



KATIE E. LESLIE

In Good Health
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A third of Americans can't handle their booze

WE ALL KNOW, or have been, or are the people who struggle with alcohol abuse. Maybe it's the occasional drinker who goes overboard in social settings, or the guy who likes a mealtime "glass of wine" that somehow turns into a bottle.

Worse yet, it could be the person who shows the classic signs of alcoholism — cravings, overindulgence, withdrawal symptoms and the need to drink more for the same "buzz."

According to a new study published in the July issue of the Archives of General Psychiatry, more than 30 percent of Americans surveyed said they have had problems with alcohol. About 18 percent of those people said they abused it, while 12.5 percent said they are alcoholics.

The study was conducted by researchers at the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, who interviewed 43,083 American adults between 2001 and 2002 about their drinking habits and related health problems, such as depression and anxiety.

Before I read this study, I never pondered the differences between abusing alcohol and being an alcoholic. According to the NIAAA, abuse can refer to people who may overindulge or even binge, but do not develop dependence. Of course, even in those circumstances problems with work, school and family can arise.

Researchers found that alcohol abuse was greatest among people 50 to 60 years old, and prevalence was higher among men and American Indians. Asians, Hispanics and blacks had a lower prevalence of abuse than whites.

Among the alcoholics interviewed in the study, most people were around 22.5 years old when they developed alcoholism. About a quarter of them finally sought treatment, but on average, it took them eight to 10 years to do so.

Researchers in the study said they believe so few seek treatment because the public is generally unaware of the severity of alcohol abuse and alcoholism, as well as what treatment options are available. While many of us know about Alcoholics Anonymous, a 12-step self-help treatment program, alcoholism can also be treated with medications, psychotherapy or other social therapies.

If you'd like to read more about the different treatments available for alcohol abuse and alcoholism, check out this link from the NIAAA — <http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/aa49.htm>

What's happening in health:

■ The Stroke Survivor Support Group will meet today at the Glade Valley Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, 56 W. Frederick St. in Walkersville. Today's topic will be how to "return to wholeness" after stroke, at a seminar on mind and body health led by Ted Cmarada, director of the Center for Integrative Healthcare.

The meeting, from 4:30 to 6 p.m., is open to anyone interested. For details, contact Laura Atkinson at 301-888-4300.

■ I recently wrote a story about a Frederick-based occupational therapy center that works with children who have developmental delays, but goofed on giving you the best way to reach Way to Grow. Visit

(See LESLIE A-8)



Liz Bartlett, seen here in her New Market office, is a clinical herbalist and wellness counselor.

Staff photo by Skip Lawrence

Herbs as an alternative to healing

By JAMIE BUSSEY
 News-Post Staff
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FREDERICK — Allergies got you down? Fighting a re-occurring cold? Suffering from chronic back pain? Everyone has an ailment, but in the last few years people are turning to more than doctors for help — they are turning to nature and, more specifically, to herbs.

"I definitely think the trend is moving more to the natural," said Tonya Nickerson, wellness manager for The Common Market. "People are tired of not knowing what's wrong with them and they want to understand and play a more active role in their well-being."

Debbie Rippeon is a client of New Market herbalist Liz Bartlett. Rippeon discovered medicinal herbs after many failed attempts to stop her hot flashes.

"I had tried several standard types of medications in order to battle hot flashes ... and was at the end of the rope," she said.

After Bartlett gave what Rippeon said was the most thorough medical history evaluation she has ever had done, Rippeon was told to try Estrologic, an all-natural herb supplement. After four weeks of taking it, Rippeon said she was symptom-free.

"As a society we have become too dependent on that quick fix. I am not saying there isn't a place for conventional medicine in society, but it could be a good working relationship if administered correctly," Rippeon said.

Kat Smith is a patient of Ryan Diener, the co-founder of the Health Holistic Association, and she uses Chinese herbs to help with anxiety and infertility.

Smith began seeing Diener in April 2006 after hearing about him from a friend. She began receiving acupuncture and Diener recommended some Chinese herbs for hormonal balance and anxiety.

"I have been taking them for a year and I can definitely tell a difference," she said.

Prior to taking the herbs, Smith had taken prescription drugs, including Zoloft and Paxil, but said nothing worked. Now she has no more palpitations caused by anxiety and feels calmer.

"I think people are becoming more educated and learning more and ... looking more to holistic approaches," she said.

