

Health

Formerly Brain Dead Woman Learns To Communicate

In a highly unusual case, two researchers reported that a car accident victim, whose injuries left her apparently brain dead for 15 months, has come out of her vegetative state and learned to communicate.

Because the so-called "vegetative state" is considered permanent if it lasts for 12 months, the case may prompt reviews of many issues concerning the care of patients who emerge from a coma yet seem to have no awareness of their surroundings, the researchers said.

Reporting on the case in the New England Journal of Medicine, Dr. Nancy Childs of the Healthcare Rehabilitation Center in Austin, Texas, and Walt Mercer of Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit, Michigan, said they were aware of only one other such recovery that has been well documented.

Their patient was 18 when she suffered a brain injury. When she

came out of her coma, her eyes opened but did not focus or track anything. She did not respond to commands and extensive tests showed she was in a vegetative state.

However, after 15 months, hospital staffers thought there were times when she flexed her leg or closed her eyes in response to commands. They recorded the responses as "rare and inconsistent."

The patient was given generic drugs that affect the nerve cells in the brain and her responses grew consistent. She became able to use eye blinks to communicate and after five years of therapy, was able to spell out "Mom, I love you" and to communicate by mouthing words and short phrases.

She remains in a long-term care facility.

Childs and Mercer say there was no way doctors could have predicted that she would recover, and there

was no clue as to what prompted her emergence from the coma.

The woman's case "illustrates that clinical practicality and ethical prudence may suggest forgoing the use of the term permanent 'vegetative state' altogether," the researchers said.

Three factors complicate decisions about whether people in a vegetative state should receive aggressive care.

The first is that in spite of her recovery, the young woman remains "severely disabled and totally dependent."

The second is that the bill for her care came to well over \$1 million.

"Whether desirable or not, cost has become an ethical issue," Childs and Mercer said.

Thirdly, the woman, as with other patients who recover from a vegetative state, has "no behavioral evidence of depression or despondency" over her handicap. She likes humor, making jokes and teasing.

Diet Paramount In Heart Disease Fight

Unfit middle-aged men seeking to cut their risk of heart disease should concentrate on diet, not just exercise, according to researchers.

A University of Maryland study concluded that both weight loss and aerobic exercise do the older, fatter body good, but researchers found "aerobic exercise training in the absence of weight loss has substantially less beneficial effects."

In the study of 111 sedentary and obese men aged 46 to 80, 44 were told to lose 10 percent of their body weight, while 49 were told to increase maximum aerobic capacity by 10 percent while maintaining body weight.

Based on medical tests conduct-

ed before and after the nine-month regimen, men in both groups achieved reduced blood levels of low density lipoprotein cholesterol, the so-called bad cholesterol that contributes to artery blockage that leads to heart attacks and strokes.

Both also showed lower levels of plasma triglycerides and insulin, which are indicators of coronary artery disease. But the weight-loss group gained even more health benefits, including significant increases in high-density "good" cholesterol, larger decreases in fasting glucose and insulin levels and significantly lower blood pressure.

Age was a factor as well, as older subjects lost only two-thirds as much

weight as middle-aged subjects and did not attain the same health benefits.

"Collectively, these results suggest that weight loss is the preferred treatment to improve coronary artery disease risk factor profiles in healthy, overweight, sedentary, middle-aged and older men," study author Leslie Katzel wrote in the Journal of the American Medical Association.

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in most developed countries.

Many coronary deaths are caused by heart attacks that strike without warning in middle-aged and older people.

Oestrogen Doesn't Cause Weight Gain

The long-term use of hormones such as oestrogen is not responsible for extra weight commonly gained by post-menopausal women, according to the latest studies by researchers.

After adjusting for age and taking into account factors such as alcohol consumption, smoking and physical activity, researchers at the University of California found no significant physical differences between women who took synthetic hormones and those who did not.

"The present study confirms that hormone users tend to be leaner when

first given oestrogen and shows that neither long-term nor intermittent use explains or prevents the weight gain and central obesity commonly observed after menopause," wrote Donna Kritz-Silverstein and Elizabeth Barrett-Connor in the Journal of the American Medical Association.

