

by Scott LaFee

MEDTRONICA

HealthCentral

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This Web site covers medicine broadly, with the day's top health-related news stories and features on "what's hot." Keep in mind those "what's hot" stories are sponsored by specific groups, who may have a specific agenda to sell.

GROWING UP, GROWING OLD - A recent Stanford University study found no evidence that the human growth hormone has any significant effect upon the aging process. CNS Photo. MEDTRONICA - The www.healthcentral.com Web site offers health-related news stories and features. CNS Photo. GROWING UP, GROWING OLD

For some time now, the marketing of growth hormone as an anti-aging elixir has been something of a growth industry. It's estimated that 20,000 to 30,000 people took the stuff in 2004 in an effort to delay the effects of time - a tenfold increase from the mid-1990s.

They might have gotten just as much benefit from just drinking a glass of water. In fact, they probably would have been better off. A new Stanford University study, which reviewed all published data on the use of human growth hormone by healthy elderly adults, found no evidence that the hormone, which is naturally produced by the pituitary gland in the brain, has any significant effect upon the aging process.

Indeed, it might hurt. Possible side effects of GH use, the researchers said, include joint swelling and pain, carpal tunnel syndrome and a heightened risk of diabetes.

"You're paying a lot of money for a therapy that may have minimal or no benefit and, yet, has a potential for some serious side effects," said study author Dr. Hau Liu.

GH hurts the pocketbook, too. The monthly cost of therapy is \$1,000 to \$2,000. Liu and colleagues found the

only positive effect of using GH was a slight increase in muscle mass and a corresponding decrease in fat - about 4 pounds difference.

"If you went to the gym pretty regularly, you might get that change without breaking into too much of a sweat," Liu said.

BODY OF KNOWLEDGE

According to Stephen Juan, author of "The Odd Brain," experts claim that when they walk into a room, left-handers tend to turn left and right-handers turn right.

GET ME THAT. STAT!

Mothers with more income and education may be less likely to keep their children's immunizations up to date. A survey of 11,860 children by researchers at Southern Illinois University found that the poorest Hispanic and non-Hispanic black families were more likely to have received the recommended childhood vaccinations compared to children of non-Hispanic white mothers. Almost 53 percent of non-Hispanic white children in the sample did not have up-to-date immunizations, compared with 22.7 percent of Hispanic children and 16.1 percent of non-Hispanic black children.

BEST MEDICINE

Did you hear about the homeopath who forgot to take his medicine and died of an overdose?

STORIES FOR THE WAITING ROOM

To stutter was to shudder in 19th-century Germany. That's because a popular "cure" for the problem was surgery. Specifically, the cutting away of the tongue root - that triangular wedge connecting the underside of the tongue to the floor of the mouth.

Doctors sometimes didn't stop there. In particularly difficult stuttering cases, medical wisdom advised also removing the adenoids and, for good measure, drilling a hole into the skull.

PHOBIA OF THE WEEK

Levophobia - fear of the left side

OBSERVATION

"Dying is a very dull, dreary affair, and my advice to you is to have nothing to do with it."

- W. Somerset Maugham

LAST WORDS

Waking briefly during her last illness, and finding all of her family surrounding her bed, Lady Nancy Astor (1879-1964) asked, "Am I dying or is this my birthday?"

WellNews: All the news that's fit by Scott LaFee