

# In Good Hands

A Free Monthly Newsletter For The Friends and Patients of: **The Maryland Spine Institute**

*We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give. Sir Winston Churchill*

## Heart Surgeons Get Wake-Up Call On Common Procedure, United States DEAD LAST In Healthcare... AGAIN... And...

### Are Cherries Better Than Aspirin And Other Anti-Inflammatory Drugs?



**M**aryland – This issue is jam packed with interesting, informative... and... *helpful* information. So, let's skip the introduction and jump right into the good stuff...

Here's the first very interesting fact for this month: On May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2007, the Commonwealth Fund issued a report entitled, "Mirror, Mirror on the Wall: An International Update on the Comparative Performance of American Health Care."

#### **The Results Were *NOT* Good...**

In fact, here's what the first sentence of the report had to say: "*Despite having the most costly health system in the world, the United States consistently underperforms on most dimensions of performance, relative to other countries.*"

Shocked? You shouldn't be. Why? Because this is nothing new...

According to the report: "*Among the six nations studied— Australia, Canada, Germany, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States—the U.S. ranks last, as it did in the 2006 and 2004 editions of Mirror, Mirror. Most troubling, the U.S. fails to achieve better health outcomes than the other countries, and as shown in the earlier editions, the U.S. is last on dimensions of access, patient safety, efficiency, and equity. The 2007 edition includes data from the six countries and incorporates patients' and physicians' survey results on care experiences and ratings on various dimensions of care.*"

Overall, Germany and the UK topped the list, with Canada and the United States bringing up the rear. Also worth noting here is that America spends

close to **THREE TIMES** as much for its mediocre approach to health per capita (\$6,102) annually than does New Zealand (\$2,083), and almost twice as much as Canada (\$3,165).

Even worse, American doctors are the **SLOWEST** to change when it comes to technology, again, with the lowest numbers in relation to using electronic medical records or keeping up with the latest treatments via the Internet.

Now here is something that you will probably find interesting... even puzzling... According to the report, "*the area where the U.S. health care system performs BEST is preventive care, an area that has been monitored closely for over a decade by managed care plans.*"

It's always been abundantly clear that...

#### **An Ounce Of Prevention Is Worth A Pound Of Cure**

For example, the May 9<sup>th</sup> edition of the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) had an article entitled: "Cardiologists Get Wake-up Call on Stents."

According to the article, "*Patients with stable coronary artery disease treated with stents and optimal medical therapy fare no better than those who receive optimal medical therapy alone, according to new findings from a large clinical trial.*"

For many cardiologists, the results serve as a wake-up call that they need to reevaluate how frequently they offer stenting (which has slight risks associated with the intervention itself, as well as stent-associated thrombotic events) as a first option for relief of stable angina. The data comes from the

Clinical Outcomes Utilizing Revascularization and Aggressive Drug Evaluation (COURAGE) Trial, reported here in March at the annual conference of the American College of Cardiology.

### **What So Many Knew All Along...**

It seems like research is simply confirming what many thought to be true all along. Prevention is far superior to invasive “crisis” procedures after years and years of neglect.

It is abundantly clear you cannot abuse or neglect your body and health and have the wonders of modern medicine save you.

Now for something different... but... related...

First, let’s be clear about this: This newsletter does NOT endorse ANY politicians. It simply exposes our valuable readers to important healthcare issues that exist. That being said... you should know about this...

U.S. Rep. Ron Paul (R-Texas) has introduced a bill that would curb restrictions imposed by the FDA and FTC regarding health claims for dietary supplements.

Why would he do that? Aren’t these restrictions good for the consumer to make sure they don’t get “duped” by snake oil salesmen making false claims?

Maybe. But, maybe not. Check this out and decide for yourself:

### **The Cherry Grower’s Story...**

Back in 1999 a peer-reviewed report came out in the Journal of Natural Products, published by the American Chemical Society, the world’s largest scientific society.

According to LewRockwell.com, the study concluded that “tart cherries may relieve pain better than aspirin and many other anti-inflammatory drugs.” It turns out that consumption of about 20 cherries reduces inflammation in a similar manner as aspirin or Cox-2 inhibiting drugs without the lethal side effects of gastric bleeding or vitamin depletion associated with these drugs. The molecules in cherries, called

anthocyanins, work to reduce inflammation at ten times less dosage than aspirin. [Journal Natural Products 1999 Feb; 62(2): 294–6] Pills that provide concentrated anthocyanins would make it even easier to consumers to achieve these health benefits.

