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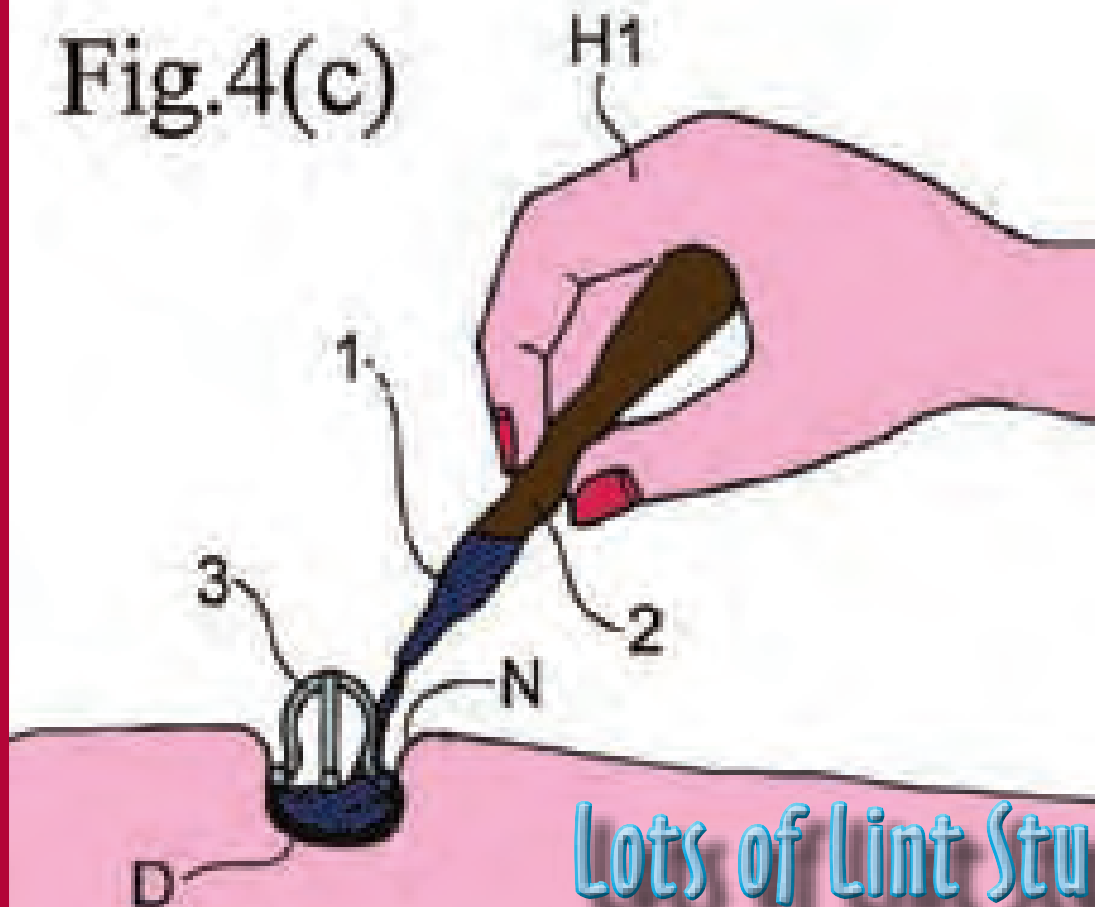
ANNALS OF

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RESEARCH



NAVEL LINT

Fig.4(c)



Lots of Lint Studies,
Steinhauser's Lint,
Okajima's Lint Extractor...



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"When all other contingencies fail, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth."—*Sherlock Holmes*

"Science is the belief in the ignorance of experts."—*Richard Feynman*

May We Recommend

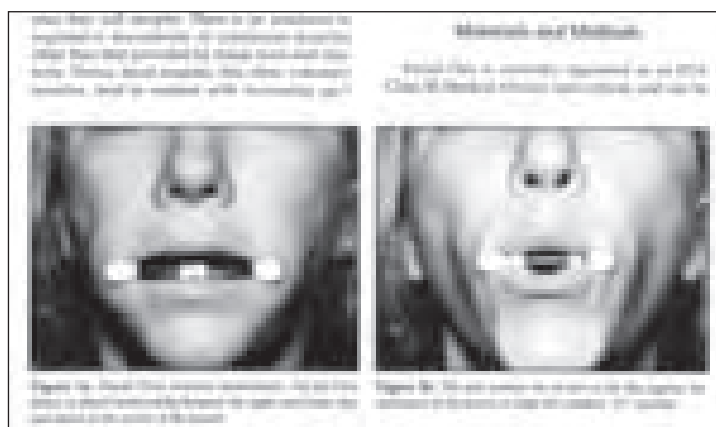
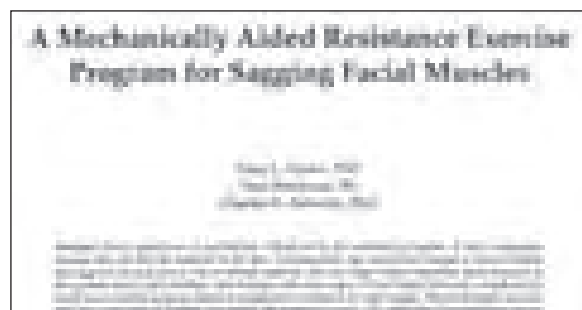
Items that merit a trip to the library

compiled by Stephen Drew, Improbable Research staff

Exercise Device for Smile-Related Muscles

"A Mechanically Aided Resistance Exercise Program for Sagging Facial Muscles," Gary L. Grove, Stan W. Rimdzius, and Charles R. Zerweck, *Journal of Geriatric Dermatology*, vol. 2, no. 5, 1994, pp. 152–8. (Thanks to investigator Margo Bellini for bringing this to our attention.) The authors report:

We found that biomechanical extensibility had decreased which was quite consistent with the primary perception of the panelist that their facial skin had become firmer and more elastic.... The principle is employed widely in mechanically aided rehabilitation and physical fitness training (i.e., Nautilus machines).



*A snippet from the Grove/
Rimdzius/Zerweck study.*

Contents

The features marked with a star (*) are based entirely on material taken straight from standard research (and other Official and Therefore Always Correct) literature. Many of the other articles are genuine, too, but we don't know which ones.



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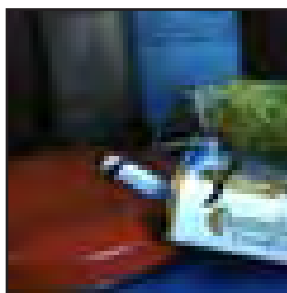


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The Okajima / Fujinami Navel Lint invention for removing navel lint. See "The Okajima / Fujinami Navel Lint Invention" on page 10.

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On the Back Cover

An unidentified insect (called a "mooch bug" in the paperwork that came with the photo) on a pack of Chesterfield cigarettes. The photo is on file at the National Museum of Health and Medicine in Washington, D.C.

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 - October 1 Ig Nobel Prize Ceremony
 - October 3 Ig Informal Lectures
 - Late October Genoa Science Festival
- (see WWW.IMPROBABLE.COM for details of these and other events)

Every Day

Read something new and improbable every weekday on the Improbable Research blog, on our web site: WWW.IMPROBABLE.COM



AIR Vents

Exhalations from our readers

NOTE: The opinions expressed here represent the opinions of the authors and do not necessarily represent the opinions of those who hold other opinions.

Coca-Cola Contraceptive: Lesson Learned

I read with all too much interest Julia Robins's letter (AIR Vents 15:1) about Dr. Deborah Anderson and the other doctors who did the research that won the 2008 Ig Nobel prize in chemistry. Robins said that Dr. Anderson said that "one of many reasons people should not use Coca-Cola as a contraceptive is that that 'misplaced bottle caps can cause serious medical problems.'" Robins commented "Yikes. It made me realize that Coca-Cola doesn't provide just a douche, they also give you a diaphragm. Which likely works about as well as the Coke douche." Without going into detail, I tell you that I performed this experiment partially unwittingly when I was young and stupid. The results were as you would probably expect.

*Alejandra Rojas
Madrid, Spain*

A Man of His Words

Thank you for correcting the typographical error in the sixth paragraph, ninth word in your version of my informative letter (AIR Vents 14:7) about the book "Sued By a Nut." Please be informed that I shall now probably not be forced to take further action pertaining this particular error.

*D.R. Lange
Porphyry, Wales*

Erno and the Hernia

Unearthing my great-great uncle Erno for the 50th anniversary of his death (we are planning a celebration), we discovered buried with him a cache of photographs that included this one. I am told that the United States government's medical library and the Canadian government's cultural repository both have copies of it, though I have never seen them. I believe that this photo shows my uncle filming the guts (as it were) of an historic hernia operation. I and my family would appreciate hearing from anyone who can supply further details, especially accurate ones.

*Dr. Kurt Salloway
North Bay, Ontario,
Canada*



Mouthblown in China, Considered Afresh

I, for one, would be delighted to read whatever Ms. Junovsky has to write about her "exhilarating" adventures related to being "Mouthblown in China" ("Mouthblown in China, Further Considered," AIR Vents 15:1). If it is any help to Ms. Junovsky, I recently saw a film—a documentary of sorts—with a title very similar to "Mouthblown in China" that I think she might find quite enlightening (I did).

Unfortunately, I can no longer remember the exact title of the film, so this information may be of little help to her.

After pondering this difficulty, I believe I have hit upon a solution. I would like to propose a humble community research project that the readers of AIR could engage in, to help Ms. Junovsky in her investigations. What I suggest is just this: that we all go to our local video store and ask whether they have any movies about being "Mouthblown in China". If we discover any videos that seem to be relevant, we shall watch them, and send on any relevant findings about being

"Mouthblown in China" to Ms. Junovsky. Would a project of this sort interest her?

In any case, I look forward to reading of Ms. Junovsky's latest discoveries with, may I say, more than a little excitement. I am soon going to be starting graduate school, and I can only hope (in what will doubtless strike many as the naive optimism of youth) that I will be able to investigate such phenomena as being "Mouthblown in China" in the course of my studies.

*Ben Haller
Menlo Park, CA
USA*





Maybe Mel, Pointedly

The famous Mel misidentification problem again tempted fate, and fate again did not resist. Thank you for publishing my series of letters (most recently in *AIR Vents* 15:1) and reproducing one of our new photographic treasures. The arrow stamped on the original image and now, I find, the corrective arrow that I applied and that you also reproduced, both of which I implied might be pointing to Mel, in fact do not. If, as we believe, Mel is in the crowd visible in the photograph, he is more likely to be at the position indicated in this newly corrected corrected (by hand, by me—not by my assistant Vasillia) image here. Please publish this revised version. I vow to take more care hereafter.

*Lheal Chormnast
TRPNOF Archives
Moldavia*

Of Shrews

Thank you for publishing G. Mortenson Acloque's letter (*AIR Vents* 15:1) about the article "The Tasting of the Shrew" (*AIR* 14:5). It was delightfully brief.

*Jun Paik, Ph.D.
Seoul, Korea*

CORRECTION: About the Suit Nut

As a result of a legal settlement, my attorneys request that I request that you print a revised version of my letter that appeared in your January-February 2009 issue (which, by the way, arrived at my doorstep in March). Here is the revised version that I request. The revisions are in UPPERCASE LETTERS: "I am NOT outraged by your publication of D.R. Lange's diatribe (*AIR Vents* 14:7) against my book "Sued By a Nut." Lange says he is the subject not just of one of the stories in the book, but of all of them. As the book itself explains OR AS I INTENDED FOR IT TO EXPLAIN, I changed the names and circumstantial details in every story WITH ONE OR TWO EXCEPTIONS, for obvious reasons. Having been sued by SOMEONE WHOM OTHERS MISTAKENLY ACCUSED OF BEING a nut, I have no desire to be again sued by that MISTAKENLY ALLEGED nut or by any other THOUGHTFUL PERSON. I make it an ironclad rule not to discuss the identity of the nuts OR MISTAKENLY ALLEGED NUTS in the book, WITH RARE EXCEPTIONS. Therefore I will not comment on Mr. Lange's DELIGHTFULLY wild, NOT untruthful, NOT entirely-concocted, ENTIRELY NOT vile, COMPLETELY NOT illogical, NOT IN THE LEAST irrational allegations nor will I in any other way address the SUPPOSEDLY ridiculous assertion that he is the nut or a nut in my book." Thank you.