Recent studies

Herbs have been around for 3,000 to 5,000 years, according to Diener, so why the public interest now?

Western culture is based on the mind-set of a scientific approach, Diener said. That means in order to have something to have credibility, there should be research and studies available to prove it, and until recently very few studies had been done on the medicinal use of herbs, according to Diener.

In October of 1991, U.S. Congress passed legislation that provided \$2 million in funding to establish an office within the National Institutes of Health "to investigate and evaluate promising unconventional medical practices," according to the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) website. Seven years later, NCCAM was established and today "is dedicated to exploring complementary and alternative healing practices in the context of rigorous science."

NCCAM has conducted extensive research on the use of alternative medicine, including information on the use of specific herbs, from alo vera to echinacea.

NCCAM is not the only research source for alternative medicine. According to Nickerson, the Herbal Gram, sponsored by the American Botanical

(See HERBS A-8)

Top: Lemon balm is said to be a good antiviral and mood elevator.

Bottom right: Yarrow is known to reduce bleeding and to induce sweating during a fever.

Bottom left: Lavender is said to be good for the nervous system.



Staff photos by Skip Lawrence

Spontaneous bruising happens with age

DEAR DR. GOTT: I am a woman of 80 years, small and rather thin (110 pounds). I have noticed in the past few months that I awaken with bruises on my arms and legs. Their size varies from small to 1 inch around. This occurs several times in a week. I sleep alone. Do you have any thoughts on why this occurs?

DEAR READER: As we age, our skin changes. It becomes thinner, less smooth and more susceptible to trauma. Also, tiny veins in the skin's surface become more fragile, leading to bruising that occurs without trauma. Called "spontaneous ecchymosis," the condition is harmless but cosmetically troublesome. I believe you can safely disregard your spontaneous bruising.

Having said this, I would hate to be caught missing a coagulation defect. I urge you to ask your primary care physician to authorize a blood count and clotting tests to make certain your blood cells and clotting factors are normal.

NUMBNESS MAY BE FROM AGING, NOT FROSTBITE

DEAR DR. GOTT: When I was in World War II, in Europe, my feet froze. For the last few months, my feet have had a numb feeling, and the doctor told me he could give me medicine for this, but I would have to take it for the rest of my life. I am 50 years old. He doesn't discuss any side effects. He just says the numbness was from my frozen feet. I now take blood pressure pills and am in



DR. PETER GOTT

For Your Health

pretty good shape.
 DEAR DR. GOTT: Frostbite is a form of vascular trauma. Tiny arteries in the feet and hands

freeze and are damaged permanently. This leads to numbness and other symptoms.

Although frost injury may be your problem, I'm surprised that you have been free of symptoms for decades. A more likely culprit is the normal aging process in an elderly gentleman, accentuated by the frostbite.

You need testing of the arteries in your legs and pelvis to make sure your basic problem is not arteriosclerotic blockages in the arteries. I am not familiar with any medicine that will treat frostbite, but arterial blockage can be helped in a variety of ways.

If I were you, I'd continue being feisty, inquisitive and physically active. Forget any medicine for frostbite.

Other options for allergies

DEAR DR. GOTT: My son, a young adult, uses Nasonex for his allergies. Is there something better or different he could be doing to help himself? Please advise.

DEAR READER: Your son may fare better if he were to use the prescription Zyrtec or nonprescription Claritin. Neither of these drugs will cause drowsiness or other side effects and do not affect the nose or sinus openings.

Spasms present choking risk

DEAR DR. GOTT: My husband has occasional bouts with difficult

(See GOTT A-9)

Herbs and their uses

ALOE VERA

Heals wound and skin conditions (such as sunburn), taken orally can be used as a laxative, also orally can help treat diabetes, asthma, epilepsy and osteoarthritis

BILBERRY

The fruit treats diarrhea, scurvy, menstrual cramps, eye problems, varicose veins, venous insufficiency (poor blood to the heart) and other circulatory problems

BLACK COHOSH

Used for rheumatism, hot flashes, night sweats, vaginal dryness, menstrual irregularities and premenstrual syndrome, and to induce labor

CAT'S CLAW

Viral infections (such as herpes and HIV), Alzheimer's disease, cancer and arthritis, used to support immune system and promote kidney health, as well as to prevent and abort pregnancy

