Fast walking, jogging cause bone fragility

ANI, Mar 13, 2010, 04.42pm IST

If you think it is only good to lose weight by jogging and fast walking, then here’s the twist in the tale—such weight-bearing exercises fail to prevent the increased bone turnover caused by weight loss, University of Missouri researchers have found.

During weight loss, bones are being remodelled – breaking down old bone and forming new bone – at an accelerated rate. As a result, bone density is reduced, causing increased fragility.

"Accelerated bone turnover is not favorable, but the potential negative consequences of increased bone turnover do not outweigh the numerous other health benefits of weight loss. Adequate intake of calcium and vitamin D may minimize the reduction in bone density during weight loss," said Pam Hinton.

The researchers examined bone turnover markers in the blood of overweight, premenopausal women. These bone markers, which are released by the bone cells that are involved in bone breakdown and formation, are used as indirect indicators of bone remodelling.

After six weeks, women who lost 5 per cent of their body weight by adhering to a calorie-restricted diet and participating in weight-bearing exercise experienced an increase in bone turnover markers.

The researchers observed the same increase in markers among women who also lost 5 per cent of their body weight by calorie-restriction only or by dieting and participation in non-weight-bearing exercise.

The findings indicate that low-impact, weight-bearing exercise, such as slow jogging, does not prevent the increase in bone turnover associated with modest weight loss.

"These findings should not affect the prescription for aerobic exercise during weight loss. The rationale for recommending aerobic exercise during weight reduction is to increase energy expenditure and maintain lean body mass," said Hinton.

In previous studies, researchers found that weight-bearing exercise promotes bone building, which suggested that this type of exercise would prevent bone turnover in weight loss, said
Future studies will examine the ability of high-impact, weight-bearing exercise to maintain normal bone turnover during weight loss.

The study was published in *Applied Physiology, Nutrition and Metabolism*. 
The many Marks of Twain

Like a comet, Missouri's native son keeps lighting up the world with his inspiration and spirit.

By Aarik Danielsen

Sunday, March 14, 2010

He came into the world during the year of Halley's Comet and went out in a year the fiery, celestial body returned. In the 75 years in between, Mark Twain was a cultural comet, radiating matchless wit and wisdom, illuminating the world and combusting social conventions with the light of his insight.

As the 100th anniversary of his death approaches, the University of Missouri community — which awarded the state's favorite and, arguably, most famous son an honorary degree in 1902 — has gathered again to pay its respects and plumb the depths of his life and writings. This week, noted scholars are "Marking Twain" with lectures, performances and panels devoted to celebrating and investigating the impressions he left on journalism, truth-telling, popular culture and the American landscape.

MAN OF MYSTERY

Mention Twain and the average person will likely recall the moment, perhaps in grade school, when he or she read “Huckleberry Finn” or “The Adventures of Tom Sawyer” and his most famous characters leapt off the page and into their lives forever.
“But Twain is so much more than that,” said Jim Cogswell, director of libraries at MU. “That’s what I’m hoping” participants will “learn. … This is a guy who grew up in a slave state, who traveled a great deal, was a journalist, was a novelist, was a playwright, was a poet, was just about everything else that involves the written word.”

Few people understand the breadth of Twain’s work better than Tom Quirk, professor of English at MU. He has spent decades writing on Twain, editing his books and delving headlong into his inscrutable life. Last year, he received the UM Curators Award for his volume “Mark Twain and Human Nature”; this engagement started simply, filling a research void left by a retiring professor, but grew exponentially. It “was a personal interest, it was a teaching interest, then it became a scholarly interest, and now it’s some kind of fanaticism,” he said, chuckling.

A friend once said of Twain, “You were all there for him, but he was never all there for you.” Quirk’s interpretation is that Twain skillfully read people and would become immersed in the pursuit of knowing them fully, yet he could not be fully known. Such enigmas spur Quirk’s study. “He’s a person that is infinitely fascinating, infinitely mysterious, and I’ve been trying to pin him down for 25-plus years,” he said.

“I think I’ve made a few inches toward” understanding Twain, he said. “He’s a very elusive figure, as are his writings, which are incredibly diverse.”