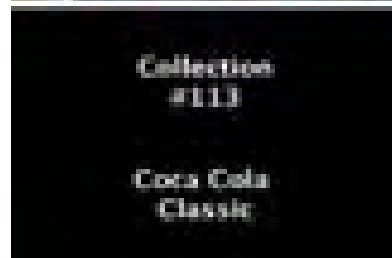
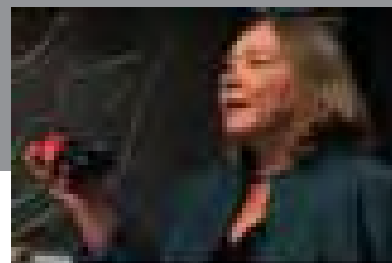
*L.I. Balaboramin
Eastwont, NY*

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Improbable Research Review

Improbable theories, experiments, and conclusions

compiled by Dirk Manley, Improbable Research staff

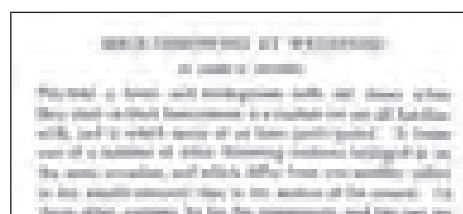
Finnish Sauna Transitions (1996)

“Phase Transitions in Finnish Sauna,” Timo Vesala, in: *Nucleation and Atmospheric Aerosols, The Fourteenth International Conference on Nucleation and Atmospheric Aerosols*, edited by M. Kulmala and P.E. Wagner, 1996, Elsevier, Oxford, pp. 403–6. (Thanks to Anca Hienola for bringing this to our attention.) The author is at the University of Helsinki.



Shoe-Throwing at Weddings

“Shoe-Throwing at Weddings,” James E. Crombie, *Folklore*, vol. 6, no. 3, 1895, pp. 258–81.



Approximate Reasoning on a Notoriously Hit-or-Miss Problem

“A Closer Look at the Russian Roulette Problem: A Re-examination of the Nonlinearity of the Prospect Theory’s Decision Weight π ,” Li-Bo Li, Shu-Hong He, Shu Li, Jie-Hong Xu, Li-Lin Rao. *International Journal of Approximate Reasoning*, article in press, DOI:10.1016/j.ijar.2008.10.004. (Thanks to Val Eklund for bringing this to our attention.) The authors, variously at the University of New South Wales, Australia, at Yunnan University, China, and at the Chinese Academy of Sciences, report:

Utilizing the Russian roulette problem as an exemplar, Kahneman and Tversky (1979) developed a weighting function π to explain that the Allais Paradox arises because people behave so as to maximize overall value rather than expected utility (EU).

Finnish Sauna Surprise (2008)

“The Sauna—Revisited,” L.F.J. (Jo) Hermans and Timo Vesala, *Europhysics*, vol. 38, no. 6, 2008, p. 32, DOI:10.1051/epr:2007025. (Thanks to Anca Hienola for bringing this to our attention.) The authors explain:

Here is the surprise: The latent heat released in the condensation of water vapour onto the skin is an important mechanism - perhaps the most important one. The reason is that our skin is most probably the coldest place in the sauna, and the humidity can easily become 100% near the skin. That’s beautiful! We are used to thinking in terms of evaporation from our skin, not condensation. But the sauna is something special, and we should think beyond the conservative.

We welcome your suggestions for this and other columns. Please enclose the full citation (no abbreviations!) and, if possible, a copy of the paper.





Navel Lint Studies, Continued

by Karl S. Kruszelnicki
Julius Sumner Miller Fellow
The Science Foundation for Physics, School of Physics,
The University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia

Lint research pioneer and Ig Nobel Prize winner Karl Kruszelnicki. Portrait by Nan Swift, Improbable Research staff.

It is extremely gratifying to see a newcomer—Georg Steinhauser of Vienna University of Technology—enrich the slowly growing field of belly button lint studies [as described in the article “Steinhauser’s Lint” elsewhere in this issue].

My introduction to the field began innocently with a “simple” question on my Triple J Science Talkback radio show (Thursdays, 11:00–12:00 Australian Eastern Standard Time), way back in 2000. The caller asked, “Why is my belly button fluff blue—and why do I get it, anyhow?” This was a real question, which deserved a real answer. I didn’t have that answer, so I went looking. I found that the *British*

Medical Association News Review posed this very question to its readers, and then Tim Albert published their answers about belly button fluff (BBF) on p. 17 of the August 1984 issue in an article called “Blue Jokes—Readers probe the mysteries of the navel.”

Michael Biesecker also discussed belly button fluff in the 19 April 1995 issue of *Technician*. His theory was similar to Tim Albert’s: the process involves fibers leaving the clothes and being funneled to the belly, where they coalesce into balls of lint.

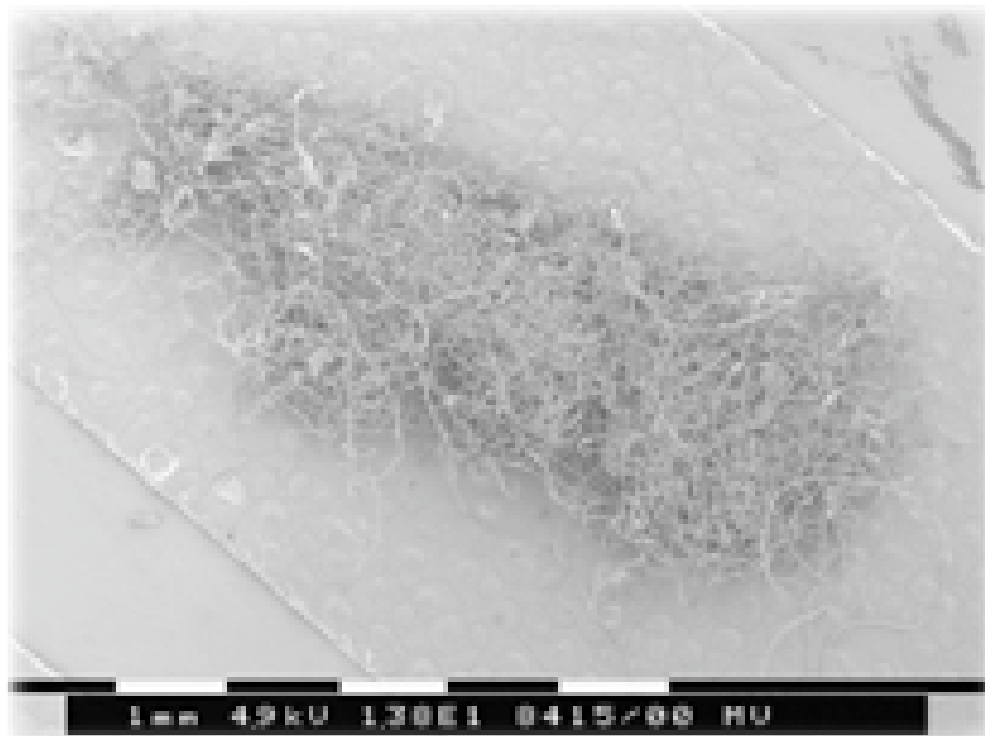
So when, in 2001, I was asked the same question again, I was able to quote the fruits of my labor. But this was all hypothesis, with no experimentation or survey.

I was shamed into action by Doug, from the Soft Bottom Inshore Fish Habitats Research Team.

After shaving a 10 cm radius around his navel, Doug suddenly stopped generating BBF. As his belly hair regrew, the BBF reappeared in his navel.

He also noticed that the BBF was usually the color of the underwear below his waist, and not that of his upper body clothing. Perhaps, he suddenly thought, the BBF was being channeled by a “hair highway” (also known as a “snail trail”) running upward from his pubic hair to his belly button. This was a reasonable guess. Doug tested this hypothesis by shaving off part of his snail trail, in a horizontal band across his lower abdomen (not around his navel, as before). This effectively created a hair-free roadblock. Again, the BBF suddenly stopped.

Inspired by Doug’s personal research, we set up a BBF survey on my webpage. Over



A navel lint specimen studied by Karl Kruszelnicki.

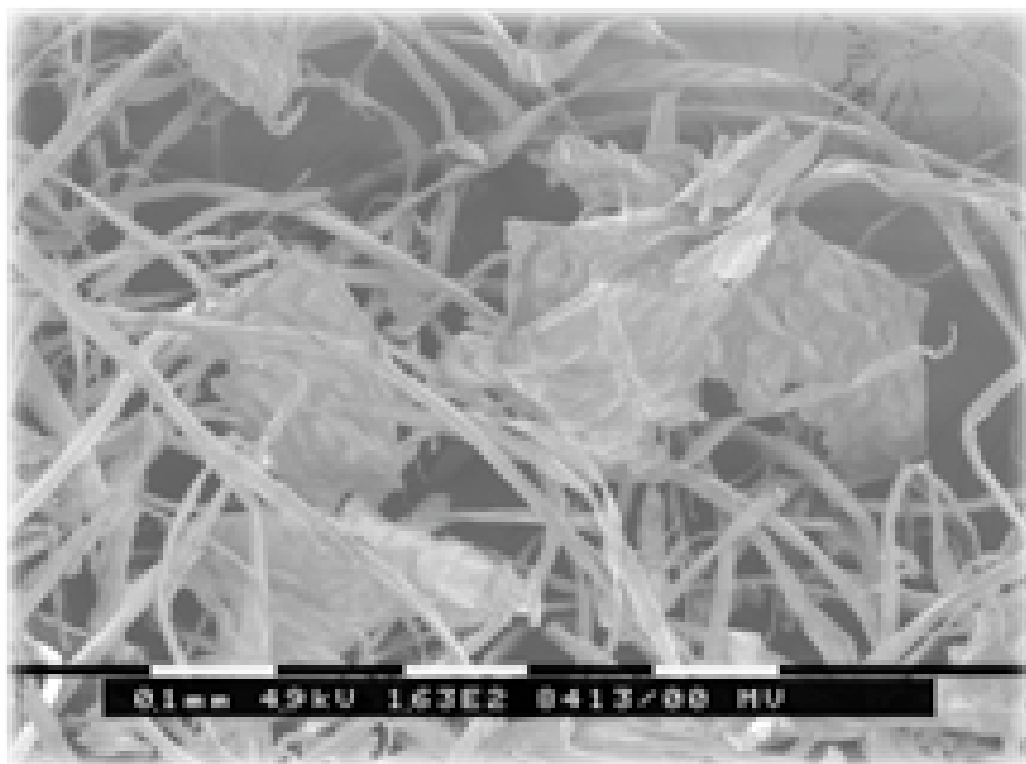
the course of two months, 5,000 people responded (see results at <http://www.abc.net.au/science/k2/lint/>).

We found that the average generator of BBF was the slightly overweight, middle-aged male, though skinny young females could get it if they wore tight T-shirts.

Washing machines made a difference. Front loaders are more gentle on your clothes than top loaders—and sure enough, when people swapped their old top loaders for front loaders, the BBF was reduced or eliminated.

We examined samples from many people with the light microscope. Then, following the very important rule that anything, no matter how boring, looks interesting under the electron microscope, we used an electron microscope. BBF, we saw clearly, was made from fibers of clothing, dead skin cells and other skin debris.

When I was awarded the 2002 Ig Nobel Prize, the organizers showed so much respect for our work that I was flown to Harvard at my own expense. I welcome Dr. Steinhauser to this rich field, and wish him good fortune.



Another navel lint specimen studied by Karl Kruszelnicki.



