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MEDTRONICA

RX list

www.rxlist.com/script/main/hp.asp

A straightforward, if not always easy to follow, listing of the most popular drugs prescribed, their benefits, side effects and more.

STORIES FOR THE WAITING ROOM

James Garfield served as the nation's 20th president for just six months and 15 days. On July 2, 1881, he was shot by a disgruntled office seeker, but it was arguably his doctors who killed him.

There were 16 in all. The first on the scene after the shooting was Dr. Willard Bliss, who jabbed both his dirty finger and a nonsterile probe into the gunshot wound trying unsuccessfully to find the bullet. Bliss' ministrations did so much damage that subsequent doctors erroneously concluded the bullet had penetrated Garfield's liver, rendering remedial surgery useless.

HEARTS GUMMED UP - Dental researchers say intensive treatment of gum disease possibly prevents heart attacks and strokes. CNS Photo.

MEDTRONICA - The RX List Web site at www.rxlist.com/script/main/hp.asp offers information on the most popular drugs prescribed. CNS Photo.

After Bliss, other docs tried their hand. The Army surgeon general stuck his unwashed finger into the wound too, followed by the Navy surgeon general, who managed to actually puncture the liver.

Alexander Graham Bell, inventor of the telephone, was summoned to find the bullet with his newfangled metal detector. Bell claimed success. Doctors operated. But Bell had really just detected a mattress spring under the president, not the bullet. The doctors found nothing.

All the while, Garfield's wound was worsening until, ultimately, it prompted a fatal heart attack.

HEARTS GUMMED UP

Out of the mouths of babes - or rather, dental researchers at University College London - comes this news: Intensive treatment of periodontitis (a gum disease) can directly improve the health of blood vessels and

possibly prevent heart attacks and strokes.

In the first clinical trial of its kind, English scientists with colleagues at the University of Connecticut found that intensive treatment of patients with severe periodontitis also helped restore blood vessel function elsewhere in the body.

The mechanism connecting the two phenomena isn't fully understood. Gum disease involves a bacterial infection that invades the tissue around the teeth. Scientists theorize that the bacteria may disturb other tissue in the body as well, because some of the bacteria enters the bloodstream.

Or periodontitis may trigger a low-grade inflammatory response throughout the body that includes a detrimental effect to vascular walls, most notably in the heart.

BODY OF KNOWLEDGE

The nail of the middle finger grows fastest.

GET ME THAT. STAT!

The average person spends about two weeks of his or her life kissing. It has been estimated that kissing burns two to six calories per minute. Using an average of four calories burned per kissing minute, about 80,640 calories are consumed by kissing over the course of a life.

To lose one pound, you must burn 3,500 calories. Thus, the average American loses about 23 pounds in his or her life kissing.

PHOBIA OF THE WEEK

Peladophobia - fear of bald people

BEST MEDICINE

A woman went to a psychiatrist and said, "Doctor, something must be done about my husband. He thinks he's a refrigerator."

The psychiatrist replied: "I wouldn't worry too much about it. Many people have harmless delusions. It'll pass."

"But you don't understand, doctor," cried the woman. "My husband always sleeps with his mouth open and the little light keeps me awake."

OBSERVATION

"I tended to faint when I saw accident victims in the emergency ward, during surgery, or while drawing blood."

- Novelist and former M.D. Michael Crichton on why he gave up medicine.