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AMERICANS' FONDNESS for meat keeps packing houses busy

Will meatless diet help sex life? Doctors doubt it

By GERALD STORCH

News Staff Writer

Would the removal of meat from your diet really improve your sex life?

That and other claims are made by the American Vegetarians of Akron, Ohio, which says it serves as a coordinating center for the 50 or so vegetarian groups now operating in the United States.

Seven of their contentions — about how meat is related to cancer, lousy sex, crime, dope, overweight, brain malfunctioning and world survival — are reprinted below in boldface type.

The News checked each of these statements with a professional expert. Only one of the claims (about weight) bore up; another (about dangerously high levels of harmful polychlorinated biphenyls in the Great Lakes) was partially substantiated. The rest are, at the least, highly disputable or, at worst, palpably false.

CANCER: Dr. Wessel of Cornell says the *aromatic hydrocarbons* of meat stimulate cancerous cell growth. Abraham Ribicoff states in 1973 that at least 16 known carcinogens are added to meat. The Wall Street Journal in October '73 front-pages an American Cancer Society report naming meat the No. 1 cause of intestinal cancer.

Dr. Michael J. Brennan, president and medical director of the Michigan Cancer Foundation: "There've been no studies we know of that have definitely demonstrated a specific correlation between high meat consumption and the incidence of colon cancer or any other type of cancer."

Dr. Brennan notes that studies of Seventh Day Adventists — who don't drink, smoke or eat meat — do show a lower incidence of colon, breast, lung and other cancers. "But whether that proves beef causes cancer is something no scientist would say" — at least not without a lot more research. /1

SEX: The butyric acid in animal fat is an offensive smell. Vegetarians weigh less, have clearer complexions, more stamina, less pork chop breath, less sweat.

Dr. Raymond E. Buck, a psychiatrist who is the director of sex therapy at Lafayette Clinic, says he simply has never seen any research that would indicate vegetarians have better sex lives. If it were true, "the word would have gotten around a lot quicker than this!"

CRIME: A study funded by the Law Enforcement Assistance Act and conducted at the Morris County prison in New Jersey revealed that criminals have more uric acid (meat by-products) in their blood streams than noncriminals.

Dr. Frank Hartung, a Wayne State University sociologist and criminologist who has written a book called "Crime, Law and Society," was asked if he thought vegetarians committed fewer crimes than meat-eaters. "I'd jump all over a statement like that," he replied (though he didn't use the word 'jump'). "It's absurd."

Dr. Frank McDonald, an internist who is chief of nephrology (kidney diseases) for Wayne State University and the Detroit Medical Center, says uric acid is indeed a meat byproduct, as the vegetarians say, but it also comes from vegetables like beans.

DOPE: This uric acid in meat is trioxypurin, very similar in nature to dioxypurin (caffeine). There is a similar craving in both instances for the rapid heartbeat and increased respiration caused by the purine or toxins' ingestion.

Dr. McDonald: "I would say the likelihood of their having good scientific evidence to support that is extremely remote. In fact, I think it's ridiculous."

WEIGHT: A study done by Dr. Stare and Dr. Harding of Harvard and reported in the Journal of the American Dietetic Association demonstrated that the average nonanimal product

vegetarian weighs 28 pounds less than the average meat-eater.

Vera Thompson, director of nutrition for the Detroit Health Department, says this is true. "Vegetables are mostly water. Meat has large amounts of water, too, but also large amounts of fat, which vegetables don't have, and that's where the calories come in."

BRAIN: The same study showed that vegetarians have more red blood cells per cubic centimeter, hence get more oxygen flow to the brain. Secondly, meat takes three to four hours to digest in the stomach, as opposed to 20 minutes for an apple. Vast amounts of blood are diverted from the brain after a meat meal.

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Does sex reflect diet?

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Dr. Warren Hardy, a neurosurgeon at Grace Hospital, says this isn't right: "A meat meal or any heavy meal will bring a vast amount of blood to the stomach, but that doesn't take it away from the brain." Instead, he says, the blood is shunted to the stomach from the liver, spleen and to some extent the legs. The brain has protective mechanisms to insure it keeps on getting enough oxygen and sugar.

WORLD SURVIVAL: The American Chemical Society as reported in Science News warns of dangerously high levels of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB) in the waters of the world. PCB's in Lake Michigan cause salmon sterilized a whole northern Ohio minn farm. PCB's are a product of DDT, sunlight and time. M

John Hesse, a Michigan Bureau of Water Management aquatic biologist who is working on the PCB problem in the Great Lakes, says fatty fish like lake trout and salmon do seem to have dangerously high levels. But most fish don't right now.

As for the DDT theory, Hesse doesn't believe it; instead, he says, PCB's get into the water as a waste from industrial plants using them in fluid in their transmitters and transformers.

It must be noted also, however, that vegetables and grains don't have a PCB problem. When PCB gets into the food supply, it inflicts skin and internal disorders on people.

Many vegetarians also like to claim that human teeth are

naturally designed for eating vegetables, not meat. According to the North American Vegetarian Society of Malaga, N.J., for example, man's canine teeth "have no resemblance" to those of cats, dogs or other carnivorous animals.

But Dr. James Nagy of Dearborn, president of the Detroit District Dental Society, says that's just plain wrong.

"They're about as far out as you can get, saying we're not designed to eat meat," he declares. "You contrast man to other meat-eating animals, and you come up with pretty close to the same kind of teeth."

On the other hand, if you look in a cow's mouth, "you see huge, flat molars. These are meant to grind up pulp-type foods and grains of a vegetarian diet." But man's molars

are smaller and fewer. "We have more teeth that rip food apart than grind."

One anti-meat issue that vegetarians must deal with is that of insulin, used by diabetics. At present, the only practical source for it is the pancreas of pigs and cows. It takes the pancreases of about 1,500 cattle or 7,500 pigs just to produce one ounce of insulin.

As her solution, Nellie Shriver, president of the American Vegetarians, suggests using human cadavers as the source for insulin.

That's "not very good" as a method right now, says Dr. James Auto, a spokesman for the Michigan Diabetes Association. This is currently being done experimentally, and some

success has been achieved. However, several hundred human bodies would be needed to take care of the insulin needs of just one diabetic.

Articles in a newspaper called "Vegetarian World" blames diabetes on the excessive intake of fatty meats, processed flour products and sugar. They claim that a combination of wheatgrass chlorophyll and rejuvelac taken three times a day has been "proven scientifically" to eliminate the need for insulin within a few weeks.

Dr. Auto says he's not aware of any such miracle cure. It is true, he says, that many diabetics can ease their problem by losing weight. But once a person is at normal weight, and he's still diabetic, Dr. Auto knows of no method except insulin that will help. //



—News Photo by Alan D. Lawrence

HAMBURGERS ARE one popular method Americans use to consume part of their annual 187 pounds of meat each year. *M*