



OPINION

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Hazardous trees

This letter is about the dead trees (snags) along the east side of Highway 99 south of Harrison.

There are five dead trees; there used to be six, but one fell onto the roadway not too long ago. Currently one is broken off about 10 feet off the ground. The top is leaning against an adjacent tree and over the communication lines running north

and south.

These trees are a hazard to anyone passing by them. I've called the city, CenturyLink and Charter to report the tree broken and leaning. That was two weeks ago and nothing has been done. I believe that the trees are in the railroad right away, according to a CenturyLink representative, and they are unresponsive.

I reckon that someone will need to be killed by a falling tree to get the hazard mitigated.

Eric Jager
Cottage Grove

Offbeat Oregon History

Hundreds of hospital patients fed deadly poison in horrifying kitchen mix-up

BY FINN J.D. JOHN
For the Sentinel

Seventy years ago this week, on a quiet November evening, 467 psychiatric patients at the Oregon State Hospital in Salem were about to tuck into a scrambled-egg supper.

Before the end of the evening, 47 of them would be dead, and the rest would be in mortal agony — their teeth aching, their faces numb, their legs no longer supporting their weight as they writhed on the floor, clinging to life.

A horrifying mix-up in the kitchen had resulted in their scrambled eggs being spiked with roach poison.

Oregonians all over the state, who had never much thought about the occupants of the asylum, now were riveted. How could this have happened? And was it done on purpose?

Sent to fetch powdered milk

The events began on a Wednesday evening — Nov. 18, 1942. The United States had just entered the Second World War, and things were not yet going particularly well. Because of the vast manpower needs from the war, all unnecessary staff members had been taken from the hospital and sent overseas, so in the kitchen chief cook Mary O'Hare and assistant cook A.B. "Mickey" McKillop were on their own, cooking up an evening meal for nearly 500 people.

In lieu of the staff assistants, they had the help of some "trusties" — high-functioning patients who'd been given the job of helping out, like interns.

McKillop sent one of those trusties, a man from Medford named George Nosen, down to the basement to fetch some powdered milk to mix into the eggs. McKillop was hustling to get the meal ready and didn't have time to go downstairs and unlock doors, so — in violation of the hospital's policy, — he handed Nosen his keys to get into the storeroom where the milk was kept.

Now, at the bottom of the basement stairs were two locked rooms. On the left was the room with the dry goods — flour, sugar, powdered milk. And on the right was the room in which the fruit was stored. In that room, with the fruit, for reasons that remain unclear to this day, the hospital had decided to keep the roach poison. The poison was kept in a giant galvanized-steel trash can of the type farmers often use to keep chicken feed safe from rodents.

Nosen went down the stairs, let himself into one of the rooms, and soon was back upstairs with a generous scoop full of white powder — five, maybe six pounds of it. McKillop, with a word of thanks, tossed it into the eggs and mixed it in, poured the stuff out on the skillet, and a few minutes later was ready to serve his first patient.

Writhing on the floor

Within 15 minutes of the first mouthful of eggs going down the first patient's throat, the place was in horrific, lethal chaos. Patients writhed on the floor, unable to stand or sit. Some were vomiting blood. Within an hour, some of them were dead. By midnight, the death toll was at 30 and climbing.

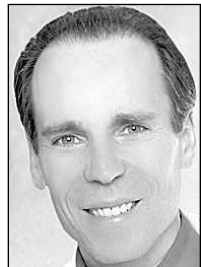
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Poor diet is the major cause of premature death worldwide

BY JOEL FUHRMAN, MD
For the Sentinel

An international team of researchers have released new data about the risk factors associated with preventable deaths and loss of quality life years. The Global Burden of Disease study is a huge, ongoing project collecting data on 79 modifiable risk factors in 188 countries; the team of researchers evaluates studies on each risk factor, grading the evidence that links each one to early death and adding more risk factors to the list when new evidence arises.



In 1990 and even in 2000, unsafe water and sanitation, and lack of handwashing were the primary risk factors. However, between 2000 and 2013 dietary risks overtook child and maternal malnutrition as the factor responsible for the greatest number of premature deaths.

A poor diet (a collection of 14 risk factors including high red meat intake, low vegetable intake and low nut/seed intake) accounted for 11.3 million deaths. Following a poor diet, the major risk factors were high blood pressure, child and maternal malnutrition, tobacco, air pollution and a high BMI.

In recent decades, the American diet has undergone a transformation that has put disease-causing refined carbohydrates, oils, and animal foods at the center of every meal, with natural plant foods playing only a minor role.

This dietary shift is apparent in the data. As new parts of the world continue to adopt these eating habits, diet is becoming a larger burden on health and lifespan all over the world.

When the researchers looked at some of the dietary risks individually, between 2000 and 2013 there was a global increase in the numbers of deaths associated with low fruit, high sodium, low fiber, low nuts and seeds, and high red and processed meat intake.

The number of deaths associated with high blood pressure, high BMI and high fasting blood glucose also increased over this time.

There is some good news though — deaths due to trans fat intake and secondhand smoke have declined.

The authors state "each of the risk factors included in this analysis is modifiable, pointing

to the huge potential of prevention to improve human health." These trends are reversible, and the deaths associated with a poor diet are avoidable. It took many years, but today everyone knows that smoking causes lung cancer.

Everyone is taught this from a young age, before the opportunity to start smoking. Tobacco use is declining, and as a result, so are the health impacts of tobacco. The data suggests that this is beginning to happen with trans fat too.

We're not there yet, but we are moving toward a time when processed meats, commercial baked goods and sugar-sweetened beverages will be viewed by everyone as dangerous.

Dr. Fuhrman is a #1 New York Times best-selling author and a family physician specializing in lifestyle and nutritional medicine.

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Personal attacks and name calling in response to letters are uncalled for and unnecessary.

If you would like to submit an opinion piece, Another View must be no longer than 600 words.

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