CHASTEBERRY

Eases menstrual problems and stimulates production of breast milk, treats symptoms of menopause, some types of infertility and acne

CRANBERRY

Treat urinary disorders (such as urinary tract infections), diarrhea, diabetes, stomach ailments and liver problems, reported to have antioxidant and anticancer activity

DADELION

Treat liver and kidney diseases, spleen problems

ECHINACEA

Prevent colds, flu and other infections, stimulates immune system, helps with skin problems, such as acne or boils

EPHEDRA

Treat colds, fever, flu, headaches, asthma, wheezing and nasal congestion, an ingredient in many dietary supplements used for weight loss, increased energy and enhanced athletic performance

EVENING PRIMROSE OIL

Eczema (skin condition), other conditions involving inflammation, such as rheumatoid arthritis, breast pain associated with the menstrual cycle, menopausal symptoms and premenstrual syndrome, used to help shorten the duration of labor, helps with cancer and diabetes

FENUGREEK

Inducing childbirth, menopausal symptoms and digestive problems, when applied to skin treats inflammation

FEVERFEW

Fever, headaches, stomach aches, toothaches, insect bites, infertility, migraines, rheumatoid arthritis, allergies, dizziness, nausea and vomiting

FLAXSEED

Laxative, hot flashes and breast pain, for high cholesterol levels, efforts to prevent cancer

GARLIC

High cholesterol, heart disease and high blood pressure, preventing certain types of cancer, including stomach and colon cancers

GINGER

Stomach aches, nausea and diarrhea, alleviating post-surgery nausea as well as nausea caused by motion, chemotherapy and pregnancy, rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis and joint and muscle pain

GINKGO

Asthma, bronchitis, fatigue, tinnitus (ringing in the ears), treat or help

prevent Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia, sexual dysfunction, multiple sclerosis

GOLDENSEAL

Skin diseases, ulcers and gonorrhea, colds, respiratory tract infections, infectious diarrhea, eye infections, canker sores

GRAPE SEED EXTRACT

Conditions related to the heart and blood vessels, such as atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries), high blood pressure, high cholesterol and poor circulation, cancer prevention and wound healing, vision problems, swelling after an injury or surgery

GREEN TEA

Prevent and treat a variety of cancers, including breast, stomach and skin, improving mental alertness, aiding in weight loss, lowering cholesterol levels, and protecting skin from sun damage

HAWTHORN

Heart disease, digestive and kidney problems, heart failure, coronary artery disease

KAVA

Help people fall asleep and fight fatigue, asthma and urinary tract infections, numbing agent, anxiety, insomnia and menopausal symptoms

LAVENDER

Antisepic, mental health, anxiety, restlessness, insomnia and depression, headache, upset stomach and hair loss

LICORICE ROOT

Dietary supplement for stomach ulcers, bronchitis, sore throat, infections caused by viruses, such as hepatitis

MILK THISTLE

Protective effects on the liver and improve its function, liver cirrhosis, chronic hepatitis, gallbladder disorders, lowering cholesterol level, reducing insulin resistance, reducing the growth of cancer cells in breast, cervical and prostate cancers

MISTLETOE

Treat seizures, headaches, treatment for cancer

PEPPERMINT OIL

Treats nausea, indigestion and cold symptoms, headaches, muscles and nerve pain, stomach and bowel conditions

RED CLOVER

Cancer, respiratory problems, such as whooping cough, asthma and bronchitis, menopausal symptoms, high cholesterol, osteoporosis, symptoms of prostate enlargement

SAW PALMETTO

Urinary symptoms associated with enlarged prostate gland, chronic pelvic pain, bladder disorders, decreased sex drive, hair loss, hormone imbalances

ST. JOHN'S WORT

Treat mental disorders, nerve pain, depression, anxiety and sleep disorders

TURMERIC

Hearburn, stomach ulcers, gallstones, reduce inflammation, prevent and treat cancer

YOHIMBE

Sexual dysfunction

VALERIAN

Sleep disorders and anxiety, headaches, depression, irregular heartbeat and trembling

(Source: <http://ncam.nih.gov/health/herbsdatabase.htm>)

Herbs

(Continued from A-7)

Counsel, releases a quarterly magazine containing research on herbs. Furthermore, schools have also been set up to help others study medicinal herbs and become herbalists.

