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Exercise to Keep Memory up !

If you want to remain sharp until the old age, start physical exercise now, scientists say.

While physical exercise has been a proven factor for overall health, its role in preventing age-related memory deficits has been debatable. Suvi Rovio and colleagues published their study from Karolinska Institute in **Lancet: Neurology** with the finding that leisure-time physical activity at midlife is associated with a decreased risk of dementia later in life.³

They studied 1449 people, aged 65 – 79 from the survivors of the population-based cohort whose physical activity was previously surveyed in 1972, 1977, 1982, 1987. Seventy-six persons had developed Alzheimer's disease (AD) and 117 had other forms of dementia. They found that those who had exercised for at least 20 minutes twice a week during their late forties or early fifties had a reduced risk of AD and dementia: Odds ratio for AD 0.38 (95% confidence interval 0.17-0.85); Odds ratio for other dementia 0.48 (95% confidence interval 0.25-0.91). In simple words, the risk was reduced almost by half. Those who had genetic predisposition had even a greater benefit. The association was unaltered even after adjusting for age, sex, and smoking/ alcohol habits.

Never too late for exercise. Let's get up and go!!

Feeling High

July 2005 issue of the **Neurosurgery** has an article "Neurosurgery at Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital (TUTH), Nepal."² I was quite excited about it and I thought about letting everyone know.

This special article by Mukhida and colleagues was very contextual – marking the 10th anniversary of the neurological surgery service at the TUTH, and 2000th neurosurgical case which unfortunately reflects the grim political environment of this country. This was a case of person injured in a highway bomb blast with bifrontal depressed cranial fracture.

The authors present the data of the achievement so far, and the present and future challenges which of course includes the ongoing warfare in the country. They ask

Scientific Round-up

As usual this time also, we have been a little late but, I believe that our valued readers forgive us taking this as a part of our development and growth. I have some exciting topics from around the globe.

whether the neurosurgery is worthwhile. Well, the answer is obvious.

While nothing in short of challenges in terms of providing healthcare to the needy people in Nepal, the neurosurgical service is harder to avail to the people because of this being logistically demanding. The fact that we do not have even a handful of neurosurgical expertise makes it even harder.

We have light at the end of tunnel, though.

High Serum Lipids Protect from Subarachnoid Hemorrhage (SAH)?

There are proven risk factors for stroke, and these risk factors may differ according to the type of stroke. Generally speaking hypertension, smoking, high low-density lipids/ cholesterol and lack of regular exercise are proven risk factors for stroke in general. However, more recently, high cholesterol levels have been suggested to be protective factor for SAH. Tokuda and Stein found that a high serum total cholesterol and a high serum triglyceride were independent protective factors for SAH (Odds ratios: serum cholesterol > 5.2 mmol/L OR 0.22; serum triglyceride > 1.7 mmol/L OR 0.29).⁴ This was based on the case-control study with 150 consecutive cases of SAH during five-year period in Okinawa Chubu Hospital in Japan.

While it won't be wise to change our established stroke prevention strategy based on this finding (as high triglyceride and cholesterol levels are proven risk factors for other strokes and heart disease), this may be a useful finding to explore further the causation of SAH and other cerebral haemorrhages.

Cannabis: Potential Medical Use

Taken as a recreational drug, cannabis can cause severe dependence. However, cannabis can be a good medicine, provided it is taken in a right dose for right indication and in a right form. Kmietowicz discusses in **British Medical Journal** news-roundup, that cannabis and its derivative can be useful in treating conditions such as multiple sclerosis, chronic pain, appetite loss and in managing heart disease, osteoporosis, to mention

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a few.¹ One of the most promising results is from animal model in multiple sclerosis where it caused 'slowdown' of the disease course. The news-roundup argues that more research needs to be carried out and be allowed, in the first place as cannabis carries that stigma of being a substance of abuse.

Those who argue for the cannabis and hemp, the industrial sibling of cannabis with a low cannabinoid content (which is the main substance for recreational use), go to the extent that it is all political that hemp-farming was made illegal. They say that there are multinational cotton-based giants who successfully lobbied to kill the hemp-farming although hemp products are much more environment-friendly than cotton farming. This debate aside, cannabis' goodness seems to be worthwhile exploring further.

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