

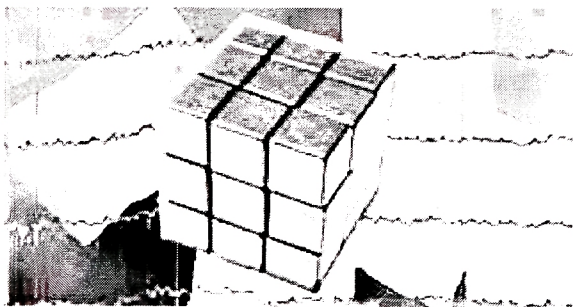
Writing for the McMaster Meducator

Writing for the McMaster Meducator is a rewarding and valuable experience. It combines exploration of medical research and health ethics with the excitement and prestige of publishing work for the McMaster community to read. The opportunity is ideal for those considering a future in medical research, health ethics, or any profession within the health care field. The McMaster Meducator provides quality educational feedback and promotes in-depth exploration into a particular topic of interest.

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Experiment Shows You Really Should 'Sleep On It'



ULLRICH WAGNER OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LUCBECK and his colleagues performed an experiment where sleep was found to actually enhance problem-solving abilities.

The subjects of the study were given training to solve a mathematical puzzle. There was a shortcut to solving the puzzle, but the subjects were not made aware of its existence. After the training, some of the participants were allowed to sleep while the others had to stay awake. Those who slept were twice as likely to find the shortcut compared to those who did not sleep.

So the next time you are stumped by a problem, the best thing you can do is go "sleep on it".

(Story courtesy of Scientific American; condensed by Jeannette So)

Study Links Marijuana Buzz to 'Runner's High'



CONTRARY TO PREVIOUS ASSUMPTIONS THAT the release of endorphins in the brain is the cause of "runner's high", Arne Dietrich and his colleagues at the Georgia Institute of Technology and the University of California found that anandamide is actually responsible for the euphoric feeling experienced when exercising.

Analogous to the sensations produced by THC, the psychoactive ingredient in marijuana, anandamide is a cannabinoid that the body produces to cope with the stress and pain of moderate or intense exercise. Unlike other cannabinoids, there appears to be no negative side effects when naturally released, as during periods of physical activity.

Although the type, duration, and degree of intensity of exercise required for the release of anandamide requires further research, the significance of such findings are indisputable. For sufferers of chronic pain, anandamide can serve as an alternative for marijuana, the distribution and application of which is still highly controversial.

(Story courtesy of CNN <<http://edition.cnn.com/2004/HEALTH/01/11/marijuana.exercise.reut/index.html>>; condensed by Jeannette So)

Brave New Babies



THE "BRAVE NEW WORLD" HAS ARRIVED, AND WITH it, the 21st century form of sexual discrimination. For the past 25 years, tremendous strides have been made in revolutionizing the creation of human life. The ability to choose the gender of a baby appears to many as simply the next logical step in reproductive medicine.

Preimplantation genetic diagnosis (PGD) is an in vitro fertilization technique that creates and tests the gender of embryos outside the womb. In contrast to its intended purpose of diagnosing serious genetic diseases before implantation, PGD is rapidly becoming the newest family planning tool.

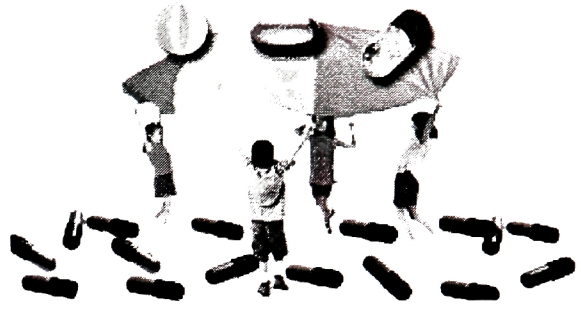
While many European countries have made it illegal, there are no laws against gender selection in the United States. Not restricted to infertile couples, the popularity of PGD can be seen with such websites as **choosethesexofyourbaby.com** and **myboyorgirl.com**, which even offer money-back guarantees if the selection fails.

The Genetics and IVF institute (GIVF) is running clinical trials with sperm-sorting technology called MicroSort. Originally created by the Department of Agriculture to sort livestock sperm, "family balancing" is the euphemism they used to apply to human subjects. Since trials began in 1995, over 1300 couples have been recruited.

Many doctors are allowing couples to choose the sex of their baby, but there are those who believe that medical interventions should not be used because gender is not a disease. People are afraid this will lead to genetic discrimination; however, scientists argue that it is improbable because unlike gender, traits such as height, personality, and intelligence are not determined by a single gene. The ethical dilemmas are countered by arguments that gender selection would decrease abortions and be a possible solution for overpopulation.

(Story courtesy of MSN.com <<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/Default.aspx?id=3990134&p1=0>>; condensed by Jeannette So)

Popping Pills in Preschool



IN 1995, 3 IN EVERY 1000 AMERICAN PRESCHOOLERS were on antidepressants, and children as young as 3.5 years old were prescribed Prozac and Paxil.

While little is known about how antidepressants affects adults, the impact they have on the growth and development of children is virtually unexplored.

Parents are unwilling to subject their children to experimentation, especially since the studies generally prohibit them from finding out any details in order to reduce the risk of bias in the results. In addition, the long-term affects of antidepressants cannot be determined because the drugs have only been developed recently.

Nonetheless, there has been much controversy over whether to treat children who are too young to consider committing suicide, but old enough to suffer from mental disorders with antidepressants. Selective mutism, a mental disorder that targets children younger than 6, is characterized by debilitating shyness, rendering children anxious and afraid to speak in social situations. Scientists believe that even toddlers and infants are susceptible to depression.

Scientists believe that even toddlers and infants are susceptible to depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety, and obsessive compulsive disorder. Despite the risks, there are an increasing number of parents who find themselves reluctantly allowing their children to be treated with antidepressants as a last resort.

(Story courtesy of Wired News <http://www.wired.com/news/medtech/0,1286,62154,00.html?tw=wn_techhead_4>; condensed by Jeannette So)