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Men'sHealth

Is BPA Worse Than You Thought?

There's already a lot of concern about bisphenol-A (BPA). A study published today from the University of Missouri suggests that standard estimates for how much of the substance it takes to harm you could be skewed.

Scientists studying BPA typically give an animal (or in rare cases, people) an amount of the estrogen-mimicking compound suspended in a drop of a benign fluid, such as corn oil. But outside of the lab, people are largely exposed to BPA through food, after the chemical has leached out of the lining of cans or polycarbonate water bottles.

In the study, researchers found that when mice ate BPA mixed in to their food over 24 hours, the rodents ended up with peak blood levels of BPA more than double that of mice who ingested a single equivalent dose of BPA in corn oil.

"Your liver is overwhelmed processing the food you ate to handle the additional BPA," explains study author Cheryl Rosenfeld, Ph.D. As a result, more of the active, harmful form of BPA winds up in your blood.

Since a smaller proportion of BPA passes through the liver from the single-dose method, earlier studies may have had to give animals much higher amounts to see a comparable effect.

The question now is whether it takes less BPA than previously believed to increase the risk of prostate cancer, diabetes, or its other harmful health effects. We'll only find out after further studies using the food method determine how harmful BPA really is. In the meantime, you can protect yourself by brushing up on the real BPA risks.

—Denny Watkins

MU professor says red-light cameras are effective

They might generate money for local governments, but the cameras that automatically snap pictures of red-light runners are, indeed, effective traffic tools, a University of Missouri researcher reports.

Carlos Sun is an associate professor of civil engineering in MU's College of Engineering and recently earned a law degree. He worked with MU School of Law Professor Troy Rule to study whether automated traffic systems are merely being used by municipalities to turn a profit.

"Ultimately, the big question was how valid is the accusation that these systems are only used for generating revenue," Sun said. "But there are legitimate safety reasons."

Statistics from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration indicate nearly a third of all traffic fatalities are related to speed and that running red lights accounts for about 880 fatalities and 165,000 injuries each year.

Sun found that cameras are effective at improving safety overall. In addition to deterring would-be red-light runners, the cameras create a spillover effect, meaning they cause drivers to respect more red lights even when there's no camera around, he found.

Like any system, automatic enforcement tools aren't inherently good or bad; rather it's up to the people using them to make sure they're being used appropriately, Sun said.

Although in the proper context "they're highly effective," there is potential for misuse, such as setting up cameras in inappropriate locations.

He pointed to the city of Charlack near St. Louis that installed speed cameras along the quarter-mile stretch of Interstate 70 running through its jurisdiction last year. After some outcry, city leaders later removed the cameras, saying they had achieved the goal of reducing speed, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported.

But Sun stressed that advocates of automated enforcement systems aren't in favor of misuse. "No one wants this tool to be abused," he said. "That would create a backlash for legitimate deployment."

Sun looked at red-light and speed cameras across the country, not specifically in Columbia.

Columbia has red-light cameras operating at five heavily traveled intersections, including northbound Providence Road and Broadway; northbound and southbound Providence at Stadium Boulevard; and Stadium at Worley.

A report presented in December showed the number of crashes at those five intersections fell 10.7 percent after the cameras were installed.

Columbia's red-light camera system is paid entirely from violations. Of the \$120 fine for violations, the company that operates them, Gatso USA, gets \$44, city spokeswoman Toni Messina said. Last year, the city ended up with \$18,047 in profit after expenses.

"The intent is not to be a revenue raiser but a deterrent," Messina said. "The numbers we've seen so far reveal this is not a cash cow operation."

The city has plans to study the need to install additional red-light cameras but is waiting for further clarification from the Missouri Department of Transportation, which has been reviewing policies.

Sun recently presented his findings at a seminar for transportation engineers in Central Missouri. His article "Is Robocop a Cash Cow? Motivations for Automated Traffic Enforcement" is published in the Journal of Transportation Law, Logistics and Policy.

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Automated ticketing legitimate, study finds

Safety benefits top potential for abuse

By: Gabrielle Giroday Posted: 06/9/2011 1:00 AM | [Comments: 0](#)

Is Robo-cop a cash cow?

That's the question posed in a new study from an American university, which acknowledges tools like red-light cameras and photo radar can cause public concern over cash-grabbing.

However, the research also shows "the safety benefits of automated traffic monitoring systems far outweigh the potential for abuse."

"There's been tremendous accusations that automated enforcement is used primarily or exclusively for revenue generation," said Carlos Sun, an associate professor in the University of Missouri's civil engineering department.

"Looking at the evidence, looking at the legal background (and) legal issues, revenue generation is really not the primary or the only reason (for it). There are absolutely legitimate safety reasons why automated enforcement (is) effective," he said.

Sun's research was based on more than 60 U.S. court cases on automated enforcement, as well as American traffic and crash data. It was published recently in the *Journal of Transportation Law, Logistics and Policy*.

Sun said the study's findings on safety apply to Canadian jurisdictions as well.

"There's definitely legitimate reasons for using photo radar in appropriate contexts," said Sun.

Issues around automated enforcement on Winnipeg streets have led to public controversy in the past.

There are currently 31 red-light cameras rotating through about 50 locations in the city, according to the Winnipeg Police Service.

There are also 10 mobile photo-radar units that catch speeders in school, playground and construction zones, according to the City of Winnipeg website. There were about 4,760 tickets for mobile photo-radar enforcement issued from January to March of this year, according to the website.

Sgt. Doug Safioles of the WPS central traffic unit said other research has shown a "dramatic" decrease in right-angle collisions at intersections with red-light cameras.

