Methylmercury Exposure and Neurodevelopment

Methylmercury, a neurotoxin present in all ocean fish, has been associated with severe neurodevelopmental damage following high levels of in utero exposure. In a prospective study conducted in the Republic of Seychelles, where the typical diet is high in ocean fish, Dr Davidson and coworkers did not detect neurodevelopmental deficits in children at 66 months of age who had prenatal and postnatal methylmercury exposure. In an editorial, Dr Mahaffey notes that subtle neurocognitive deficits may be difficult to detect and cautions women of childbearing age to be aware of the mercury contamination of the fish they consume.

See page 701 and related editorial on page 737

Severe Social Phobia Eased by Paroxetine

Social phobia, an underdiagnosed and undertreated anxiety disorder, may result in marked emotional, social, and occupational impairment. In a 12-week multicenter controlled trial, Dr Stein and colleagues found that treatment with paroxetine significantly reduced the symptoms associated with generalized social phobia compared with placebo and was well tolerated.

See page 708

Blinding Light

The association between UV-B radiation in sunlight and cataract development has been reported in men with high occupational exposure to sunlight. In a population-based sample of older individuals with ordinary levels of sunlight exposure, Dr West and coworkers found that cumulative sunlight exposure was correlated with the risk of cortical cataracts.

See page 714

New Biomarker May Help Identify Early Ovarian Cancer

Ovarian cancer is particularly lethal because it is often detected after widespread metastases have already occurred. Dr Xu and coworkers found that women with ovarian cancer, including stage I disease, and women with other gynecologic malignancies had significantly higher levels of plasma lysophosphatidic acid than healthy controls. In an editorial, Dr Roberts discusses issues that must be addressed before using lysophosphatidic acid levels in clinical practice.

See page 719 and related editorial on page 739

Late-term Abortion

Dr Gans Epner and colleagues present a scholarly review of the scientific and medical information key to an understanding of the current debate about the legislative ban on late-term abortion. In an editorial, Dr Lundberg explains JAMA’s responsibility to provide discussion and debate on difficult and even divisive issues in medicine.

See page 724 and related editorial on page 740

A 45-Year-Old Man With Low Back Pain

Many people experience low back pain and face a perplexing array of possible therapeutic interventions and conflicting recommendations. In this Clinical Crossroads, Mr S, an avid jogger, has had episodic low back pain for years but seeks evaluation because of residual numbness of his left foot after an especially severe occurrence of back pain. Dr Weinstein reviews the evidence for medical and surgical interventions.

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