Twain’s most famous tales are of rambunctious river folk and sleepy small towns, yet he wrote numerous journalistic articles, several well-received travel books and an abundance of stories and essays. In his obituary, the New York Times praised his quality and variety: “We have called him the greatest American humorist. We may leave it an open question whether he was not also the greatest American writer of fiction.” To reckon with the scope of Twain’s work is essential to recognizing his greatness, yet it doesn’t preclude readers and scholars from declaring his most famous work his most enduring.

“It’s a national classic on one hand,” Quirk said of “Huckleberry Finn.” “On the other hand, it’s been banned from the very beginning in one place or another for one reason or another. If you want to think of it as one of our national masterpieces, it’s also a book that some people decided to stifle or suppress.” Certainly, the classic has changed the fortunes and focus of the Missouri river town in which Twain spent his formative years.

“To me, Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn and Becky Thatcher — those were real people because in Hannibal, that’s how they’re treated,” said Shannon Cary with a laugh. The communications officer for MU Libraries grew up just north of that community. Upon visiting, her husband, who grew up in the South, asked incredulously, “Do people know that those are characters in books?”

The same Mississippi River ebbs and flows that Twain described swept the lovable scamp across oceans to readers internationally. As a result, “I would bet money that more people on earth know where Hannibal, Mo., is than St. Louis,” Quirk said. He pointed out the character’s cross-cultural ubiquity — “Huckleberry Finn” has been translated into myriad languages, inspired anime retellings and had his name used for European rafting squads and punk-rock clubs.
Twain's likeness and name have appeared on baseball diamonds and in cigars and beer ads. "He ... and his creations seem to be infinitely malleable and can be appropriated by a multitude of cultures," Quirk concluded.

Addressing the mystery of how Twain's work has inspired devotion in countries where the "virtually untranslatable" dialects he used would seem an even more foreign language, Quirk quoted Willa Cather. Encountering a Russian "Huckleberry Finn" fan, the author wrote, "The only answer seems to be that if a book has vitality enough, it can live through even the brutalities of translators." Quirk said this vitality, woven throughout Twain's body of work, and the sense of trust he inspired — an unspoken compact that promised "if you stick with me, dear reader, you will be repaid or satisfied or amused at least" — are keys to unlocking the mystery of Twain's vast appeal.

Cogswell believes that trust also was engendered, in part, by Twain's brutal honesty and gifts of perception. "He would turn people on their heads so that they would have to look at their own hypocrisies, their own foibles, their own weaknesses — and, in fact, he did it to himself," he said. "He had a sense of humor and a broad mind in every respect."

FROM PAGE TO STAGE

More keys to knowing Twain reside in the hands of Ron Powers. Powers shares with Twain a Hannibal heritage, a degree from MU — graduating from the School of Journalism in 1963 — and a diverse body of writing. The Pulitzer Prize and Emmy Award winner worked on "CBS News Sunday Morning," collaborated on a memoir with the late Sen. Ted Kennedy, co-wrote the book "Flags of Our Fathers," which inspired the Clint Eastwood-helmed film, and wrote a biography of Twain that was a finalist for the 2004 National Book Critics Circle Award.

This week, Powers will serve as something of a de facto guide through the world of Twain; he will deliver three lectures on Twain's influence on truth-telling in journalism, literary nonfiction and advertising. Perhaps most important, at least to those who seek more intimate knowledge, Powers' original play "Sam and Laura" will be performed Thursday night. The story closes in on the meeting between a 22-year-old steamboat pilot Twain and 14-year-old Laura Wright; the two had a brief, intense, yet completely pure romantic encounter that never materialized but left an eternal impression on Twain.

"He dreamed about her for the rest of his life," Powers told the Rutland (Vt.) Herald last month. "Dreams were very important to Mark Twain, and the older he got, the more convinced he became that our dream lives are parallel to our actual lives."

Beyond the chance to work with Powers, local playwright Mary Barile was drawn to "Sam and Laura" because it picks up where her nationally acclaimed play "Leaving Hannibal" leaves off — just as Twain leaves Missouri. Barile is this production's dramaturge, meaning she has worked with Powers and director Brett Johnson to develop the play for an audience, offering constructive criticism and practical help. Twain is known for well-developed characters, yet "Sam and Laura" offers a look at real people; Twain's work has been brought to the stage, yet the stage is rarely a place to see the man himself. If we do, it's in the work of Hal Holbrook and
others — wonderful though it might be, they portray the elder man of letters, not Twain as a Young Turk. These factors further excited Barile.

