," Laufman said.

"Never, never nag," he said. "Harassment is a sure-fire way to keep them smoking." Getting youngsters to think about the dangers of smoking may be as simple as a serious discussion or having them read a brochure.

"Even if the seed is only planted, it's a start," Laufman said.

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