

Health & SCIENCE



Another animal rabies case

The identification of a second case of animal rabies in Oregon during 1997 has prompted health officials to remind the public to avoid physical contact with bats.

In Oregon, bats are the only reservoir species for rabies. Other animals, such as foxes, cats and sometimes dogs, can occasionally become infected as a result of contact with an infected bat, according to Dr. Emilio DeBess, public health veterinarian at the Oregon Health Division. The most recent animal rabies case occurred in a Clatsop County bat which had bitten a household dog. Earlier this year, a Douglas County cat was found to have rabies.

The rabies virus is spread by saliva, and exposures may result from a bite, scratch, or saliva contact to the eyes, nose, mouth or an open wound. "Thankfully, human rabies is extremely rare, and there have been no cases in Oregon in the last seven years. However, the fact that we have seen two cases in animals this year means it is still a potential danger," DeBess stated.

"Whether a bat is healthy, sick or dead, it should not be handled," says DeBess. Bats are an important part of nature and benefit us through insect control; however, they should not be disturbed. To avoid rabies, public health officials advise:

- Never handle bats or other wild animals. Teach children not to handle bats, and to tell an adult if they see a bat in inside the house, garage, or other building.

- Keep bats out of your house by sealing openings in roofs, floors or walls and putting screens over open windows or doors. Bats may enter opening as small as 3/8 of an inch.

- If you are bitten, immediately wash any bite or wound with soap and water. Contact your doctor, clinic or emergency room.

- Immunize your dogs and cats against rabies. Cats are especially susceptible because they often catch bats. Pets that are not immunized and contact a rabid animal may need to be killed or placed in quarantine for six months.

If you find a bat in your house, DeBess recommends these steps:

- If there is any chance that the bat had contact with a person or pet, it should be captured and tested for rabies. If the bat cannot safely be captured, call your local health department for advice.

- If you are certain that there was no contact with a person or pet (for example, you saw the bat fly in the house and never lost sight of it), close the room and closet doors, open the windows, and watch the bat until it leaves.

DeBess said the Clatsop County dog which was bitten had been immunized against rabies as required by law, so it did not have to be quarantined.

Understanding and dealing with stress

BY JUNIUS RICARDO STANTON

The dictionary defines the word stress as, a factor causing mental or emotional strain or tension; the physical or mental state resulting from such strain. But exactly what is this factor? Is it external or internal? Is it beyond our control? What is the cause of stress?

We hear so much about stress related symptoms. At least 65 percent of those who visit a physician, are there because of stress related symptoms. In the African-American community, an inordinately high percentage of our people suffer from hypertension. This condition contributes to all sorts of preventable disease and psychosomatic disharmony. Most of this is related to our reaction to living in a racist and often openly hostile environment!

We have been misled to believe that stress, disease and disharmony are the results of something outside

of ourselves. We have been told that illness is the result of micro organisms that attack us from without.

The truth of the matter is all are self-induced. Stress is generated within ourselves. It is triggered by or own minds.

Prolonged negative stress undermines our immune systems and we become susceptible to disease. Bacteria and other organisms that normally would be identified and destroyed by a healthy immune system overwhelm a weakened one, causing sickness.

Negative thinking, prolonged and suppressed anger, frustration, sadness and depression also sabotage our immune systems and damage our internal organs. (Our hearts have not been programmed to naturally attack us. We do this to ourselves through lifestyle choices, our thinking and our emotions.)

We also need to understand there

are two kinds of stress, Eustress and distress. Eustress is the positive kind and distress is the harmful variety. Eustress is the inner radiance of power and control you feel when you are enthusiastic and confident. Eustress is activated by our positive attitude, expectations and enthusiasm. This positive idea triggers the body's own endorphins, chemicals that produce natural euphoria, the "runner's high" or the can't miss feeling when you are in that "zone." Athletes know what I am talking about, so do creative people who tap into their inner resources to help them paint, write, dance, compose, whatever.

Distress is when you feel overwhelmed, unable to face the challenges of life, when you are plagued with worry, fear and doubt. Distress also triggers chemicals within the body.

The problem occurs when we maintain a constant state of unease.

The body is forced to adapt to a fight flight mode for an extended period of time. During this period our digestion is slowed and more blood/energy is diverted to the extremities to enable us to fend off danger or to escape. This causes problems because our bodies are not designed to maintain this state of anxiety and tension. Negative tension saps the body's resources, draining it of vitality that could be used for other things.

