WellNews: All the news that's fit

by Scott_LaFee

MEDTRONICA

Ask Me 3

www.askme3.org/

The emphasis here is upon improving communications between patients, doctors and health care purveyors, such as insurance companies and HMOs. There are separate sections devoted to the interests of each party.

GRAPE EXPECTATIONS

GRAPE EXPECTATIONS - Store-bought grapes often remain in cold storage for a long time before making it to the supermarket. To preserve them, growers often treat them with sulfur dioxide, a chemical compound that can cause severe allergic reactions in some people. CNS Photo.

MEDTRONICA - The Ask Me 3 Web site at www.askme3.org/ is meant to improve communications between patients, doctors and healthcare purveyors, such as insurance companies and HMOs. There are separate sections devoted to the interests of each party. CNS Photo.

Mass-marketed grapes often remain in cold storage for months before finally making it to supermarket shelves. To help prevent decay, growers often treat them with sulfur dioxide, a chemical compound that can cause severe allergic reactions in some people.

Spanish researchers, according to the trade magazine Chemistry & Industry, might have found a healthier alternative: Exposing the grapes to ozone, a highly reactive but naturally occurring gaseous form of oxygen. Ozone, the researchers said, was 90 percent as effective as sulfur dioxide. In addition, ozone-treated grapes had up to four times more antioxidants than untreated grapes.

Antioxidants are believed to help prevent a variety of diseases, including cancer and brain disease.

The reason for the antioxidant boost isn't known, but it may be a response to environmental stress by plant cells, which perceive the ozone as a biochemical insult.

Vintners are interested in the ozone treatment, too. With tweaking, they say, it may prove an effective replacement to the current practice of adding sulfites to wine. Sulfites help prolong the shelf life of wine, allowing it to age, but they also make some wines unpalatable to some drinkers.

BODY OF KNOWLEDGE

Humans are born with about 300 bones, but as adults boast only 206 because many of the original bones fuse together.

GET ME THAT. STAT!

The ratio of people worldwide who are overweight to those who are undernourished is 5 to 3, according to the World Health Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

STORIES FOR THE WAITING ROOM

Got latte? Plagued by severe stomach ailments, the Italian dictator Benito Mussolini lived mostly on milk, drinking up to three quarts a day to ease his gastrointestinal pains. In his occasional meetings with Axis partner Adolf Hitler, however, Mussolini always dined alone. He didn't want to reveal his milk diet to Hitler for fear it would appear "unfascist."

Hitler, incidentally, had his own dietary problems. In 1931, doctors put him on a meatless diet to cure his own stomach disorder and a chronic case of flatulence. But Hitler frequently cheated, favoring sausages and stuffed pigeon.

HYPOCHONDRIAC'S GUIDE

Though incredibly rare, there is a documented psychological disorder called "foreign accent syndrome." Sufferers speak with an accent other than the country of their birth. In 1999, for example, a British woman from Kent reportedly acquired a French accent even though she'd been across the Channel only once in her life. An American woman born in Indiana suddenly developed a British accent, despite never having been to England.

The exact cause is unknown, but might be due to damage in the left hemisphere of the brain, where language is processed. Both women in 1999 had previously suffered strokes.

The victims are probably not actually acquiring a new accent so much as exhibiting different speech patterns due to the brain injury. In other words, it isn't really a French accent. It just sounds like a French accent.

PHOBIA OF THE WEEK

Blennophobia - fear of slime

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