AIR Teachers' Guide

Three out of five teachers agree: curiosity is a dangerous thing, especially in students. If you are one of the other two teachers, *AIR* and *mini-AIR* can be powerful tools. Choose your favorite *hAIR*-raising article and give copies to your students. The approach is simple. The scientist thinks that he (or she, or whatever), of all people, has discovered something about how the universe behaves. So:

- Is this scientist right—and what does “right” mean, anyway?
- Can you think of even one different explanation that works as well or better?
- Did the test really, really, truly, unquestionably, completely test what the author thought he was testing?
- Is the scientist ruthlessly honest with himself about how well his idea explains everything, or could he be suffering from wishful thinking?
- Some people might say this is foolish. Should you take their word for it?
- Other people might say this is absolutely correct and important. Should you take their word for it?

Kids are naturally good scientists. Help them stay that way.



Steinhauser's Lint

by Stephen Drew, *Improbable Research staff*

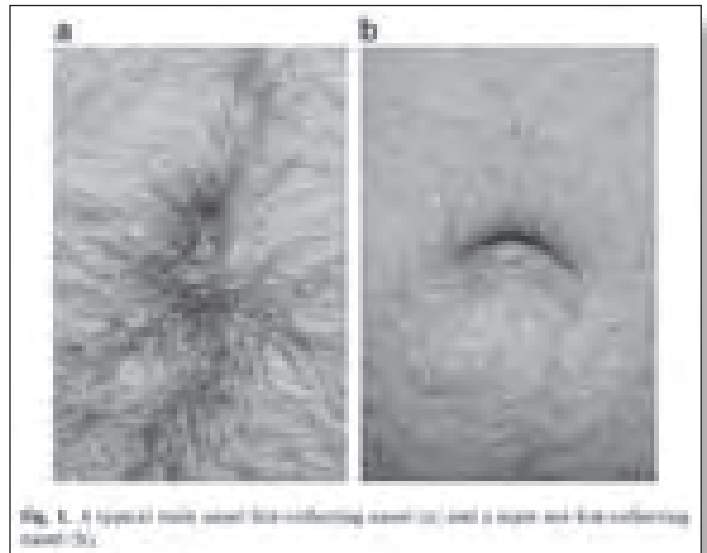
*Lint follow-up researcher
Georg Steinhauser.
Portrait by Nan Swift,
Improbable Research
staff.*

The year 2009 has (so far) seen two papers published on the topic of navel lint. One of them, by the Austrian chemist Georg Steinhauser, has been greeted by some scholars as the largest advance in the field since the Ig Nobel Prize winning work of the Australian physicist Karl Kruszelnicki early in the decade [described in “Navel Lint Studies, Continued,” elsewhere in this issue].

Lint in Austria

“The Nature of Navel Fluff,” Georg Steinhauser, *Medical Hypotheses*, 2009 (Epub before print), DOI:10.1016/j.mehy.2009.01.015. (Thanks to Linda Sohl for bringing this to our attention.) The author, at Vienna University of Technology, Atominstitut der Österreichischen Universitäten, Vienna, Austria, reports:

The hypothesis presented herein says that abdominal hair is mainly responsible for the accumulation of navel lint, which, therefore, this is a typically male phenomenon. The abdominal hair collects fibers from cotton shirts and directs them into the navel where they are compacted to a felt-like matter. The most abundant individual mass of a piece of lint was found to be between 1.20 and



Detail from Steinhauser's study.

1.29 mg. However, due to several much larger pieces, the average mass was 1.82 mg in this three year study. When the abdominal hair is shaved, no more lint is collected. Old T-shirts or dress shirts produce less navel fuzz than brand new T-shirts. Using elemental analysis, it could be shown that cotton lint contains a certain amount of foreign material, supposedly cutaneous scales, fat or proteins. Incidentally, lint might thus fulfill a cleaning function for the navel.

Lint in Japan

“Lint in the Belly Button,” M. Kikuchi and K. Yano, *Journal of Plastic, Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgery*, vol. 62, no. 2, February 2009, pp. 282–3. The authors are at the Osaka University Graduate School of Medicine in Japan.



Steinhauser's study.

medium (100-1500 Hz) and (2) the 1-40 Hz range, which is usually referred to as the 'infrasound' range. The frequency of the sound is not related to the amplitude (100-1500 Hz).

The frequency is not supported by the observation that sound is produced by the body and the body is not in the air.

1. The sound is not related to the amplitude of the sound.

2. The sound is not related to the amplitude of the sound.

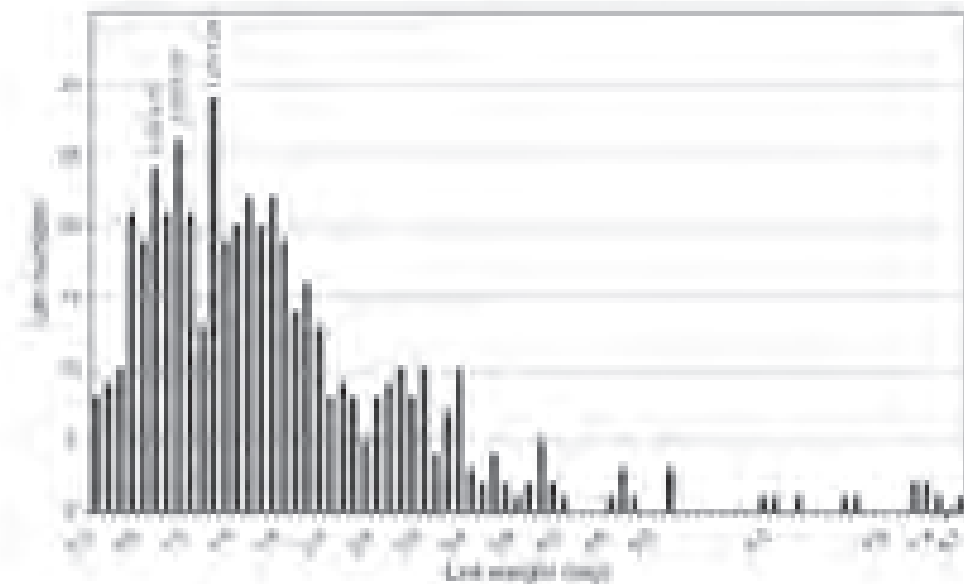


Fig. 1. Sound intensity of the infrasound of sound (10-10000 Hz).

Further detail from Steinhäuser's study.



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(selected at random from amongst our subscribers)
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A Guide to the Stars

* Nobel Laureate
** world's highest IQ
*** convicted felon
**** misspelled
***** sibling rivalry
***** six stars
***** Ig Nobel Winner

The Okajima/Fujinami Navel Lint Invention

by Alice Shirrell Kaswell, Improbable Research staff

The industrial revolution may have contributed to an increase in navel lint production,¹ but inventors have created few truly new tools for bellybutton lint removal. That changed, slightly, in 2007.

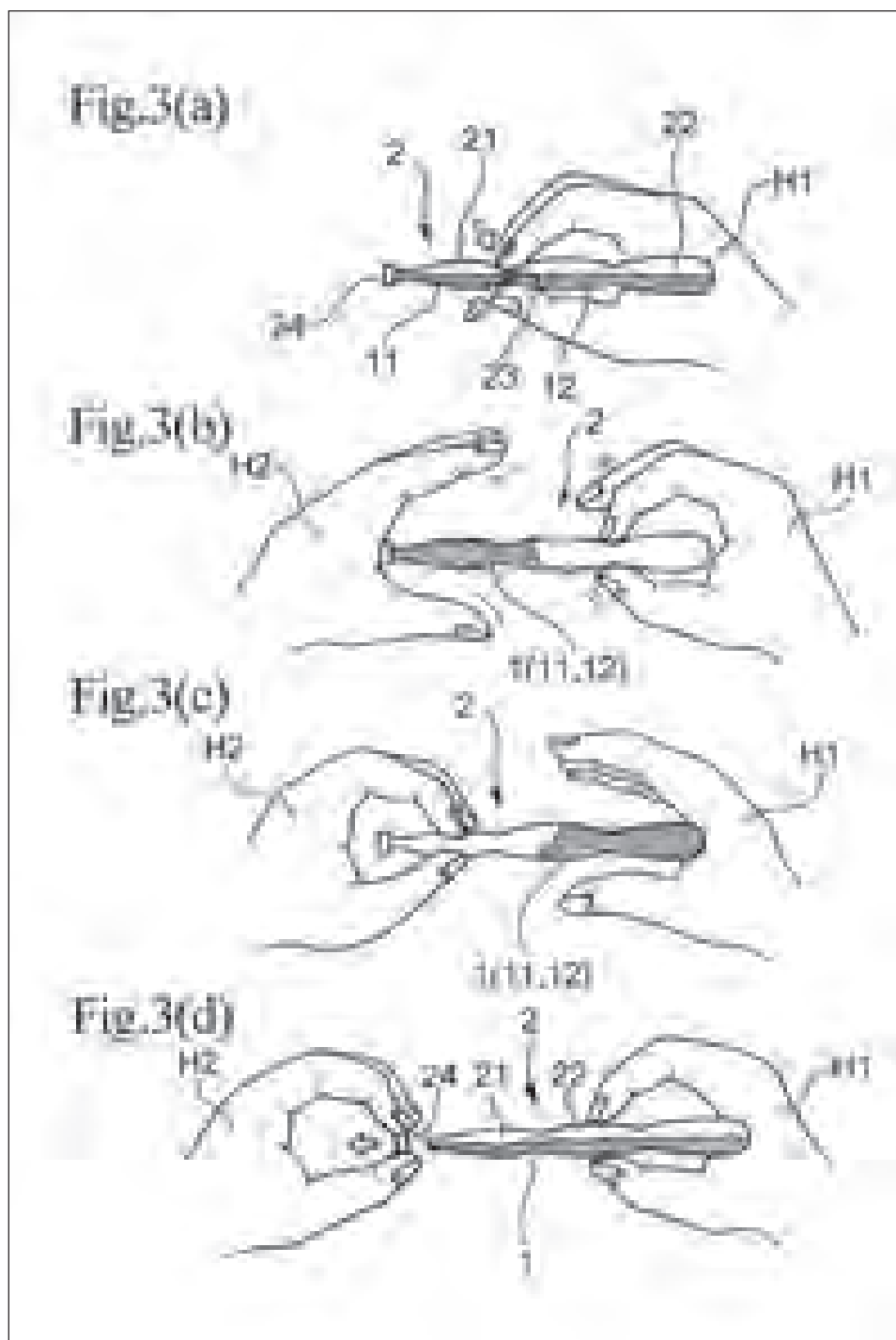
A patent application (US #2007/0041923) filed by Takao Okajima and Susumu Fujinami is titled “Body recessed portion cleaning agent.” It describes:

A body cavity cleansing agent which is either poured into or applied to a navel cavity or an ear hole, solidifies after a specified period of time and takes a form that can be removed from said navel cavity or said ear hole together with dirt in said navel cavity or said ear hole...

The inventors wax nearly lyrical:

The present invention also provides a navel cavity opener for stretching and opening a navel cavity so as to allow the above body cavity cleansing agent to be poured into the navel cavity, including a tubular part, a flange formed such as to extend from an outer circumferential surface of the tubular part, and a plurality of fins extending from the outer circumferential surface of the tubular part at a predetermined interval, wherein the tubular part is provided with a cleansing agent injection port at an upper end thereof, a cleansing agent discharge port that communicates with the cleansing agent injection port is provided on a lower end side of the tubular part relative to the flange, and the fins extend from the lower end of the tubular part toward the flange such that their height from the tubular part increases gradually.

Technical detail of Okajima and Fujinami's navel cavity opener for stretching and opening a navel cavity so as to allow the above body cavity cleansing agent to be poured into the navel cavity.