"The connection between Sam and theater is a very strong one; it's not unusual," she said. "Therefore, placing Sam on stage is just really the next step."

Getting Twain on stage has been a process of give-and-take, suggestion and revision, a matter of trust. Barile and Johnson initially felt intimidated to give an esteemed writer such as Powers notes but found him "amazing" to work with, Barile said. The bulk of their comments centered on letting subtext speak for itself, making Powers' vision stage ready and allowing history and license to converge in a way the audience would understand. Although drama and invention are at work, the play is always anchored to Powers' thorough research; the Herald noted "the spine of the play is rooted in fact" and mentioned many letters and essays on which he drew. A post-play talk back will allow theatergoers to give Powers further feedback; the play has been publicly read just once, so Johnson hopes audience members will be excited at a chance to have a say in "what the play becomes."

He identified challenges in bringing Twain from Powers' page to a local stage: namely, a "fast and furious" rehearsal process and nuances involved in playing it as a concert reading minus major set design and blocking. To deal with these considerations, Johnson is paying attention, in the rehearsal time he has, to characterization as well as rhythm, dynamics and pacing. With these emphases, and with original music from members of bluegrass band Ironweed throughout, he and Barile believe audiences will fail to miss any flash and bang. Audiences will ultimately find a compelling production full of "vibrant" scenes and "specific, interesting" characters, they said.

"I also really love how passionate the play is; the characters are very passionate — it's a love story," Johnson said. "But, also Ron's interest in these people and their lives shines through."

The beauty and passion in Powers' tale in no way obscures or takes away from the love Twain found later with his wife of 34 years, Olivia. "I think whoever Sam loved, he loved deeply," Barile said. "Sam just cared very deeply for people. I have no doubt that he very much loved Laura all his life. Did it lessen his love for Livy? No."

21ST-CENTURY TWAIN

In assessing Twain's relevance in 2010, local scholars and admirers identified modern arenas where he would be welcome, all the while affirming his singularity.

"I've often thought that Lewis Black and Sam Clemens on the same stage would be great," Cogswell said. "These guys would play off each other so well. It would just blow you away. To have him sitting across from Jon Stewart on 'The Daily Show' would just be priceless."

Quirk juxtaposed Twain and Garrison Keillor — both extraordinary writers but best known, in their own time, as public performers. He also deemed Stephen Colbert an "heir" but drew a distinction, marveling at how much of Twain's topical humor has remained beloved a century later whereas Colbert's current event-driven faux-reportage would likely be "indecipherable" in
20 years. Ultimately, Twain's unique persona, timely presence and prescient writing make him one-of-a-kind.

“I think Sam can’t be reproduced, and no one really can be another Sam just because he was a person so much of his time,” Barile said. “He was watching America grow up.”

“Was he perfect? No, we have him as this iconic ... guy dressed in white with a big shock of hair who wrote these wonderful books,” she added. “He was human, and he was frail, and he could be nasty, and he could be bigoted. I dare any one of us to reveal ourselves in literature that way today and not suffer in a century from people looking at us. But, I think the thing about Sam is that he rises above it — it doesn’t matter. It doesn’t matter how much people know about him — he’s still the voice of the West, really.”

Quirk, a man who has learned the more he knows about Twain, the more there is to know, summed up the writer’s enigmatic charisma even more neatly. “There’s something there — I don’t know what it is,” he said. Yet that question mark shouldn’t keep Columbia crowds or even Quirk himself from pressing forward. “That doesn’t mean he’s a problem,” he said. “It just means he’s an enigma. I don’t think all problems have to be solved — in fact, some of them are more interesting if they’re just looked upon.”

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For many, cotton ball incident still stings

KU students join in diversity chat.

By Janese Heavin

Friday, March 12, 2010

David Mitchell is conflicted. As a black man whose mother was a sharecropper, he’s angry and frustrated that two University of Missouri students lined cotton in front of the Gaines/Oldham Black Culture Center. As an associate professor of law at MU, he also understands that charging the students with felony hate crimes will hurt their chances to be productive citizens.