However, the comparison found hormone users did start menopause earlier than non-users, were more likely to engage in moderate to strenuous exercise, and were more likely to drink alcohol three or more times a week.

The researchers tracked 671 wom-

en, aged 65 to 94, between 1972 and 1991. Of those, 146 used hormones continuously for 15 years or more, 331 used hormones intermittently, and 194 never used hormone replacement therapy.

Oestrogen replacement therapy is designed to relieve the symptoms of menopause caused by a drop in natural hormone levels that include excessive sweating and dryness and shrinkage of the vagina.

Oestrogen also helps prevent osteoporosis (a brittling of the bones) and narrowing of the arteries cause by impaired blood flow.

Sick Teens Face Eating Disorders

Teenagers suffering from chronic illnesses such as diabetes tend to be more likely to develop eating disorders because of a poorer body self-image, according to researchers.

The study of 3,500 adolescents in grades 7-12 in Minnesota public schools found those who had diabe-

tes, asthma, attention deficit disorder and seizure disorders were more likely than their "normal" peers to develop patterns of binge eating, frequent dieting and purging of food.

Dianne Neumark-Sztainer of the University of Minnesota School of Public Health said the anonymous survey showed the need to carefully

screen chronically ill students.

"Health care providers need to be alert to the higher risk among this group for the use of unhealthy weight-control practices," she wrote in the Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine, a journal published by the American Medical Association.

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Finding Your Niche In The Workforce

By Prof. McKinley Burt

There was a good response to last week's article, "Education In The Next Millennium: Part II". Most seemed in agreement that, given the failure of the politicians and the education establishment in general to address the problem in a timely manner, and awful lot is going to depend upon the individual in preparing for gainful employment.

In respect to the fast decreasing number of jobs, one reader alluded to the game of "Musical Chairs" played at his elementary school. "Everytime I'm laid off and go back into the job market there are less positions open -- I'm a 'permanent' temporary worker." He "appreciated the fact" that in the two preceding articles I have addressed procedures realistic enough to deal with the problem.

I believe I put it, indeed, "A mind is a terrible thing to waste" and that as a high school dropout very early on, I never allowed this circumstance to place any of the conventional restrictions on my career development. Neither can you in these times of economic slowdown and a contraction of employment opportunities. As in the case of that Beaverton executive who hired me to address his Human Resources Seminar, it also is going to be quite difficult for you to plan your personal economic

development in a straight line.

And I went on to counsel, "Read, Work and Do!"

But I should elaborate, for even though for years I have provided my own experienced-based models for the "upward bound", it is still very easy to be overwhelmed by a cold, uncaring system and to be intimidated by the glut of information and disinformation coming from every direction. One methodology I use is a workshop scenario where last month, for instance, I "immersed" a group of community people in my "The Dalles Oregon work experience at an aluminum plant."

An industrial plant and supporting workforce (700) of this type provides a model par excellence for the exercise of initiative in pursuing vocational or professional development. The very nature of the plant with its 24 hrs a day, 7 days a week schedule required that it be a self-contained city with all the infrastructure of metropolitan area: water, lights, sewers, fire, police, telephone, cafeteria, recreation, school and lecture rooms, hospital, etc.

In describing an incredibly rich learning experience to which any of us may subject ourselves, several participants commented that over twenty years ago I had antedated contemporary educators in trying to introduce this model to the Portland

School System and a Community College (Last week I quoted from a Oregonian news article, "Learning To Compete: A Tripartite Approach Involving Government, Schools and Business prepares Europes Workforces"). Still a problem we see.

The Aluminum Plant provides a comprehensible model of both the individual nature and the interaction of over fifty, trades and professions, and how there is both a commonality and a possibility of integration in each. I proceed to show that for each there are manufacturer's texts and manuals which in a clear and concise manner describe operating and maintenance procedures; even the underlying scientific basics. With the manufacturers representatives coming on the job to mentor and/or follow up with workshops or lectures. Thats all over.