"Two things have happened over the years, the collisions are down in those intersections and the average speed that's being travelled has been reduced," he said.

But that doesn't mean everyone's onside.

Colin Craig, Manitoba director for the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, said he's opposed to photo-radar vehicles.

He said mobile photo radar has been a "cash grab."

"If your kid is running in the street and gets hit by a vehicle that's speeding, are you really going to feel good knowing that the owner of that vehicle gets a ticket a couple weeks down the road in the mail?" he said.

"... Whereas a real officer can actually pull a dangerous driver over and they'd be in a position more likely to prevent such accidents from happening."

But Slavica Maric, head supervisor at Carpathia Children's Centre on Grant Avenue, said she's glad a photo-radar vehicle is often parked near the centre, where about 150 kids regularly attend.

"It's just rushing for nothing," said Maric.

"To get somewhere three minutes earlier, they jeopardize everybody's safety."

Forbes

Are Yoga and Tai Chi Good Candidates For Physical Therapy?

Jun. 9 2011 - 8:03 am | 2 views | 0 recommendations | 0 [comments](#)

Two recent studies caught my eye, because they highlight some actual good science in trying to adapt two longstanding, ancient practices — Yoga and Tai Chi — into the modern era so they can be used for practical medical purposes.

In the case of Yoga, a recent pilot study at Indiana University showed some positive results in using yoga as a follow-up to physical rehabilitation therapy for elderly stroke victims. Over the course of eight weeks, the study participants showed significant improvement in their balance, thus limiting their risk for falls. Moreover, the lead researcher noted that the group was excited by yoga and wanted to continue with it after the study, indicating that a few weeks of using yoga as therapy could stick, thereby improving the lives of stroke victims.

Meanwhile, a similar pilot study at the University of Missouri studied the use of Tai Chi as a method of cognitive rehabilitation for cancer survivors who had undergone chemotherapy. After ten weeks of Tai Chi classes, the study group showed significant improvements in tests of their memory, language, attention, stress, mood and fatigue. Because Tai Chi focuses on slow, fluid movements, it could be a good option for patients with more limited physical abilities.

Now, one thing that's worth pointing out is that both of these studies are just preliminary — more work needs to be done before the Yoga and Tai Chi exercises used here can be applied to a therapeutic program. But the initial results are encouraging, and I think that follow up studies are definitely warranted.

Domestic violence linked to dying earlier

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COLUMBIA, Mo., June 8 (UPI) -- Experts suggest the United States' ranking near the bottom of 33 developed countries for life expectancy at birth -- 27th -- may be due to domestic violence.

Tina Bloom, an assistant professor in the Sinclair School of Nursing at the University of Missouri, says leading causes of infant mortality are complications related to pre-term birth or low birth weight-outcomes -- both of which can have a life-long impact -- have been linked with domestic violence.

However, addressing maternal-child health disparities goes beyond the issue of domestic violence because abused women need access to resources for finding employment, affordable and safe housing, financial assistance, transportation and healthcare, Bloom explains.

These social determinants of health, articulated in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' "Healthy People 2020," a 10-year plan for improving the health of Americans, heavily influence women's responses to violence and the health of women and children.

"Healthcare providers are not well trained to routinely screen or recognize the signs of domestic violence," Bloom says in a statement. "They don't know how to ask about abuse, what to say or how to connect abused women with help. We need to engage with current students, our future healthcare providers, to bring this issue to the forefront."

Healthy mothers produce healthy babies and together they give rise to a healthy population, Bloom adds.

Bloom's findings are published in the Western Journal of Nursing Research.



McCaskill's tour

Stopping off at Hickman By Hank Waters/6/8/11

Sen. Claire McCaskill recently took a tour of Missouri school districts and discovered educators think No Child Left Behind is flawed. Really.

Though political exigency must have helped drive her from border to border, when she ended her tour at her Hickman High School alma mater, she received a nugget educators should have understood and promoted long ago but never seem to mention out loud. Parkade Elementary second-grade teacher Brian Rehg said, "When looking at MAP test scores ... it's important to look at the growth of each student, not whether or not they hit a certain mark. That's really important for low-income students. ... I see that every day as a Title I school."

Two Hickman High School students in the audience agreed some of their peers, unable to keep up, become frustrated. Myah McCrary said, "In my opinion ... after failing so many times, they give up in a way, and they don't feel like trying any longer."

Valuing progress made is not only a way to help bridge the famous achievement gap; it's a far better way to evaluate the quality of instruction being given and received. As noted here earlier to the point of irritating redundancy, a teacher who imparts significant improvement for a low achiever might be doing a better job than one whose academically advanced charges emerge from class still academically advanced and testing higher.

The aggregation of such results does more to measure school and district quality than do snapshots of student achievement levels.

I have the cynical hunch this value-added assessment model is slow getting off the ground because it provides more accountability for teachers and other academic officers. Measuring the progress made by every student every year is not hard, but it's challenging to educators.

McCaskill heard a number of other suggestions mostly requiring more money, but student growth assessment was the only one directly focused on teacher quality, the single factor most often cited by persuasive education experts for improving American K-12 education.

Value-added assessment by itself won't assuredly improve teacher performance but is a necessary step on the way. It will show how well teachers and schools are doing. It can show good as well as poor performance and do much to help teachers provide targeted help for struggling students.

My disappointing hunch is that, after McCaskill's visitations and other talk about what to do next to improve education, we will hear a lot more about scholarships, grants, appropriations, maintaining tenure and other costly fixes than improving teacher accountability and quality.

The best teachers should clamor for value-added testing across the board. So far, Brian Rehg is a chorus of one.

HJW III