“Does this qualify as a felony?” he wondered yesterday during a town-hall forum on campus. Regardless of how the students are reprimanded, “I don’t think anyone is going to be satisfied.”

Charges have yet to be filed against Sean Fitzgerald, 19, and Zachary Tucker, 21, who have admitted to and apologized for placing cotton balls in front of the black culture center two weeks ago. Boone County Assistant Prosecutor Ryan Haigh said his office is still gathering information and has meetings scheduled next week to review the case. The students face a tampering charge, which would be enhanced to a Class D felony if classified as a “hate crime.”

The incident has fueled heated debates but also sparked a pledge for unity on campus that has even attracted support from the University of Kansas. Sophomore Kelsey Murrell and five other KU students attended last night’s forum, putting aside athletic rivalries to join in the dialogue and deliver a banner in support of MU’s efforts to promote diversity. The banner, signed by more than 100 KU students, “is an offering of support and a symbol of unity, not as Tigers and Jayhawks, but as people in society who respect diversity,” said Murrell, who shares the hometown of Kearney with Fitzgerald.

About 100 people attended last night’s forum, part of an ongoing “Difficult Dialogues” series. Some questioned whether the incident could be used as a learning experience or whether the students are beyond redemption.

But Mitchell, who served as a panelist, said too often white offenders are given second chances while blacks with minor offenses aren’t. “When it’s an act against a minority group, it’s, ‘Let’s not race to judgment,’ or ‘Let’s be careful,’ ” he said. “On the other side, it’s, ‘Where’s the nearest penitentiary, what enhancement is there for sentencing and how much time can he get?’ ”

One participant suggested the students made a rash decision and might not have realized what they were doing. But Nathan Stephens, director of the black culture center, pointed to the fact...
that the students did not leave cotton anywhere else on campus, despite having admitted to also climbing landmarks at Faurot Field and Carnahan Quad and planting a pirate flag at the ROTC building the same night. Plus, Stephens pointed out, the cotton wasn’t simply thrown but instead lined in rows.

“I wanted to believe it was a rash, spur-of-the-moment thing,” said Kourtney Mitchell, an MU employee. “I want to give people the benefit of the doubt.” But details indicate otherwise, he said, adding that labeling the act a “prank” shows a lack of contextual understanding.

Chancellor Brady Deaton said he was disappointed to learn Tucker is a senior. “My biggest hurt was that a senior at this institution could still harbor the feelings that were expressed,” he said.

Despite the incident, though, Deaton, Chief Diversity Officer Roger Worthington and Residential Life Director Frankie Minor all said major improvements in race relations have occurred on campus over the past decade.

Marie Glaze sees those changes, too. She grew up here during the civil rights movement and recalls Columbia being “toxic” with racial tensions. Last night’s event encouraged her.

“Listening to these young folks talk has given me hope because I know just from the things they’ve shared that Columbia and the University of Missouri are in good hands,” she said at the end of the forum. The cotton ball incident “is just a small stumbling block.”

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Governor targets scholarships for elimination

By Terry Ganey

Friday, March 12, 2010

One of the more dramatic government cost savings Gov. Jay Nixon proposed yesterday was the elimination of state-paid scholarships to private college students.

Westminster College President Barney Forsythe said today he was “shocked and disappointed” by the suggestion, which he said “came out of left field.”

In a speech in Springfield yesterday, Nixon said “We simply can’t continue to subsidize the choice to attend a private school.”

Jack Cardetti, a spokesman for Nixon’s office, said today the governor was proposing to eliminate private college scholarship money for both the Bright Flight program for high achievers and Access Missouri for need-based students. Cardetti said the savings would be in the neighborhood of $50 million a year.

“The governor believes that state taxpayers may no longer be able to pay to send kids to private colleges,” Cardetti said.

“It’s not that we’re against private colleges in Missouri. There are great private colleges in Missouri. But in this financial situation, it’s a luxury that Missouri taxpayers can no longer afford, in our opinion.”

Forsythe said Nixon’s proposal could limit student choices and drive students out of Missouri.