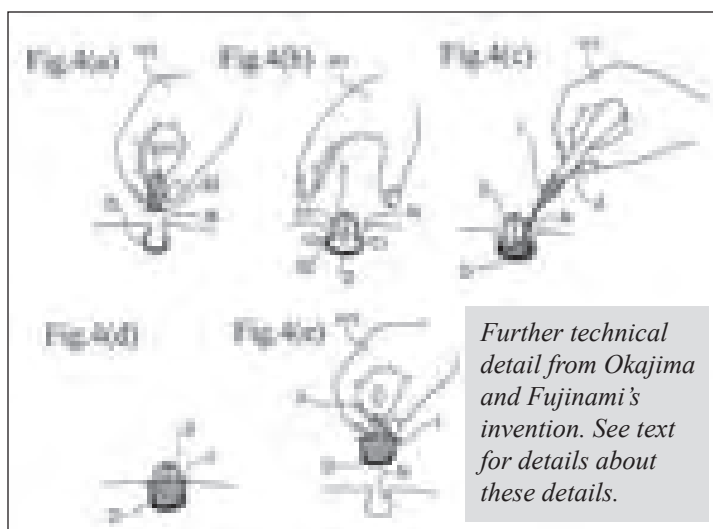


Okajima and Fujinami express confidence in their invention:

By thus performing the bellybutton cleansing in the mode shown through FIG. 3(a) to FIG. 3(rf) and FIG. 4(a) to FIG. 4(e) using the body cavity cleansing agent 1 of the present embodiment, the bellybutton lint D is readily removed from the navel cavity N.

They also celebrate the relative safety their invention provides for the person whose bellybutton is laden with undesired lint:

In this process, there is no risk that the inner surface of the navel cavity N is hurt or a stimulus is given to the abdominal membrane as compared with the case where the bellybutton is scratched with a fingernail or scraped with a swab. By using the above-described opener 3, the opening of a navel cavity N that is not fully opened can be stretched and opened, and thus facilitating the pouring of the composition 1 therein. Also, the opener 3 makes the removal process easier, as the composition 1 accompanied by the bellybutton lint D can be removed from the navel cavity N together with the opener 3 by removing the opener 3 from the navel cavity N after the composition 1 has solidified. Moreover, as the bellybutton lint D is removed together with the composition 1, the removal effect is clearly visible, which gives a feeling of the effect of the cleansing



process. If the navel cavity is primarily opened enough to allow the body cavity cleansing agent to be poured in, the composition may be directly poured into the navel cavity without using the opener.

Notes

1. The presumed lint increase is presumably linked to the presumed proliferation of clothing production machinery and the burgeoning availability of inexpensive clothing.

(12) Patent Application Publication		(10) Pub. No.: US 2007/0041923 A1	
(22) Okajima et al.		(40) Pub. Date: Feb. 22, 2007	
(54) BODY RECESSED PORTION CLEANSING AGENT		(50) Foreign Application Priority Data	
(73) Inventors: Takao Okajima, Tokyo (JP); Susumu Fujinami, Tokyo (JP)		Apr. 24, 2005 (JP) 2005-120467	
Correspondence Address: OHLSON, OPPAK, MCCLELLAND, MARCH & NEUSTADT, P.C. 1940 DUKE STREET ALEXANDRIA, VA 22304 (US)		Mar. 11, 2006 (JP) 2006-107145	
(77) Assignee: Kao Corporation, Tokyo (JP)		Publication Classification	
(21) Appl. No.: 10551780	(51) Int. Cl. A61B 8/00 (2007.01)	(52) U.S. Cl. 424/76.02	
(22) PCT Filed: Apr. 25, 2004			
(54) PCT No.: PCT/JP2004/0057			
(21) (47) Date: Aug. 23, 2004			
		(57) ABSTRACT	
		A body cavity cleansing agent of the present invention is either poured into or applied to a navel cavity (N) or an ear hole and solidified after a specified period of time, and the cleansing agent takes a form that can be removed from the navel cavity (N) or the ear hole together with lint in the navel cavity (N) or the ear hole.	

The Okajima/Fujinami patent application.

The Coming and Going of Cello Scrotum

A look at a transitory medical concept

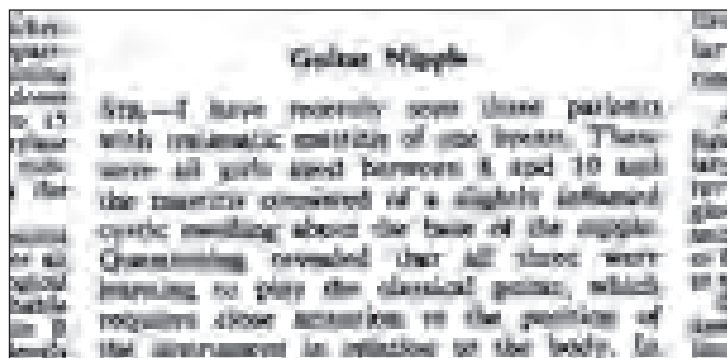
By Alice Shirrell Kaswell, Improbable Research staff

The years 1974–2009 saw the inspiration, birth, and death of a medical ailment that puzzled some physicians, inspired others, and perhaps made no impact upon most. Its history played out in the pages of several medical journals. Here are glimpses at the most pertinent chapters.

Hello, Guitar Nipple

“Guitar Nipple,” P. Curtis, *British Medical Journal*, April 27, 1974, p. 226. The author, in Winchester, UK explains:

I have recently seen three patients with traumatic mastitis of one breast. These were all girls aged between 8 and 10 and the mastitis consisted of a slightly inflamed cystic swelling about the base of the nipple. Questioning revealed that all three were learning to play the classical guitar, which requires close attention to the position of the instrument in relation to the body. In each case a full-sized guitar was used and the edge of the soundbox pressed against the nipple. Two of the patients were right-handed and consequently had a right-sided mastitis while the third was left-handed with a left-sided mastitis. When the guitar playing was stopped the mastitis subsided spontaneously.



Hello, Cello Scrotum

“Cello Scrotum,” J.M. Murphy, *British Medical Journal*, May 11, 1974, p. 335. The author, in Chalford, Gloucester, U.K., explains:

Though I have not come across ‘guitar nipple’ as reported by Dr. P. Curtis (27 April, p. 226), I did once come across a case of ‘cello scrotum’ caused by irritation from the body of the cello. The patient in question was a professional musician and played in rehearsal, practice, or concert for several hours each day.

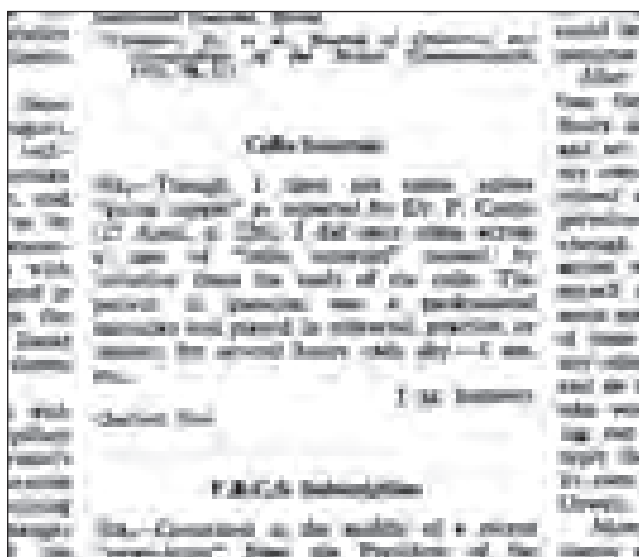
“Cello scrotum” questioned

To the Editor: I applied the comprehensive, standard revision of “Dermatologic Problems of Musicians” by Rimmer and Spitznagel (*J Am Acad Dermatol* 1990;22:607-611). As a former professional cellist, I appreciate the descriptions of “celist’s elbow” and “cello knee.” However, I question the accuracy of the information under the designation of “cello scrotum.” The authors cite just one case, which is not their own (Br Med J 1974;2:335). That case consists of a brief (9-line) letter to the editor in which the author states that a professional cellist had a “cello scrotum” caused by “irritation from the body of the cello.” I find this a bit puzzling. When the cello is held in typical playing position, the body of the instrument is not near the scrotum. Contact of the body of the cello with the scrotum would require an extremely awkward playing position, which I have never seen a playing cellist assume.

Cello Scrotum Questioned

“‘Cello Scrotum’ Questioned,” Philip E. Shapiro, *Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology*, vol. 24, no. 4, April 1991, p. 665. The author, at Yale University, explains:

I question the accuracy of the information under the designation of “cello scrotum.” The authors cite just one case, which is not their own. That case consists of a brief (9-line) letter to the editor in which the author states that a professional cellist had “cello scrotum” caused by “irritation from the body of the cello.” I find this a bit puzzling. When the cello is held in typical playing position, the body of the instrument is not near the scrotum. Contact of the body of the cello with the scrotum would require an extremely awkward playing position, which I have never seen a playing cellist assume.



Goodbye, Cello Scrotum

“Cello Scrotum Confession,” Elaine Murphy and John M. Murphy, *British Medical Journal*, January 27, 2009, p. 288. (Thanks to Caroline Richmond and Kenneth Mackenzie for bringing this to our attention.) The authors, the former at the House of Lords in London, the latter at St Peter’s Brewery in Bungay, Suffolk, U.K., explain:

Perhaps after 34 years it’s time for us to confess that we invented cello scrotum. Reading Curtis’s 1974 letter to the *BMJ* on guitar nipple, we thought it highly likely to be a spoof and decided to go one further by submitting a letter pretending to have noted a similar phenomenon in cellists, signed by the non-doctor one of us (JMM). Anyone who has ever watched a cello being played would realise the physical impossibility of our claim.

Somewhat to our astonishment, the letter was published. The following Christmas we sent a card to Dr Curtis of guitar nipple fame, only to discover that he knew nothing about it—another joke we suspect. We have been dining out on this story ever since. We were thrilled once more to be quoted in [your recent article] “A symphony of maladies.”



Baroness Elaine Murphy, the physician who co-conceived cello scrotum and later put it out of existence. Photo: The Monitor Board, Independent Monitor of NHS Trusts, of which Baroness Murphy is a member.

Life and De’Ath

Another glimpse at the life work of researchers named De’Ath

Compiled by Stephen Drew, Improbable Research staff

A Preventive Approach to Family Life

“A Preventive Approach to Family Life—The Role of the Health Visitor,” E. De’Ath, *Health Visitor* [NOTE: the journal later changed its name to *Community Practitioner*], vol. 55, no. 6, June 1982, pp. 282–4. (Thanks to Tom Kleepsies for bringing this to our attention.)



The 374-Word Oath

by Seth Jarndyl, Improbable Research staff

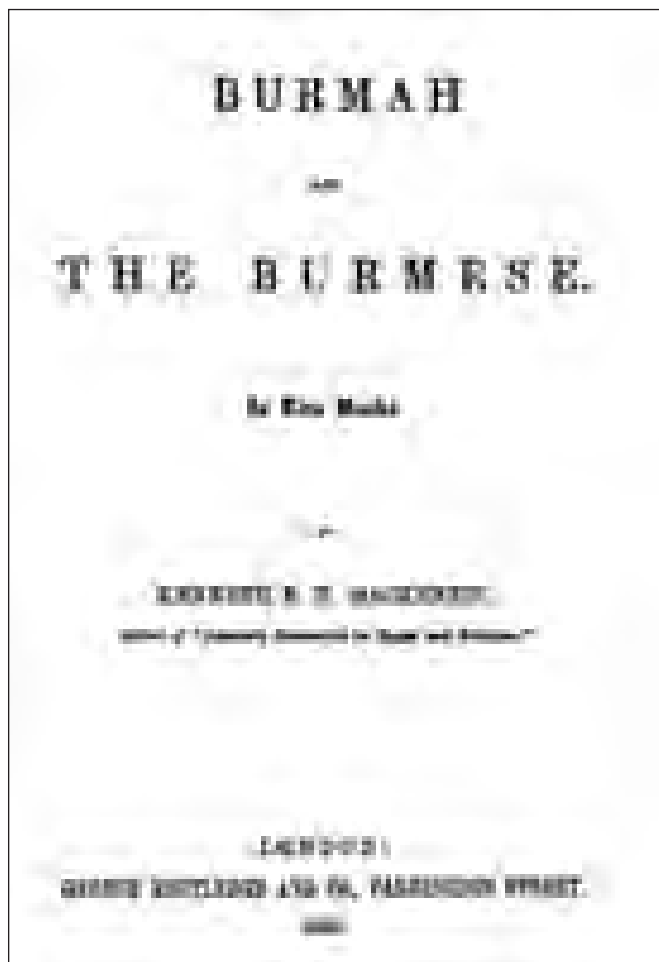
What is the lengthiest spoken oath regularly required of witnesses in a formal legal trial? I believe the answer is: 374 words, in the legal courts of Burma (now Myanmar), until at least the middle of the nineteenth century.