When cherry growers began to cite this scientific study, the FDA followed by sending a warning letter to 29 companies that market cherries threatening regulatory action if they did not remove the scientific information regarding the anti-inflammatory properties of cherries from their websites. The FDA declared cherries to be “drugs” once health claims for a disease were associated with the product.

Bob Underwood, who sells capsules containing concentrated cherry paste, was quoted in an Associated Press story in 2006 as saying: “We have the government telling people to eat more fruits and vegetables, and we have the U.S. Department of Agriculture funding some of these fruit studies, and

*now we have another arm of the federal government that says you can't use the research.”*

According to LewRockwell.com, “The Health Freedom Protection Act would stop the FDA from censoring truthful claims about the curative, mitigative, or preventative effects of dietary supplements,” says Scott Tips of the National Health Federation, a Monrovia, California-based organization that is leading the charge behind

### **Welcome New Patients!**

**Here are the new patients that became members of our practice family this last month! We'd like to welcome you publicly, and wish you all the best!**

*Mike Broyles; Bel Air, MD*

*Ben Byrge; Aberdeen, MD*

*Howard & Linda Dietz; Dundalk, MD*

*Brittany Germroth; Baltimore MD*

*Sonia Gullion; Street, MD*

*Vera Ingoll; Whiteford, MD*

*Wendy Lake; Loch Raven, MD*

*Charlene McBride; North East, MD*

*Jean Mecler; Conowingo, MD*

*Maria Navarro; Phoenix, MD*

*Bogdan Pawelski; Baltimore, MD*

*Patty Petrucci; Fallston, MD*

*Mark Puckett; Bel Air, MD*

*Kim Shaneybrook; Bel Air, MD*

*Roger Sharp; Elkton, MD*

*Cindy Siejack; Loganville, PA*

*Mike Whiteford; Aberdeen, MD*

this legislation.”

Sad to see that legislation is needed to stop the censorship of truthful claims... isn't it?

*And don't forget, if you ever have any questions or concerns about your health, talk to us. Contact us with your, questions. We're here to help, and don't enjoy anything more than participating in your lifelong good health.*

## Inspirational Story Of The Month –

*(Names And Details Have Been Changed To Protect Privacy.)*

### Be Careful What You Want And Who You Want To Be Like - An “Anti-Success Story”

We’ve all heard it a thousand times.

Be careful what you wish for – because it just might come true. And as you will soon see in a couple of examples in just a moment., it’s true. But, just as important, is to be careful WHO you want to be like. In other words... who you look up to and emulate to “success.” And even more important – who your children attempt to imitate to improve their lives.

For example, on May 25<sup>th</sup> 2007, Yahoo News printed a story that was entitled, “Ryan O’Neal Won’t Face Criminal Charges.” As the story goes... prosecutors declined to charge Ryan O’Neal with assault with a deadly weapon for firing a gun during a brawl with his older son earlier this year. There was insufficient evidence and witnesses gave conflicting accounts of the event. O’Neal’s attorney, Mark Werksman, claimed the elder O’Neal acted in self-defense and was quoted in the article, “It’s a tremendous relief for Mr. O’Neal to have this resolved favorably in this manner.”

According to the same Yahoo News article, O’Neal said he fired a warning shot to scare his 42-year-old son, Griffin O’Neal, who had attacked him with a fireplace poker. But it gets worse... “He said his son lashed out at him during a fight, but he ducked and the poker struck Griffin O’Neal’s girlfriend, Joanna Berry, who was eight months’ pregnant.” “She received a serious eye injury and needed stitches for a facial cut,” said Gloria Allred, an attorney who represented both Berry and Griffin O’Neal. Werksman said, “Ryan O’Neal suffered bruises to his arms and legs when he was struck several times.”

But that’s not all – “In 1983, police were called to their home after a fight in which Ryan O’Neal knocked out two of Griffin O’Neal’s teeth,” the Los Angeles Times reported. No charges were filed. Griffin O’Neal also has had several run-ins with the law. He was found guilty of reckless boating in a 1986 accident that killed the son of film director, Francis Ford Coppola, and later was given an 18-day jail sentence for failing to perform community service ordered in that case. He also has pleaded no contest in two unrelated cases to drunken driving and shooting at the unoccupied car of an estranged girlfriend.”

**WOW!!!**

No comment or judgment. Just... WOW!

On the same day, Yahoo News also covered the story of Bjarne Riis. Who’s that? He won the Tour De France in 1996. And he has now come out and admitted to doping. According to the story, he took several performance enhancing drugs. Several Ex-Tour De France winners have either been busted or have “come clean” recently about taking banned drugs. And does anyone have to mention steroids in baseball? One can only speculate how bad the problem is in ALL sports.