Your perception of any situation and your self-assessment of your ability to cope with it, triggers emotional and physiological reactions within you. It's not what's happening on the outside but your appraisal of your abilities and resources that count. Remember, for you, the world is what you think it is! Most of the situations we face in our daily lives are not life-threatening. Our egos may be threatened but not our existence!

Two people can experience the exact same situation and respond in distinctly different ways. To a master plumber a stopped toilet is no big deal. To a novice it could be a major crisis. The key to dealing confidently with life is to use your mind to trigger Eustressful responses rather than distressful ones. I am not advocating denial and wishful thinking. I am talking about evaluating every situation calmly and reasonably. Even an unpleasant situation should be examined to find the positive or optimal outcome. I am advocating using the power of your mind to help rather than hurt you! It is possible and preferable to apply your mind and inner resources to bring about the best possible resolution for all concerned.

Within you resides the creative power, the intelligence, strength and fortitude to effectively cope with life's ups and downs.

Thousands more eligible for mental health services

New services, faster access to care and greater cost predictability are forecast as all Oregon Health Plan members became eligible for expanded mental health services in July.

The health plan covers about

350,000 Oregonians whose incomes are below the federal poverty level, about 10 percent of whom are expected to need some type of mental health services.

The Oregon Legislature initially

authorized the Medicaid-financed health plan to offer an expanded package of mental health benefits to 25 percent of health plan members, and those in Benton, Clackamas, Coos, Josephine, Washington and 15 east-

ern Oregon counties have been eligible since Jan. 1, 1995.

Results so far show improved access to a broad range of mental health services, more flexible delivery of services and increased consumer involvement in designing services, said Ralph Summers, health plan unit manager in the Mental Health and Developmental Disability Services Division. He said that in the 20 initial counties mental health consumers were served faster, reported being more satisfied with services, and saw introduction of services that hadn't existed before.

The Legislature authorized expanding the package of mental health services to the remaining 75 percent of health plan members effective July 1. The 16 counties where health plan members are receiving a broader range of mental health services for the first time are Clatsop, Columbia,

Curry, Deschutes, Douglas, Jackson, Jefferson, Klamath, Lane, Lincoln, Linn, Marion, Multnomah, Polk, Tillamook and Yamhill.

For the next three months, health plan members in these 16 counties will receive mental health services on a fee-for-service basis - that is, mental health clinics will continue to bill the state Medicaid office for services rendered. By Oct. 1, the state plans to have contracts with mental health organizations to deliver services in all counties.

Summers said that until the state approves the new managed care providers, health plan members may call county mental health departments to learn where to obtain services. Phone numbers for county mental health departments can be found in phone books blue (government) pages under the County section.



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HEALTH FOCUS

Strokes warrant emergency action

The result can be permanent disability and even death.

Strokes used to be hard to treat, but treatments effective in the first few hours following a stroke are being tested and approved.

"Clot-busting" drugs similar to the ones used for heart attacks are also beneficial for strokes. One approved drug, t-PA, helps break up blood clots and prevent further cell damage.

However, to minimize damage, t-PA and experimental stroke drugs must be administered within the first three to six hours of stroke symptoms. To benefit from these medications, you must get to the hospital immediately.

Dr. Dennis Mosier, a neurologist at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, is testing a new drug for early stroke treatment called a neuroprotective. This type of drug, designed to stop the chain reaction of cell damage, must be given within

six hours.

Mosier believes that physicians will one day treat stroke patients in the emergency room with a combination of neuroprotectives and clotters.

Chances for stroke recovery are greatly improved by fast action. Do not hesitate to call "9-1-1" at the first sign of any of these symptoms:

- One-sided weakness, numbness or paralysis.
- Problems speaking or understanding.
- Dizziness or loss of balance.
- Blurred or decreased vision.
- Sudden severe or unexplained headache.

Recognizing stroke symptoms and reacting promptly can be the difference between life and death or between recovery and major disability.

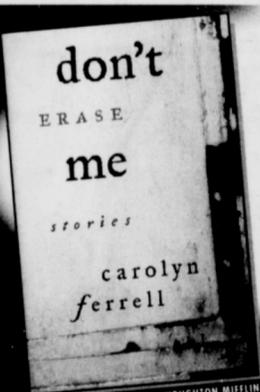


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