“Access Missouri was set up to give students of our state, particularly students with financial need, access and choice in higher education,” Forsythe said. “The beauty of the state system is that it’s got something for everyone, public and private, large and small, two- and four-year and technical training.”

Private colleges have a lot of support in the Missouri General Assembly, and the likelihood of Nixon’s idea going anywhere seems remote.

“That dog will not hunt in the legislature,” said Chris Kelly, D-Columbia and a member of the House Budget Committee.
But Nixon's comments are likely to have a big impact on discussions that public and private college presidents are having over the Access Missouri scholarship program. Sen. Kurt Schaefer, R-Columbia, is sponsoring legislation to equalize payments. Currently, the maximum available to students at four-year public colleges is $2,150, but students at four-year private colleges can get as much as $4,600.

Schaefer's bill would provide $2,850 to students attending four-year institutions, public and private, beginning in 2014. College presidents are scheduled to meet next week to come up with some new arrangement.

"I'm disappointed that our conversations will be in the context of the governor's announcement," Forsythe said. "That creates some challenges for us all."

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New York, Washington to Get Soaking Rain Over Weekend

March 12, 2010, 4:49 PM EST

By Brian K. Sullivan

March 12 (Bloomberg) -- Soaking rain from a slow-moving storm will spread across the northeastern U.S. today, leaving as much as 4 inches (10 centimeters) from Washington to New York City through the weekend, forecasters said.

Flood watches are posted from southern New Hampshire to northern Ohio and south to Georgia, the National Weather Service said. Warnings for sustained winds as high as 40 mph were issued in New Jersey, Virginia and North Carolina, while a winter storm watch is posted for southern Vermont and upstate New York.

For the New York City area, showers are forecast through Monday. The area's flash flood watch takes effect tomorrow morning, and the heaviest rain is forecast for tomorrow and most of the next day.

"It will be a very slow-moving system and that will be a problem," said Tom Kines, expert senior meteorologist with AccuWeather Inc. in State College, Pennsylvania. "Two to four inches of rain is a lot of rain, and when you add in melting snow, it makes matters worse. We're going to have a few days of easterly wind bringing in all that Atlantic moisture in. It's not a good situation."

The storm track is the essentially the same one that brought record-breaking snow last month to Dallas, Washington and much of the mid-Atlantic region.

El Nino Pattern

An El Nino, a warming of the Pacific Ocean, has driven an energized jet stream across the southern half of the U.S. this season, while colder arctic air has been pushed away from the North Pole by high pressure.

The pattern may mean more tornados for much of the U.S. in the coming months as well, Tony Lupo, chairman of the Department of Atmospheric Science at the University of Missouri, said earlier this week.
There are several storm systems moving throughout the eastern U.S. now, according to weather service maps. Parts of Florida received as much as 6 inches of rain yesterday and 2 to 4 inches more are possible today, Kines said.

“There are some places in Florida where they have had twice their normal monthly total of rain in the last 36 hours,” Kines said.

--With assistance from Aaron Clark in New York. Editors: Charlotte Porter, Richard Stubbe
University should be fair in granting benefits

Regarding "University moves toward same-sex benefits" (March 5): The University of Missouri's proposal to grant benefits to employees' same-sex domestic partners and not grant like benefits to opposite-sex domestic partners unless married appears discriminatory, hence unconstitutional, as it imposes a requirement on one unmarried pairing for reason of their sexual orientation and not the other.

The fact that same-sex unions are not permitted in Missouri should have no bearing. Same-sex couples would be accorded benefits outside of marriage that would be denied to opposite-sex couples outside of marriage. If the criterion to qualify for benefits is to be lowered, it should apply to all employees regardless of sexual orientation.

If the objective of this proposal is to extend benefits to homosexual people, as it seems to be, it opens the real possibility that benefits will have to be given to all who apply as same-sex domestic partners, whether gay or straight, as any requirement that one declare or otherwise prove one's sexual orientation probably would not withstand a court test. Such a declaration or affidavit, while unverifiable, would constitute an imposition on same-sex couples for the purpose of obtaining benefits that would not be imposed on anyone else.

Even though state and local governments are facing revenue and budget shortfalls as never before, and the University of Missouri faces cutbacks in funding, the university is looking for new ways to increase its budget. Go figure.

Don Weiss — Ferguson