



Next Meeting: Thursday 9/20/12

Greater Los Angeles Veterans Affairs Medical Center
 Wadsworth Bldg (500)11301 Wilshire Blvd. LA 90073
 Operator: 310-478-37116400 (6th floor),
 SW corner San Diego Freeway (405) & Wilshire Blvd.
 Exit Wilshire Blvd West from San Diego Freeway,
 immediate right on to campus west of freeway.
 5:30pm free dinner 6:00 meeting (no RSVP needed)
 1. POLST Grant Update, other announcements
 2. Dr. Kenneth Landis – The Legacy of Nancy Cruzan.
 3. Cases from the field.
 Free parking but come early (congested)
 *******In the News*******

"How much would you pay for a few more months of life?" Newsweek article tallies the cost of pricey cancer treatments offering limited benefit for their punch. Yervoy, used in advanced melanoma, cost \$120k for the promise of 4 mos of extended life. Australia's national health care service decided against funding that treatment. Provenge, an immune-therapy drug for late stage prostate CA offers an average life extension of 4 mos at a cost of \$93K. Combining Tarceva with older Gemecitabine to combat pancreatic cancer for \$15 K extends life by 14-16 days. The United Kingdom does not cover Tavastin for advanced breast cancer to the tune of \$188k which, when combined with Herceptin, delays advanced cancer growth for about 6 months.

Spokespersons for the drug companies cite the cost of research and development as reasons for their expense. But *The Journal of Clinical Oncology* reported research in 2004 testing the relationship between a drug's development and its final asking price and determined that "the drug companies are not pricing their drugs to recuperate losses associated with research and development, marketing and operating prices... rather (the average wholesale price) depends on what the market itself can bear."

Dr. Thomas Smith of Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center in Baltimore asserts, "What we have now are a bunch of blockbuster drugs that give a little bit of benefit. If you're that person, it could be a really big benefit to have three extra months before your disease starts growing again, but as a society we simply can't pay for that for everybody." Dr. Lee Newcomer, senior VP for Oncology at United Healthcare maintains, "If we're going to continue to have a sustainable health system, we have to talk about that as a society. Beil, Laura, Newsweek, 9/3, 2012

Health Board Approves Bloomberg's Soda Ban

Over 1/2 of New York's population is obese and 5,000 deaths a years are attributed to obesity, according to the Health Department. The Mayor has promoted banning the sale of oversized sugary soft drinks in government regulated outlets.

Some argue that instead of decreasing personal choices, obesity aggravated by soft drink consumption could be better addressed through education. Subsidizing corn, makes foods with high-fructose corn syrup inexpensive. Taxes breaks to corn growers inadvertently support obesity. This could be altered via a modified tax structure. Tax on foods known to cause obesity could reduce consumption because of cost increase, and tax revenue could pay for obesity-related education, community exercise facilities and healthcare.

[NYTimes.com http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/14/nyregion/health-board-approves-bloombergs-soda-ban.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/14/nyregion/health-board-approves-bloombergs-soda-ban.html)

Conferences/CME

10/26 "Building Bridges" cultural sensitivity at End of life, California Endowment, Oakland, CA
 11/30 Fri, noon -2pm Bayley, Carol, Dignity Health Care Ethicist on *Conundrums in the Bioethics Consult*, lunch, CME provided, California Hospital, Keck Auditorium

HOTTTT Topics!

There are many unknown cases of children conceived from donated sperm inheriting genetic conditions from male donors. Because mothers are not required to report births or children's illnesses to the sperm banks, records of genetic diseases are scant. Sperm containing genetic defects continue to be sold to unaware families. The FDA only requires that sperm be screened for infectious and communicable disease, but not genetic disease, including neurofibromatosis type 1, cystic fibrosis, and hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, among others. Choosing a sperm donor is a genetic gamble. Websites such as the Donor Sibling Registry are connecting families with children who are the offspring of the same sperm donor to document some genetic conditions.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/15/health/in-sperm-banks-a-matrix-of-untested-genetic-diseases.html?pagewanted=1&ref=health>

HAPPENINGS

Garden Party coalition for compassionate care

Sun, 9/23, 2-6 pm, Wilcox M 310 S. Pasadena Ave, Tustin
 Dave Tennant - Screenwriter & Humanitas Award winner
 Lindsey Your, co creator of e-Prognosis
 Solomon Liao, MD - National leader in Palliative Medicine & Geriatric Pain Management, Tours, wine, appetizers
srichards@coalitionccc.org

What's the Word?

Athletes with sterling careers are facing early dementia possibly as the result of head injuries incurred during their lives in sports, claim their life partners who have joined forces to bring attention to the inglorious future faced by some former NFL stars. Similar attention is now being given to younger players including Pop Warner and high school teams with efforts to delay and, in some cases, prohibit return to play after head injury until evaluation by a physician.

A burden is placed on team doctors and other health professionals to assess when an athlete can safely return to play after head trauma while hedging bets regarding the future. Such decisions can be particularly daunting given the limited opportunities for some youths to advance in education without the assistance of sports scholarships. Many health professionals already feel challenged in their efforts to reduce couch and screen time in favor of sports participation in communities plagued by obesity, diabetes, hypertension, and violence. Sports Illustrated 9/12, p.39

*******Weigh in with the Editor*******

Kendra Gorlitsky, MD gorlitsk@usc.edu Contributors: Alyson Kil, MS 3 USC (KSOM), Andrew Cunningham, Nick Vidar MS 2, USC (KSOM)



GLOSSARY

Harm Reduction

Practices designed to reduce the harmful consequences associated with human behaviors, even if those behaviors are risky or illegal, such as drug and alcohol abuse.