Schooling in herbs

Bartlett graduated last year from the Tai Sophia Institute for the Healing Arts, located in Laurel. The institute, founded in 1975, is a graduate program that focuses on "reuniting the science of medicine and the art of healing" by integrating Eastern tradition and Western philosophy, according to the school's website.

Bartlett now holds a master's in science: herbalist from Tai Sophia and has been seeing clients for two years.

"We (herbalists) don't treat or diagnose disease. We try to support healthier living, and as a

result it corrects a lot of problems," Bartlett said.

When Bartlett works with a client, she determines what herbs to give him or her on a case by case basis based on medical history, lifestyle and genetics. Bartlett also makes sure a client takes the correct amount of herbs.

"Vitamins and herbs get a bad wrap because people are self-medicating and taking too much, which can cause high toxicity," Diener said. Therefore, it is important to not only research herbs, but also consult someone when possible, he said.

"(It's) important to know what you're talking about when you start taking these things."

Bartlett agreed, stating there is a fear of herbs among some people who are not sure what it is and how it will interact with other medications one might be taking.

But "herbs have a lot to offer people in terms of health," she said.



Staff photo by Skip Lawrence
Master gardener Liz Bartlett is a clinical herbalist and wellness counselor.

Risk of poisoning from ingesting hand-sanitizers is low

By CAROL M. OSTROM

The Seattle Times
McClatchy Newspapers

SEATTLE — Did a 4-year-old girl named Halle really get alcohol poisoning after licking hand-sanitizer gel off her hands?

That's the story in a widely circulating e-mail. And it has some parents around the country calling for schools and child-care facilities to ban the common anti-germ gel.

The call to ban the products reached the point where William Hurley, medical director of the Washington state Poison Center, officially warned that such a move would be unwise.

"Hand sanitizers are effective in controlling the spread of infections," said Hurley, who points to a 2005 study that found a 59 percent reduction in the spread of gastrointestinal illness when families used the popular products. "I think it would be a mistake to take it out of those environments."

The e-mail story goes like this: School officials phoned Halle's dad to come and pick up his "very, very sick" daughter. Then Halle was "rushed to the emergency room by her father for being severely lethargic and incoherent."

Doctors were stumped, the story goes, but then Halle's classmates revealed they had seen her

lick the sanitizer from her hands.

The website Snopes.com, which debunks and sometimes verifies urban legends, says the story is basically true, citing television reports from Oklahoma.

Most gels currently sold contain 60 to 90 percent ethanol, the same type of alcohol present in liquor, perfume and mouthwash. Some contain isopropyl alcohol, which is more potent.

Hurley said an average-size 5-year-old would have to ingest almost six teaspoons — about 1 ounce — of an ethanol gel to cause toxicity, and about half that from isopropyl gels. Regardless, it's more than the typical squirt used on hands.

Locally, the state poison center has received 656 reports of children ingesting sanitizing gel. Only 25 of those showed minor toxicity such as coughing or vomiting. Only one showed signs of intoxication, Hurley said: a 6-year-old girl who drank an estimated half to two-thirds of a 16-ounce bottle.

"She was a little goofy in speech and in walking, but not sedated or in any danger," he said.

Still, to be cautious, small children should always be supervised with the gel, which should be dispensed by an adult. Bottles should be labeled with a "Mr. Yuk" sticker, available from the poison center, and stored out of the reach of children.

Waiting in ER reduces patient satisfaction

By PATRICIA ANSTETT

Detroit Free Press
McClatchy Newspapers

Waiting more than two hours for emergency department care dramatically reduces patient satisfaction, according to a national survey released by Press Ganey, a leading patient satisfaction survey firm from South Bend, Ind.

The national average wait time was 240 minutes. Patients were most pleased with care they got between 7 a.m. and 3 p.m., the survey said.

Hospitals that apprise patients of delays also help curb dissatisfaction, according to the report, "2007 Emergency Department Pulse Report: Patient Perspectives on American Health Care." It surveyed waiting times for 1.5 million patients treated at more than 1,500 emergency departments in 2006.

Leslie

(Continued from A-7)

www.way2grow.com or call 301-846-GROW for details about their work.

Health tip of the week:

To find out about alcohol treatment programs in our area or to speak with someone about the problem, call the National Drug and Alcohol Treatment Referral Routing Service — 1-800-662-HELP, or visit <http://csat.samhsa.gov/>

Better yet, dial 211 and be connected with people who can give you the lowdown on local resources.

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