That, anyway, is the longest I have found in examining legal documents and historical reports from the nations of the world over the past five hundred years. If anyone knows of, and can document, a longer oath, I would of course be pleased to hear of it.

The Burmese Oath

A English translation of the oath appears in Kenneth R.H. Mackenzie's 1853 book *Burmah and the Burmese*, published in London. Mackenzie writes:

Witnesses, both in the civil and criminal causes, are sometimes examined upon oath, though not always. The oath is written in a small book of palm-leaves, and is held over the head of the witness. Foreigners, however, take their own oaths.



Mackenzie calls the small book *The Book of Imprecations*, but says that “the Burmese call it, the Book of the Oath.” It includes some sentiments for any witness who would testify untruthfully:

May all those who, in consequence of bribery from either party, do not speak the truth, incur the eight dangers and the ten punishments. May they be infected with all sorts of diseases.

Moreover, may they be destroyed by elephants, bitten and slain by serpents, killed and devoured by the devils and giants, the tigers, and other ferocious animals of the forest. May whoever asserts a falsehood be swallowed by the earth, may he perish by sudden death, may a thunderbolt from heaven slay him—the thunderbolt which is one of the arms of the Nat Deva.

May false witnesses die of bad diseases, be bitten by crocodiles, be drowned. May they become poor, hated of the king. May they have calumniating enemies, may they be driven away, may they become utterly wretched, may every one ill-treat them, and raise lawsuits against them. May they be killed with swords, lances, and every sort of weapon. May they be precipitated into the eight great hells and the 120 smaller ones. May they be tormented. May they be changed into dogs. And, if finally they become men, may they be slaves a thousand and ten thousand times. May all their undertakings, thoughts, and desires, ever remain as worthless as a heap of cotton burnt by the fire.

When it comes time for the witness to speak, says Mackenzie, “The book of the oath is held over the deponent’s head, and he says:”

I will speak the truth. If I speak not the truth, may it be through the influence of the laws of demerit, viz., passion, anger, folly, pride, false opinion, immodesty, hard heartedness, and scepticism, so that when I and my relations are on land, land animals, as tigers, elephants, buffaloes, poisonous serpents, scorpions, &c., shall seize, crush, and bite us, so that we shall certainly die. Let the calamities occasioned by fire, water, rulers, thieves, and enemies oppress and destroy us, till we perish and come to utter destruction. Let us be subject to all the calamities that are within the body, and all that axe without the body. May we be seized with madness,

The book that documents the book that documents the oath.

dumbness, blindness, deafness, leprosy, and hydrophobia. May we be struck with thunderbolts and lightning, and come to sudden death. In the midst of not speaking truth may I be taken with vomiting clotted black blood, and suddenly die before the assembled people. When I am going by water, may the water Nats assault me, the boat be upset, and the property lost; and may alligators, porpoises, sharks, or other sea monsters, seize and crush me to death; and when I change worlds, may I not arrive among men or Nats, but suffer unmixed punishment and regret, in the utmost wretchedness, among the four states of punishment, Hell, Prita, Beasts, and Athurakai.

If I speak the truth, may I and my relations, through the influence of the ten laws of merit, and on account of the efficacy of truth, be freed from all calamities within and without the body; and may evils which have not yet come, be warded far away. May the ten calamities and five enemies also be kept faraway. May the thunderbolts and lightning, the Nat of the waters, and all sea animals, love me, that I may be safe from them. May my prosperity increase like the rising sun and the waxing moon; and may the seven possessions, the seven laws, and the seven [merits of the virtuous, be permanent in my person; and when I change worlds, may I not go to the four states of punishment, but attain the happiness of men and Nats, and realize merit, reward, and perfect calm.¹

After the concluding thoughts of hope and cheer, the witness, if he is still alive and not seized with madness, dumbness, blindness, deafness, leprosy, and hydrophobia, testifies.

Note

1. Mackenzie goes on to say: “The last term requires explanation. It is the Buddhistic state of extreme delight, called nib’han, or nieban.”

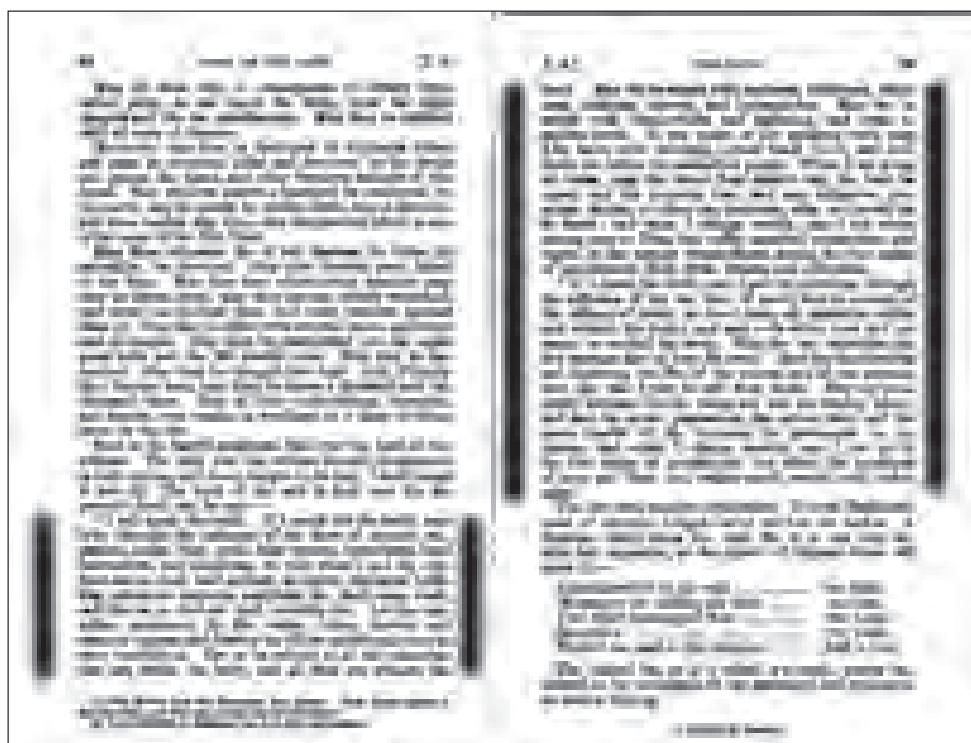
Reference

Burmah and the Burmese, Kenneth R.H. Mackenzie, Geo. Routledge & Co., London, 1853.

*The oath as it appears
(in English translation)
in the book that documents the
book that documents the oath.*



Map of the Burmese empire, from Travels from India to England Comprehending the Burmese Empire and a Journey through Persia, Asia Minor, European Turkey, &c. in the Years 1825-6, James Edward Alexander, J.L. Cox (publisher), London, 1827.



PubMed Goes to the Movies (Part 2)

Why see the film when you can read the article?

by Robert E. Pyatt Ph.D.
Assistant Laboratory Director
Nationwide Children's Hospital
Columbus, Ohio

This is the second part of a comparison of classic films and science articles that share the same name. Part 1 appeared in AIR 14-5.

The movie facts come from the Internet Movie Database (www.IMDB.com). Information about the science articles comes from the U.S. National Library of Medicine's PubMed database (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/>).

Quest for Fire

Quest for Fire (1981)

Starring Ron Perlman and Rae Dawn Chong. Directed by Jean-Jacques Annaud.

On a journey to discover a source of fire for their village, a group of prehistoric hunters encounter saber-tooth tigers, mammoths and cannibals. If they do find the source, can they tame the oxidation-reduction reaction and build a society?

“Quest for Fire: Seeking the Source of Pathologic Oxygen Radicals in Atherosclerosis”

D. Schultz and D.G. Harrison, *Arteriosclerosis, Thrombosis, and Vascular Biology*, vol. 20, no. 6, June 2000, pp. 1412–13.

On a journey to discover the source of reactive oxygen species (superoxide, hydrogen peroxide, and hydroxyl radicals) in the narrowing of blood vessels, a group of scientists encounter macrophages, endothelial cells and lipoproteins in the vessel walls. If they do find the source, can they tame the oxidation reactions and build a treatment?

Live and Let Die

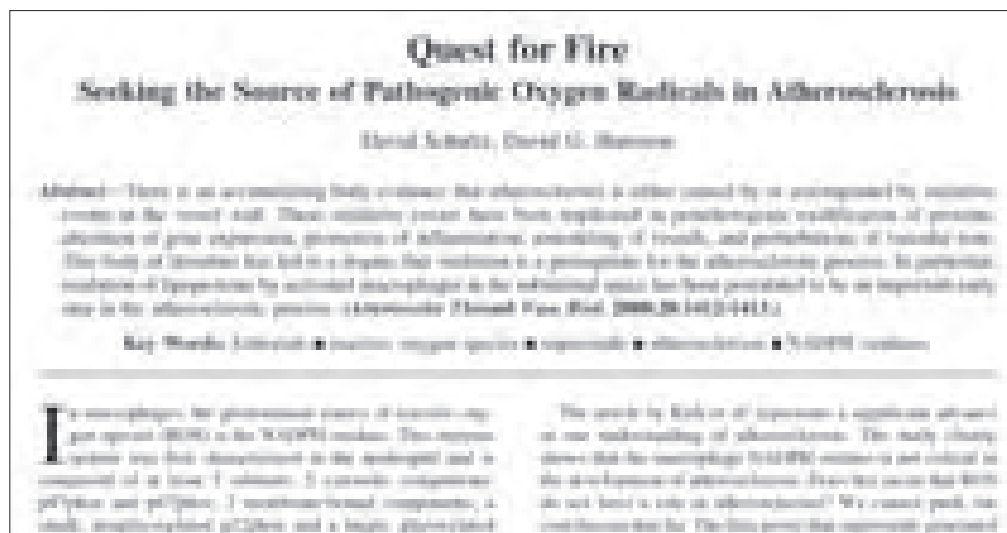
Live and Let Die (1973)

Starring Roger Moore, Jane Seymour, and David Hedison. Directed by Guy Hamilton.

Operating with a license to kill, James Bond is recruited to stop a global takeover by the drug lord Kananga with the help of CIA agent Felix Leiter, the virgin fortune teller Solitaire and a little voodoo witchcraft.

Live and Let Die: *in vivo* Selection of Gene-Modified Hematopoietic Stem Cells Via MGMT-Mediated Chemoprotection”

M.D. Milsom and D.A. Williams, *DNA Repair*, vol. 6, no. 8, August 2007, pp. 1210–21. Operating with a license to differentiate, hematopoietic stem cells are recruited to stop a global takeover by invasive, malignant tumors with the help of MGMT mediated selection, vector transduction and a little voodoo witchcraft.





Live and let die: In vivo selection of gene-modified hematopoietic stem cells via MGMT-mediated chemoprotection

Michael D. Milsom, David A. Williams*

Cincinnati Children's Research Foundation, Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center,
Division of Experimental Hematology, 3333 Burnet Avenue, Cincinnati, OH 45229, USA

ARTICLE INFO

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In vivo selection

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ABSTRACT

Gene transfer into hematopoietic stem cells (HSC) provides a potential means of correcting monogenic defects and altering drug sensitivity of normal bone marrow to cytotoxic agents. These applications have significant therapeutic potential but the translation of successful murine studies into human therapies has been hindered by low gene transfer to large niches (including humans), and recent serious side effects in a human immunodeficiency trial related to lentiviral mutagenesis. The latter trial, along with other subsequent trials, while bringing into focus the potential risks of integrating vector systems, also clearly demonstrates the potential usefulness of in vivo selection, as it relates to inefficient gene cell transductions. Developing from initial studies by our group and other investigators in which

continued >

An affair to remember

Laurence J. Jermol, DDS, JD¹
Albany, NY

Okey, you've finally decided to do something really stupid. You enter into a torrid affair with a patient or the parent of a patient. Forget about defending your actions—as Forrest Gump quoted, stupid is as stupid does. But is there also a risk management lesson inherent in this affair? Consider the following scenario:

At some point during treatment, you have an informed consent discussion with your patient. You do it by the book. Your lover has implicit faith and trust in what you're saying; after all, you would only be

the physician's ability to comply with an applicable standard of care and that, because of the intimacy between the parties, the plaintiff's ability to make health care decisions was compromised.