And, then, I am able to show that by paying attention and showing initiative I was able to leave the accounting department for a new "Niche in the workforce"--converting the environment into my own "community college". Becoming an "Electronic Instrument Technician," within a year I was servicing and repairing, voltmeters, temperature controls, mass spectrometers, water gauges, weather instruments, time clocks, etc. "Read, Work, Do

Masters of Excellence Series Success In Business And Life

By Cora Smith

Jim Rohn, author of "The Art of Exceptional Living" was in the Portland during a recent Masters of Excellence series.

Corporations, private enterprises and just plain folks eager to succeed in business and their personal lives, attended the Jan. 10 event at the Jantzen Beach Red Lion.

A dapper, handsome man of high energy, Rohn discussed his international travels in correlation with his millionaire status and how he achieved his goals by the age of 31.

Rohn gives credit to a millionaire friend, who after several failures in business, seeing a need to be around positive money making achievers, began a mentoring program that lasted five years. It was that sixth year that his successes begin to "bring in the bacon."

It was simple, he said, by simply doing what he did best. He talked about issues that concerned him and in particular about kids.

He said it begin by "wondering, what can I do to make myself better?"

His rich friend taught him the philosophy of his life - manners, discipline, multiple skills, language skills, finances and most importantly (a well kept secret of the rich) time management.

Time is more important and

valuable than money, he said.

Rohn encouraged people to spend time with something worthy.

Other tips were to evaluate aspects of your life by questioning what it takes to govern people, what constitutes a good life, what makes life worthwhile, what makes life valuable and how life works with economics?

He said you should build financial independence and follow a good formula and a common denominator for your career/financial success.

Find opportunity from others and profit from their experience, he said, avoiding neglect of important issues to your progress. Take risks, walk out of the shadows into the daylight, he said. Develop your personal guidance system, going within to communicate, building self esteem to avoid dangers and seek opportunities, he encouraged.

Other tips: Earn the value of other person's experiences, sort out the best for yourself and use it, purchase books, learn from failures and be a selective listener.

Several books he suggested for your personal library include the Bible, Richest Man in Babylon and Think and Grow Rich.

These books are easy to read, he said, understand them and they will change your life.

Rohn also told listeners to correct old habits in judgment, if they are wrong do something about them.

The truth helps to set us free, he said.

The powers of emotions such as feeling sorry for yourself and how you feel about the past, can be used as a school, letting it be your teacher, he said.

Reach into the past for your needs and move on into your successful future, he said. He also advised listeners to filter out unworthy and undesirable characters and situations in your life.

Write it down, long range and short range goals, cross off accomplishments, erase ideas if you've changed your mind, apply new ones, always remembering to be realistic, he said.

Rohn said it was also important to measure your personal development and celebrate your successes with friends or family members. Wisdom and faith invested in labor creates new life, he added.

Videos and books are available on Rohn's successes.

He was a compelling and inspirational and a result-oriented speaker.

Dennis Waitley, the next speaker in the series presents "Winning in the 21st Century, Profiles of the New Leader, scheduled on Feb. 7.

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British researchers are testing "chemical condoms" that could let women guard against HIV but still get pregnant, the New Scientist recently reported.

The vaginal virucides would be aimed at women whose partners refuse to practice safe sex.

"Eventually, virucides could offer women greater control over their sexual health. They may be marketed in the form of gels, creams or foams," said the weekly science magazine.

If successful in preventing the transmission of the virus which causes AIDS, the compounds could be especially useful in countries such as Uganda where women face intense pressure to bear children despite the high incidence of HIV.

Tests began late last month in London, picking up from the 1980,

when scientists identified a number of compounds that appeared to prevent HIV from invading susceptible cells.

Researchers grasped the potential but their work on vaginal virucides soon ran into problems as benefits from killing the virus had to be weighed against damage done to other cells.

The latest trials at St. Mary's Hospital aim to exploit the compounds' ability to kill the deadly virus while also protecting vulnerable cells.

A safety trial on 36 women who were not sexually active revealed no side effects or damage to the vaginal lining.

But the ultimate test will be to study virucides in countries where the risk of HIV is high, said the magazine.