Justice

Treating like cases alike (and different cases differently), acting fairly towards other people. For individual physicians, this amounts to a duty not to engage in wrongful discrimination. For the health system, it requires the healthcare resources be equitably distributed and that no one should bear unfair burdens.

Doping

Receiving blood transfusions as a means of enhancing oxygenation to the tissues and increasing athletic endurance

Post concussive syndrome:

Complex disorder in which a variable combination of symptoms — such as headaches and dizziness — last for weeks and sometimes months after the injury that caused the concussion (a mild traumatic brain injury, usually occurring after a blow to the head.) Loss of consciousness isn't required for a diagnosis of concussion or post-concussion syndrome. Risk of post-concussion syndrome doesn't appear to be associated with the severity of the initial injury. In most people, post-concussion syndrome symptoms occur within the first 7 to 10 days and go away within 3 months, though they can persist for a year or more. Post-concussion syndrome treatments are aimed at easing specific symptoms.

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/post-concussion-syndrome/DS01020>

THE BZZZ

The body of research showing that *Harm Reduction and Housing First* models work continues to grow, including an extensive multiphase study currently conducted by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University on the Housing Opportunities Program Evaluation (CASAHOPE).

The CASAHOPE study found no correlation between the type and amount of substance use and housing retention, refuting stipulations that people need to be 'housing ready' before accessing permanent housing.

Along with housing stability, the study has also shown that supportive housing has no negative impacts on substance use or health, in contrast to life on the streets where studies have shown that substance use increases and health deteriorates.

Even in supportive housing without requirements for abstinence or participation in treatment, the study participants demonstrated decreased substance use, consistent with previous studies.

~Mike Alviderez, Executive Director of Skid Row Housing Trust as reported in Trust News, fall, '12 info@skidrow.org

Books

Brawaly, Otis, *How We do Harm ; A Doctor Breaks Ranks About Being Sick in America*

"New cancer treatment cost an awful lot of money, and there is usually a very small incremental benefit." This current Chief Medical and Scientific Officer of the American Cancer Society, recently asserted that "instead of talking about rationing care, we need to talk about rational use of care."

BRAVE (OR TAINTED?) NEW WORLD

Lance Armstrong's recent decision not to refute charges of cheating by gaining unfair physical advantage from doping and other means resulted in the stripping of his win of 7 straight Tour de France Bicycle races and an Olympic Bronze medal. Some fans lament the fall of a hero who surmounted the obstacle of metastatic testicular cancer discovered at age 25 and treated by two surgeries including removal of local cancer and brain tumors, as well as chemotherapy. He went on to initiate "Livestrong," a fund to fight cancer and provide an example to other cancer survivors. His apologists include Buzz Bissinger writing in the September 3 edition of Newsweek who believes the athlete's denial of wrong doing, while pointing out that even "If Armstrong used banned substance, he was leveling the playing field." Citing a New York Times assertion that at least a third of the top 10 finishers of the Tour de France admitted using performance enhancers or had been officially suspected of doping... "He was still the one who overcame all odds," explains Bissinger.

As athletes face enhanced scrutiny of their bodily fluids, the other side explains that if not for a purist approach, the human body might merely become a vehicle for competitions between drug companies as they seek to demonstrate the advantages of their various products. One wonders if similar scrutiny of scholars will soon be initiated as cognitive and memory enhancing pharmaceuticals are used during formal testing i.e. SAT, MCAT and LSAT exams

Movers and Shakers

Joshua Green: Harvard psychologist is exploring the brain's efforts to tackle ethical dilemmas using emotional versus cognitive components of the brain, some of which are located differentially in anterior areas of the cingulate prefrontal cortex.

"Immigration can be dangerous to your health!"

Immigrants are deported to dangerous situations according to LA Times article. Former construction and other workers picked up for traffic and other violations have been transported to Texas border towns in Tamaulipas, (more than 1/4 of all US deportees from Mexico) where they have no family or friends and where gangs from the cartels are quick to recruit or blackmail their relatives. Federal courts responded to a legal effort to have the immigrants deported to safer areas resulted in the response that deportees are not entitled to determine their destination. The US has deported more than 1 million immigrants since 2008.

R. Marosi, reporter for LA Times September 9 2012 p.1,16,17. NPR reported on 9/11/2012 that a new program is being initiated to transport deportees to Mexico City instead of border towns.

*****SCBCC Steering Committee*****

Paul Schneider, MD Paul.Schneider@med.va.gov

Jim Hornstein, MD jimfamdoc@sbcglobal.net

Neil Wenger, MD NWenger@mednet.ucla.edu

Kendra Gorlitsky, MD gorlitsk@usc.edu

Margie E. Spies, RN margie.e.spies@kp.org

Kenneth Landis, MD kwlsccrdoc@aol.com

Theresa Drought Theresa.s.drought@kp.org

Webmaster: Stuart Fin