Regarding the first issue, the court framed the question this way: "[Were] the defendant's recommendations... objectively reasonable given the totality of the... circumstances?" The court answered by saying, "Factors bearing on the defendant's subjective state of mind were irrelevant to that objective inquiry." What the plaintiff was trying to claim was that doctors must

An Affair to Remember

An Affair to Remember (1957)

Starring Cary Grant and Deborah Kerr. Directed by Leo McCarey.

A playboy (Grant) and a singer (Kerr) meet and romance on a cruise from Europe to New York. Despite both being involved with other people, they agree to meet on the 102nd floor of the Empire State Building in six months.

Eyes Wide Shut

Eyes Wide Shut (1999)

Starring Tom Cruise, Nicole Kidman, and Sydney Pollack. Directed by Stanley Kubrick.

A physician's (Cruise) exploration of his sexual fantasies grows increasingly more dangerous and obsessive after his wife (Kidman) confesses her own sexual desires for a stranger at a party. "A meditation on sexuality and how it relates to marriage, death and money."

"An Affair to Remember"

L. Jermol, *American Journal of Orthodontics and Dentofacial Orthopedics*, vol. 119, no. 2, March 2001, pp. 327–9.

A study on the the risk management of affairs between physicians and their patients. A steamy romance between a patient and her doctor results in a lawsuit once the relationship comes crashing to an end. She claims that because of the physical nature of their torrid, sexual affair, she was unable to understand the information explained when informed consent was obtained before her lover operated on her.



"Eyes Wide Shut"

R. Lambert, M. Jeannerod, and J.F. Rey, *Endoscopy*, vol. 36, no. 8, August 2004, pp. 723–5.

A meditation on "the secondary prevention of cancer in the digestive mucosa... based on the detection of premalignant and early malignant lesions." Similar to the film, but not so much sex.

An inconvenient truth

FROM THE
FRONTLINE
Chris Spence



As a child I was good with a knife. Preparing a leg of lamb for 30 minutes—nothing was particularly exciting for me. The only words for me: As skilled the art was—think of the smell of burnt toast and the smell of building—building of a house, the house was not a house, it was a house. At university I worked in a restaurant washing dishes, graduated to vegetable preparation, and eventually specialised in making the starters. Later, armed with a Delta Smith chef's knife (which, I discovered, was a piece of art) and working. Cooking, however, has become more "entertainment," more pure enjoyment, and about the pleasure of the

the closed doors of many of our most affluent houses, the open roads, and the get yourself ready, with the chance of escaping identity or being elsewhere. Our society is "allergic" to accepting responsibility, as it is all the fault of advertising and the food industry. Our children's diet is parental parenting at its worst. All the reasons about food or eat are just that reason. Forget what we cannot control, control, early about all else, convenience—but on the way we have lost much.

The *Journal* has just published evidence that food additives adversely affect complex (p. 10, 11/11/07) and (11/11/07) (p. 11/11/07). This is not much of a surprise. But

An Inconvenient Truth

An Inconvenient Truth (2006)

Narrated by Al Gore. Directed by Davis Guggenheim.

Oscarwinning documentary on the science and politics of global warming. Gore warns, "It is now clear that we face a deepening global climate crisis that requires us to act boldly, quickly, and wisely."

"An Inconvenient Truth"

D. Spence, *British Medical Journal*, vol. 335, no. 7619, September 2007, p.566.

Commentary by Dr. Spence on the loss of our food culture. Meals have become more about convenience than quality and Dr. Spence recommends that we "reconnect with food production. Children should learn to do something with knives... Let them cut their fingers and burn their hands."

Shakespeare in love—with NMDA receptors?

How much or too little NMDA receptor activity during development can result in neuronal cell death. Recent work suggests that NMDA receptor blockade can cause neuronal neuronal apoptosis in the perinatal brain.

When William Shakespeare wrote "...the more is nothing rather good or bad, but thinking makes it so..." he probably did not have the latest research in apoptosis (apoptosis) of glutamate receptors (NMDAR) in mind—but perhaps he should have. Indeed, the very act of understanding one's thoughts, an act that involves synaptic activity and glutamate, is essential to life, as shown by NMDAR

STUART A. LIPTON¹ &
NORIKO NAKANISHI²

John Lipton report that too little NMDAR activity can result in apoptosis in the developing nervous system.

In a very elegant and thorough manner the new work shows that pharmacological blockade of NMDA receptors in perinatal

brain using TUNEL and other staining techniques. Both neuronal cell density and neuronal cell density were measured with an optical density method. Immunohistochemical techniques confirmed that cells positive for TUNEL were distinct from cells positive for GFAP (an astrocyte marker). Additionally, apoptotic cells examined by electron microscopy during the early stages of

Shakespeare in Love

Shakespeare in Love (1998)

Starring Gwyneth Paltrow, Joseph Fiennes, and Judy Dench. Directed by John Madden.

A tale of the bard as a struggling cad
with no money, no fame, no hit play.
His object of love, be it woman or lad
led the Weinstains to Oscar Sunday.

"Shakespeare in Love—with NMDA receptors?"

S.A. Lipton and N. Nakanishi, *Nature Medicine*, vol. 5, no. 3, March 1999, pp. 270–1.

NMDA receptors, the guards of the brain
Conservation from us to protozoa
Neuronal cell growth is their primary domain
But no more Shakespeare than "Rocky Balboa."

Body of Work: Guéguen and the Goad of Small Things

Savoring the colorful research of an under-publicized researcher

compiled by Alice Shirrell Kaswell and Stephen Drew

This issue's under-publicized scientist is Nicolas Guéguen, who finds significance, or at least fascination, in the goad of small things. He does what might be called voyeuristic microscopy, watching how people react to mundanely noticeable sights and sounds and touching. Many of the experiments involve young female confederates who are shaped or perfumed or who lay a hand upon strangers in particular ways. Generally, the test subjects who respond most vigorously are men.

Based at the University of Bretagne-Sud, France, Professor Guéguen has been pumping out publications since the year 2000. He honors the academic custom of referring to himself, in print, with the royal "we."

His experiments probe a range of human behavior.

A study called "Women's Bust Size and Men's Courtship Solicitation,"¹ describes how Professor Guéguen tested "the effect of a woman's breast size on approaches made by males. We hypothesized that an increase in breast size would be associated with an increase in approaches by men." The study ends with an 827-word assertion that "Our hypothesis was confirmed."

A related experiment produced a study called "Women's Bust Size and Men's Courtship Solicitation."² There Professor Guéguen reports that "1200 male and female French motorists were tested in a hitchhiking situation. A 20-year-old female confederate wore a bra which permitted variation in the size of cup to vary her breast size. She stood by the side of a road frequented by hitchhikers and held out her thumb to catch a ride. Increasing the bra-size of the female hitchhiker was significantly associated with an increase in number of male drivers, but not female drivers, who stopped to offer a ride."

BUST SIZE AND HITCHHIKING: A FIELD STUDY

NICOLAS GUÉGUEN

Université de Bretagne-Sud

Summary—To test the effect of a woman's breast size on the rate of help offered, 1200 male and female French motorists were tested in a hitchhiking situation. A 20-year-old female confederate wore a bra which permitted variation in the size of cup to vary her breast size. She stood by the side of a road frequented by hitchhikers and held out her thumb to catch a ride. Increasing the breast size of the female confederate was significantly associated with an increase in number of male drivers, but not female drivers, who stopped to offer a ride.

Frequency and Percent of Approaches When Drivers in Experimental Conditions were Test on Movement

Movement	Sex	n	Bra Cup Size		
			A	B	C
Male	774	%	14/92	17/79	24/88
		f	40/248	46/256	60/288
Female	426	%	7/39	7/64	8/33
		f	12/132	13/161	14/153

Women's bust size and men's courtship solicitation

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Received 23 March 2007; received in revised form 14 June 2007; accepted 15 June 2007

Abstract

Previous studies have found that women with larger breasts than the average were considered to be more physically attractive. In these studies attractiveness was measured with the help of silhouette figures or photographs and the effect of breast size on men's behavior was not considered. In this study two experiments were carried out in order to test the effect of a woman's breast size on approaches made by males. We hypothesized that an increase in breast size would be associated with an increase in approaches by men. A young female confederate was instructed to wear a bra that permitted her to artificially vary her breast size. In the first experiment the female confederate was instructed to sit in a nightclub bar and hold a glass in her second experiment she was instructed to take a seat in a parking area of a bar. It was found that increasing the breast size of the female confederate was associated with an increasing number of approaches by men.

An earlier study called “The Effect of Touch on Tipping: An Evaluation in a French Bar,”³ aimed to fill a very specific gap in psychologists’ knowledge of human behavior. The study explains: “Although positive effect of touch on restaurant’s tipping has been widely found in the literature, no evaluation was made outside the United States of America and in a bar. An experiment was carried out in a French bar. A waitress briefly touched (or not) the forearm of a patron when asking him/her what he/she want to drink. Results show that touch increases tipping behavior although giving a tip to a waitress in a bar is unusual in France.” Professor Guéguen has pursued related questions, some involving smiles, upon which he reports in additional studies.

“The Effect of Perfume on Prosocial Behavior of Pedestrians”⁴ is representative of several Guéguen investigations of how people respond to the presence and actions of a heavily perfumed woman. In this one, the fragranced woman walks in front of strangers and “drops a packet of paper handkerchiefs or a glove apparently without noticing.”

In these and other forays, Professor Guéguen probes and ponders the human condition.

References

1. “Women’s Bust Size and Men’s Courtship Solicitation,” Nicolas Guéguen, *Body Image*, vol. 4, no. 4, December 2007, pp. 386–90. (Thanks to Charles Oppenheim for bringing this to our attention.)
2. “Bust Size and Hitchhiking: A Field Study,” Nicolas Guéguen, *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, vol. 105, no. 3, part 2, December 2007, pp. 1294–8. (Thanks to James Randerson for bringing this to our attention.):
3. “The Effect of Touch on Tipping: An Evaluation in a French Bar,” Nicolas Guéguen and Celine Jacob, *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, vol. 24, no. 2, 2005, pp. 295–9.
4. “The Effect of Perfume on Prosocial Behavior of Pedestrians,” Nicolas Guéguen, *Psychological Reports*, vol. 88, 2001, pp. 1046–8.



“Hitchhikers’ Smiles and Receipt of Help,” N. Guéguen and J. Fischer-Lokou, *Psychological Reports*, vol. 94, no. 3, June 2004, pp. 756–60. Investigators at the Université de Bretagne-Sud, Vannes, France found that:

The positive association of smiling on helping behavior is well established in social psychology. Nevertheless, no study was found for the effect of smiling on hitchhiking success. An experiment was carried out in France where hitchhiking is a legal and common practice. Four confederates, 2 young men and 2 young women, selected for their “average attractiveness” hitchhiked, signaled to 800 (503 men and 297 women) motorists driving along the road on a peninsula. In half of the cases, the confederate smiled at the motorist. Analysis showed that, when hitchhiking women were smiling, motorists stopped more frequently but not when hitchhikers were men. Also, in all conditions, motorists who stopped were male.



Professor Guéguen’s fine-grained investigation of men’s response to particular aspects of women’s appearance and behavior also includes “The Effects of Women’s Cosmetics on Men’s Courtship Behavior,” N. Guéguen, *North American Journal of Psychology*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2008, pp. 221–8.

continued >

Body of Work (continued)



Nicholas Guéguen. Portrait
by Nan Swift, Improbable
Research staff.