Sadly, celebrities and athletes are what many in society choose to emulate, especially kids. After all, what 12-year-old doesn’t dream about being a big star, winning the Super Bowl, etc. This is not a condemnation of ALL actors, actresses or athletes. Not in the least. The news reports the sensational. But what “successful” people appear to be and who they really are can be very, very different. Sometimes the very drive necessary to achieve superhuman success leads to an unbalanced and unhealthy life. The business person who sacrifices family and health to reach the pinnacle of his or her profession will have nothing when it is reached. There are countless examples of unhappy multi-millionaires, whether they are celebrities, athletes... or... simple workaholics. Do you think Britney Spears would trade all her millions for a moment of sanity, clarity and happiness? Don’t know. But she just might. All the little girls who what to “be like Britney” should realize that too. And maybe your kids should want to be a lot more like YOU.

This month’s “success story” was more like an “anti-success story.” But, sometimes you have to realize that you are successful already. Just take the time to enjoy what you have. It’s a lot better than you may think. If you have doubts think about this: Ryan O’Neal was relieved he’s not going to jail for firing a warning shot at his son who was attacking him with a fireplace poker.

That relieves him. Think about it...

**We love helping our patients and their friends and relatives through their tough times and getting them feeling better! We are here to help you stay feeling better and looking younger! Don't be a stranger. Call us, and we will assist you in putting together a customized maintenance plan. It's not a luxury anymore! With our low monthly payment plan, it's less expensive to maintain your good health! You really can afford quality health care! Don't wait until you can no longer move!**

### **Tip Of The Month: "Summer Heat Can Be Deadly Warning Signs And How To Stay Safe"**



Here's a scary fact: The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration – NOAA – says more Americans die from extreme heat than from hurricanes, lightning, tornados, floods and earthquakes. And that's just counting the direct casualties. We have no way of knowing how many have died of other causes that would not have been fatal under other conditions.

The National Center for Environmental Health puts the U.S. heat-related death toll for 1979 –1999 (most recent figures) at 8,015. That averages out to about 175 per year, but each year is different. In the heat wave of 1980 alone, more than 1,250 people died. And heat related death can strike with very little and subtle warning. According to climatologist, Mary Knapp, based at Kansas State University, "Most people don't realize that their odds for a heat-related illness goes up the longer they're exposed. That's why the majority of deaths occur several days into a heat wave rather than on day one. People also don't realize how important nighttime temperatures can be in determining their risk." And it's not just the temperature or humidity that puts you in danger. Knapp states, "Even when the humidity is low, temperatures in the high 90s [F] can be life-threatening in a fan-cooled home. When the humidity is high, temperatures in the high 80s can be dangerous," Knapp said. "Air movement may make you feel more comfortable then, but it may not keep you cool enough to be safe." If temperatures are 80 or higher – the risk increases dramatically, especially for the elder, very young, those who are ill, and if you are involved in physical activity. Here are some early warning signs of heat-related risks: \* Dizziness, feeling faint. \* Going to the bathroom less than usual. \* Darker and/or more yellow urine. \* Labored breathing, sometimes accompanied by a pounding heartbeat. \* Headache and/or painful muscle spasms. \* Nausea and/or excessive sweating. A pounding heart and gasping for breath may seem easy for some to recognize, but for many, it is not.

#### **Athletes And Heat Stroke**

For example, athletes notoriously ignore them. Why? Because many athletes train and push themselves year round. They have trained in the hot weather before. Part of their training is a pounding heart and heavy breathing. They've "been there, done that" and survived. Right? That's exactly what put them at the most risk. We have all heard about football players dying during summer camp workouts. There is a difference between a "pounding heart" and a safe aerobic heart rate. There is also a difference between breathing hard and gasping. Experts warn: In extreme conditions, progressing into heat stroke can be a matter of minutes. The quickly developing symptoms can include: dry skin, high body temperature (above 105), rapid pulse, lethargy, disorientation, delirium, and coma. That's why heat stroke is often fatal – even with rapid first aid or medical care to reduce the body's burning, fever-like temperature as quickly as possible. Once Again... WATER! Besides knowing your risk factors, limiting strenuous activity and spending time in air conditioned rooms, drinking enough water is extremely valuable. As the temperature rises, so should the amount you drink. But do not rely on thirst. Experts warn thirst is not a good indicator of the amount of water you need. When sweating heavily, healthy adults need to drink 16 to 32 ounces of cool (not cold) fluids each hour.

**Remember, we're always here, using the miracle of the Most Advanced Technology in Healthcare available to help your body heal and maintain the health you deserve!**