Professor Guéguen's several tipping-related studies includes "The Effect of a Joke on Tipping When It Is Delivered at the Same Time as the Bill," N. Guéguen, *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, vol. 32, 2002, pp. 1955–63.

Early in his career, Professor Guéguen mounted this multi-disciplinary look at tipping: "Effect on Tipping of Barman Drawing a Sun on the Bottom of Customers' Checks," Nicolas Guéguen and Patrick Legohérel, *Psychological Reports*, vol. 87, no. 1, August 2000, pp. 223-6. The authors explain that they:

Investigated whether a drawing of the sun on a restaurant bill increases the number of tips left by clients. The experiment was carried out in bars and involved 177 clients who had ordered an espresso coffee. Analysis shows that the drawing of the sun led clients to leave a tip more frequently than when this drawing was not present. The size of the tip left was also higher. The hypothesis of the creation of a positive frame of mind by this stimulus is discussed.

Professor Guéguen's fine-grained investigation of men's response to particular aspects of women's appearance and behavior include "Women's Eye Contact and Men's Later Interest: Two Field Experiments," N. Guéguen, J. Fischer-Lokou, L. Lefebvre, and L. Lamy, *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, vol. 106, 2008, pp. 63–6.

The Effects of a Joke on Tipping When It Is Delivered at the Same Time as the Bill¹

NICHOLAS GUÉGUEN
Université de Bourgogne-Franche-Comté
Dijon, France

Summary.—Previous studies showed that a positive mood is a strong factor in a observed tipping rate. The purpose of the study, described in this paper, was to investigate the effect of a joke on tipping when it is delivered at the same time as the bill. The results showed that people who received the joke left more money than those who did not. The size of the tip left was also higher in the joke condition than in the control condition. The findings are discussed in terms of the positive mood effect on tipping behavior.

EFFECT OF A PERFORMER ON PROXIMAL BEHAVIOR OF FEMALES²

NICHOLAS GUÉGUEN
Université de Bourgogne-Franche-Comté
Dijon, France

Summary.—Previous studies have shown that proximal behavior (proximity) is a strong factor in a observed tipping rate. The purpose of the study, described in this paper, was to investigate the effect of a performer on proximal behavior when it is delivered at the same time as the bill. The results showed that people who received the performer left more money than those who did not. The size of the tip left was also higher in the performer condition than in the control condition. The findings are discussed in terms of the positive mood effect on tipping behavior.

WOMEN'S EYE CONTACT AND MEN'S LATER INTEREST: TWO FIELD EXPERIMENTS³

NICHOLAS GUÉGUEN, JACQUES FISCHER-LOKOU, AND LIV LEFEBVRE

Université de Bourgogne-Franche-Comté
Dijon, France

LIV LAMY

Université de Bourgogne-Franche-Comté
Dijon, France

Summary.—Previous studies indicated various proximal behaviors including eye contact of women are associated with men's approach behavior. However, duration of the eye contact was not tested. In Expt. 1, a female confederate established eye contact of 1 sec. or 3 sec. with a man who was viewing a bar. Duration of eye contact was the dependent variable. Results showed that duration of the eye contact was statistically different in the 3-sec. condition. In Expt. 2, the confederate made eye contact with a man and looked at him for 1 sec., 2 sec., or 4 sec. The proximal behavior (proximity) of male was the dependent variable. Longer duration of eye contact was associated with an increase in proximity.

Sound Level of Environmental Music and Drinking Behavior: A Field Experiment With Beer Drinkers

Nicolas Guéguen, Céline Jacob, Hélène Le Guellec, Thierry Morineau, and Martial Lourel

Objective: It had been found that environmental music was associated with an increase in alcohol consumption. The present review observed if music, high versus low tempo and the different styles of environmental music is associated with different level of alcohol consumption. However, the effect of the level of the environmental music played in a bar still remained in question.

Methods: Forty male beer drinkers were observed in a bar. According to a random distribution, patrons were exposed to the usual level of environmental music played in 2 bars where the experiment was carried out; or were exposed to a high level.

Results: The results show that high level volume led to increase alcohol consumption and reduced the average amount of time spent by the patrons to drink their glass.

Conclusions: The impact of environmental music on consumption was discussed and the "arousal" hypothesis and the negative effect of loud music on social interaction were used to explain our results.

Professor Guéguen also researches the effects of ambient music on how much people drink. He has received considerable attention for this study: "Sound Level of Environmental Music and Drinking Behavior: A Field Experiment with Beer Drinkers," N. Guéguen, C. Jacob, T. Morineau, H. Le Guellec, and M. Lourel, *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research*, vol. 32, no. 10, October 2008, pp. 1795–8.

Professor Guéguen's "Sound Level of Environmental Music and Drinking Behavior: A Field Experiment with Beer Drinkers" "is a follow-up, in some ways, to this earlier study: "Sound Level of Background Music and Alcohol Consumption: An Empirical Evaluation," N. Guéguen, H. Le Guellec, and C. Jacob, *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, vol. 99, no. 1, August 2004, pp. 34–8.



Professor Guéguen's music-and-alcohol studies are by no means his only angle of attack on the general subject of ambient music's effect on behavior. He was also the driving force behind this study: "Cartoon Music in a Candy Store: A Field Experiment," H. Le Guellec, N. Guéguen, C. Jacob, and A. Pascual, *Psychological Reports*, vol. 100, 2007, pp. 1255–8.

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Boys Will Be Boys

Research by and for adolescent males of all ages and sexes

compiled by Katherine Lee, Improbable Research staff

What to Do If It Gets “Bigger”

“What to Do If It Gets ‘Bigger’”, C. Kouriefs and N.A. Watkin, *Annals of The Royal College of Surgeons of England*, vol. 85, no. 2, March 2003, pp. 126–8. (Thanks to Julia Lunetta for bringing this to our attention.) The authors, who are respectively at Conquest Hospital, Hastings, U.K., and at St George’s Hospital, Tooting, London, report:

‘Anaesthetic erection’ during transurethral surgery is dangerous and should be reversed before proceeding. Adequate anaesthesia should be ensured. Compression of the shaft penis and cooling with application of ice-cold swabs or ethyl chloride spray, should be tried in the first instance. If these measures fail, we propose intracavernosal injection of sympathomimetics as the first-line pharmacological treatment. Inform your anaesthetist... Unresponsive erection is a very good reason for postponing endoscopic procedures.

When Madame Has a Stopwatch

“Serotonin Transporter Promoter Region (5-HTTLPR) Polymorphism is Associated with the Intravaginal Ejaculation Latency Time in Dutch Men with Lifelong Premature Ejaculation,” *Journal of Sexual Medicine*, Paddy K.C. Janssen, Steven C. Bakker, Janos Réthelyi, Aeilko H. Zwinderman, Daan J. Touw, Berend Olivier, and Marcel D. Waldinger, vol. 6, 2009, pp. 276–84. (Thanks to Betsy Devine for bringing this to our attention.) The authors, variously at Utrecht University in the Netherlands, at Semmelweis University in Budapest, Hungary, at the University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam in the Netherlands, at Yale University School of Medicine in the U.S., and at HagaHospital Leyenburg in The Hague, the Netherlands, report:

Lifelong premature ejaculation is characterized by persistent intravaginal ejaculation latency times (IELTs) of less than 1 minute, and has been postulated as a neurobiological dysfunction with genetic vulnerability for the short IELTs, related to disturbances of central serotonin (5-hydroxytryptamine [5-HT]) neurotransmission and 5-HT receptor functioning.

Methods. A prospective study was conducted in 89 Dutch Caucasian men with lifelong premature ejaculation. IELT during coitus was assessed by stopwatch over a 1-month period...



Effects of Underwear on Sexual Activity, in Rats

“Effect of Different Types of Textiles on Sexual Activity. Experimental Study,” Ahmed Shafik, *European Urology*, vol. 24, no. 3, 1993, pp. 375–80. The author, at Cairo University, Egypt, reports:

The effect of wearing different types of textiles on sexual activity was studied in 75 rats which were divided into five equal groups: four test groups and one control. Each of the four test groups were dressed in one type of textile pants made of either 100% polyester, 50/50% polyester/cotton mix, 100% cotton or 100% wool. Sexual behavior was assessed before and after 6 and 12 months of wearing the pants and 6 months after their removal.... The polyester-containing pants generated electrostatic potentials while the other textiles did not. These potentials seem to induce “electrostatic fields” in the intrapenile structures, which could explain the decrease in the rats’ sexual activity.



Excrement in the Late Middle Ages

Excrement in the Late Middle Ages—Sacred Filth and Chaucer’s Fecopoetics, Susan Signe Morrison, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2008.

Frankfurt on Bullshit

On Bullshit, Harry G. Frankfurt, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2005. The publisher explains:

One of the most salient features of our culture is that there is so much bullshit. Everyone knows this. Each of us contributes his share. But we tend to take the situation for granted.... We have no clear understanding of what bullshit is, why there is so much of it, or what functions it serves. And we lack a conscientiously developed appreciation of what it means to us. In other words, as Harry Frankfurt writes, “we have no theory.” Frankfurt, one of the world’s most influential moral philosophers, attempts to build such a theory here.



Frequently academic publication aims to create an ethos that will result in tangible rewards for the academic: tenure, promotion, grants, et. The academic knows that such rewards are distributed on the basis of reputation. Such a reputation is gained by publishing books and articles that have been peer reviewed before publication and positively reviewed afterward. Hence professional rewards come from academic reputation, and academic reputation comes from publication. This system seems to make academic publication a particularly rich field for bullshit.

Eubanks and Schaeffer on Frankfurt on Bullshit

“A Kind Word for Bullshit: The Problem of Academic Writing,” Philip Eubanks and John D. Schaeffer, *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 59, no. 3, February 2008, pp. 272–88. (Thanks to Randy A. Riddle for bringing this to our attention.) The authors explain:

In contrast to Harry Frankfurt’s checklist method of definition, we examine ‘bullshit’ as a graded category. We suggest that some varieties of academic bullshit may be both unavoidable and beneficial....

A Kind Word for Bullshit: The Problem of Academic Writing

The phrase “academic bullshit” presents complications with a special difficulty: the usual complications usually result from the problem involving writing that are open to the academic but the bullshitter and professorial academic bullshitter. The apparent solution to the problem must begin with a careful definition of “bullshit” and “academic bullshit.” In contrast to Harry Frankfurt’s checklist method of definition, we propose “bullshit” as a graded category. We suggest that some varieties of academic bullshitter may be both unavoidable and beneficial.

In 1975, Princeton University Press republished, in hard cover, Harry Frankfurt’s classic essay “On Bullshit.” Perhaps surprisingly, even today, as this essay has not really acquired the level of critical acclaim that the usual academic staples receive, the book has gained surprising attention in the New

Picadura de anémoma en pene

José Luis Pais, J.M. Janeiro Pais, et al., *Actas Urológicas Españolas*, vol. 32, no. 8, September 2008, p. 864. (Thanks to Erwin Kompanje for bringing this to our attention.)

Resumen de la historia clínica, antecedentes, examen físico, diagnóstico, tratamiento y evolución.

Presentamos el caso de un paciente de 35 años que, tras practicar el naturismo, sufre una picadura de anémoma en la punta del pene. El paciente es un hombre joven, sano, sin antecedentes de enfermedades, que practica el naturismo. El diagnóstico se basó en la historia clínica y el examen físico. El tratamiento consistió en la aplicación de hielo y analgésicos. La evolución fue favorable.



El paciente es un hombre joven, sano, sin antecedentes de enfermedades, que practica el naturismo. El diagnóstico se basó en la historia clínica y el examen físico. El tratamiento consistió en la aplicación de hielo y analgésicos. La evolución fue favorable.

The Nudist Diver and the Anemone

“Picadura de Anémoma en Pene” [article in Spanish], J.M. Janeiro Pais, et al., *Actas Urológicas Españolas*, vol. 32, no. 8, September 2008, p. 864. (Thanks to Erwin Kompanje for bringing this to our attention.) The authors report:

We report the case of a man who 35 years while practicing and performing the Naturist underwater photography to a group of anemones, suffer the bite at the distal end of the penis by one of them.

Puzzling Solutions

Solution to Last Month's Puzzler

by Emil Filterbag, *Improbable Research* staff

With the exception of question 429, questions 426-491 in part C of last month's puzzler all pertain to the study

"The Apical End of Actinoceras," Rousseau H. Flower, *Journal of Paleontology*, vol. 14, no. 5, September 1940, pp. 436-42.

Due to a misprint, question 429 refers to question 429. It should, instead, refer to question 429.

With the exception of the answer to question 429 (for which, see the answer to question 429), the answers are:

QUESTION 426

Rousseau H. Flower

QUESTION 427

Flower

QUESTION 428

Rousseau

QUESTION 429

See the answer to
Question 429

QUESTION 430

H.

QUESTION 431

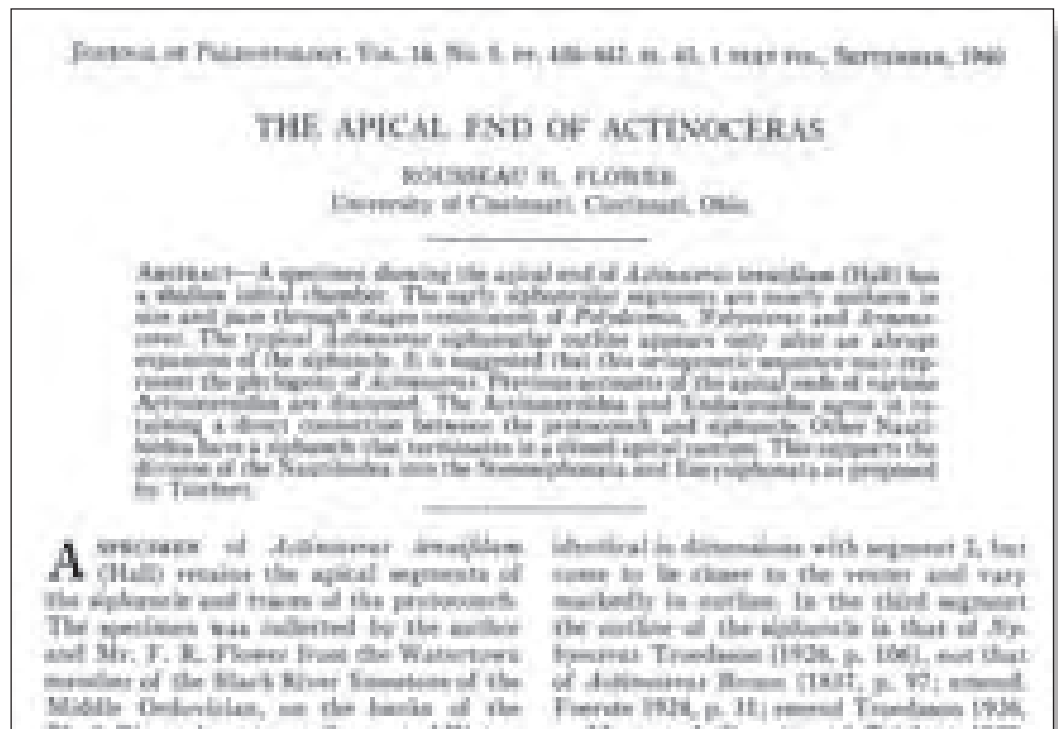
The author, Rousseau H. Flower.

QUESTION 432

It is a study by Rousseau H. Flower.

QUESTION 433

The apical end.





QUESTION 434

It is only the upper
left corner.



QUESTION 435

Upside down.

For the answers to questions 436-491 see the answers to questions 436-491.

The 19th First Annual Ig Nobel Prize Ceremony

Thursday evening, October 1, 2009
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The seven Nobel Laureates at the 2006 Ceremony, preparing themselves mentally to shake hands with the New Ig Nobel Prize winners (who, in this photo, are seated behind them). Photo: Kees Moeliker.

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Soft Is Hard

Further evidence why the “soft” sciences are the hardest to do well

compiled by Alice Shirrell Kaswell and Bissell Mango, Improbable Research staff

First Names and Disruption

“Boys Named Sue: Disruptive Children and Their Peers,” David Figlio, *Education, Finance and Policy*, vol. 2, no. 4, 2007, pp. 376–94. The author, at the University of Florida, explains:

I propose an unusual identification strategy to estimate the effects of disruptive students on peer behavior and academic outcomes. I suggest that boys with names most commonly given to girls may be more prone to misbehavior as they get older.... The data bear this out.

First Names and Crime

“First Names and Crime: Does Unpopularity Spell Trouble?” David E. Kalist and Daniel Y. Lee, *Social Science Quarterly*, vol. 90, no. 1, March 2009, pp. 39–49. (Thanks to Julia Lunetta for bringing this to our attention.) The authors, at Shippensburg University in Pennsylvania, report:

We investigate the relationship between first name popularity and juvenile delinquency to test the hypothesis that unpopular names are positively correlated with crime....

The following is a list of select names and their respective PNI [Popular-Names Index]: Matthew, 76; Christopher, 64; Ryan, 49; Brian, 30; Richard, 20; Charles, 16; Luke, 5; Walter, 2; and Garland, 0.06.

Our results show that unpopular names are positively correlated with juvenile delinquency for both blacks and whites.

Boys Named Sue: Disruptive Children and Their Peers

“Boys get most girls and I’d get most that ever got it’d taught and I’d have for good / I will go for life and I will go for a long time.”
—“Boys Named Sue,” by David Figlio, published by University of Florida (2007)

In the 1990s, 2000s and 2010s, the National and Multicultural Survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Education, nearly half of all surveyed teachers in the United States reported that students with disruptive behavior were more likely to be disruptive than their ability to learn collectively, and a smaller but growing number of teachers reported that students with disruptive behavior were more likely to be disruptive than their ability to learn collectively. Teachers reported that students with disruptive behavior were more likely to be disruptive than their ability to learn collectively, and a smaller but growing number of teachers reported that students with disruptive behavior were more likely to be disruptive than their ability to learn collectively.

Lots of TVs Correlates with Lots of TV

“Characteristics Associated With Older Adolescents Who Have a Television in Their Bedrooms,” Daheia J. Barr-Anderson, Patricia van den Berg, Dianne Neumark-Sztainer, and Mary Story, *Pediatrics*, vol. 121, no. 4, April 2008, pp. 718–24, DOI:10.1542/peds.2007-1546. (Thanks to Brechtje Daams for bringing this to our attention.) The authors, at the University of Minnesota, report:

Twice as many youths with a television in their bedroom were heavy television users (watched >5 hours/day), compared with youths without a television in their bedroom (16% vs. 8%).

First Names and Crime: Does Unpopularity Spell Trouble? *

David E. Kalist, Shippensburg University

Daniel Y. Lee, Shippensburg University

Objective: We investigate the relationship between first name popularity and juvenile delinquency to test the hypothesis that unpopular names are positively correlated with crime. **Methods:** To compare the names of juveniles in a state’s population with the names of juveniles who received substantiated charges in that state’s juvenile justice system, we construct a popularity name index. Regression analysis is used to examine the relationship among names, crime, and socioeco-

Looks Like Success

“The Face of Success: Inferences From Chief Executive Officers’ Appearance Predict Company Profits,” N.O. Rule and N. Ambady, *Psychological Science*, vol. 19, no. 2, 2008, pp. 109–111, DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-9280.2008.02054.x. The authors, at Tufts University in Medford, Massachusetts, explain in a related press release:

Using photographs of the highest and lowest ranked Fortune 1000 companies’ CEOs, psychologists Nicholas Rule and Nalini Ambady quizzed ordinary college students to determine which of the pictured faces were characteristic of a leader.

Without knowledge of the pictured individuals’ job titles, and by rating the faces on competence, dominance, likeability, facial maturity and trustworthiness, the students were able to distinguish between the successful and the not-so-successful CEOs.

Despite the ambiguity of the images, which were cropped to the face, put into grayscale and standardized in size, ratings of power- and leadership-related traits from CEOs’ faces were significantly related to company profits.

The Hotness of Profs (2004)

“Web-based Student Evaluation of Professors: The Relations Between Perceived Quality, Easiness and Sexiness,” James Felton, John Mitchell and Michael Stinson, *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, vol. 29, no. 1, 2004, pp. 91–108.



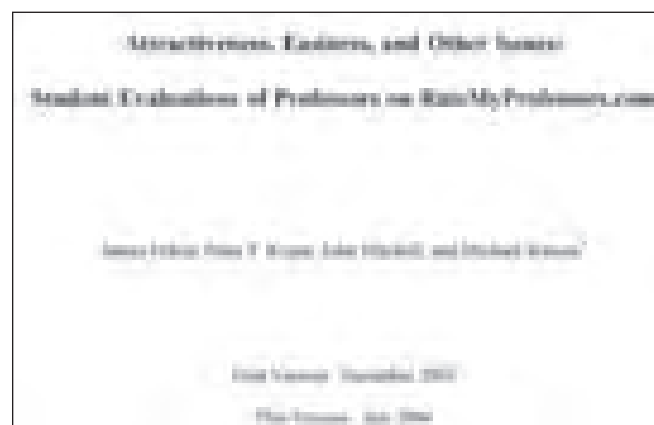
Three Nasal Narratives at the Origins of Psychoanalysis

“The Psychoanalysts’ Nose—Sigmund Freud, Wilhelm Fliess, and Emma Eckstein: Three Nasal Narratives at the Origins of Psychoanalysis,” Annick Le Guerer, *Psychoanalytic Review*, vol. 88, no. 3, June 2001, 401–53.

The Hotness of Profs (2006)

“Attractiveness, Easiness, and Other Issues: Student Evaluations of Professors on RateMyProfessors.com,” James Felton, Peter T. Koper, John Mitchell and Michael Stinson, *SSRN Working Paper #918283*, July 2006. (Thanks to Toby Sommer for bringing this to our attention.) The authors, at Central Michigan University, report:

Felton, Mitchell and Stinson (2004) reported that web-based student evaluations of teaching (SET) demonstrated a student preference for course easiness and instructor sexiness. This study explores these same relationships with a larger and improved database. Results indicate even stronger relationships than previously reported. In addition, this study demonstrates significant cultural differences by institution and discipline in the relationships between quality, easiness, and hotness in web-based SET.

The image shows a snippet from a table of student evaluations. The table has several columns with headers that are mostly illegible due to blurring. The rows contain numerical data, likely representing scores or ratings. The table is presented in a standard academic format with a header row and multiple data rows.

A snippet from the Felton / Koper / Mitchell / Stinson hotness study.



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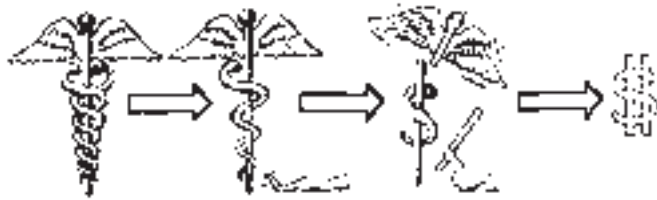
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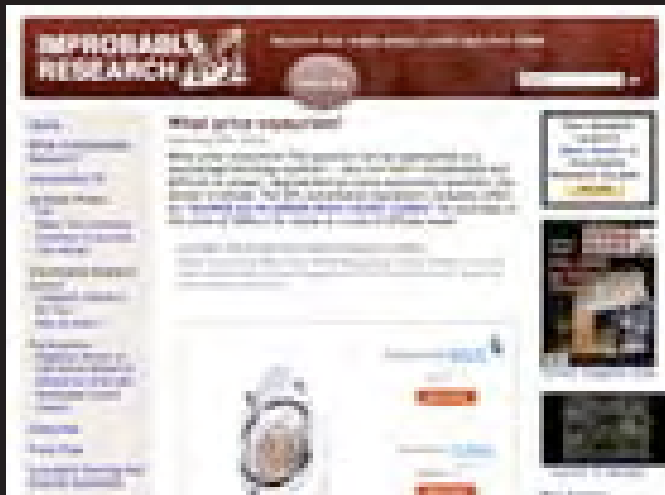
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