



To Your Health

Children of Gays More Open-Minded

A new study by University of Southern California sociologists Judith Stacey and Timothy Biblarz says children with lesbian or gay parents show more empathy for social diversity, are less confined by gender stereotypes and are probably more likely to explore homosexual activity themselves. They also concluded there was no difference in sexual orientation or gender behavior.

Australians Attempt Spermless Fertilization

The Monash University's Institute of Reproduction and Development in Melbourne, Australia, has found a way to use parts of cells from non-reproductive parts of animals' bodies to fertilize an egg. The technique has only been attempted in mice and much more research is needed to see if these embryos can survive in the womb, and can live, flourish and have "normal" offspring. Attempting this technique in humans is currently illegal in Australia and many other countries and may soon be illegal in the U.S. too. But if the technique works, a Lesbian couple could someday create a family that is 100% their own. (Oh, yeah, it would help straight couples in which the man has no sperm too.) However, the lead researcher is quoted as saying, "If, as a technology, it would be used as a treatment for infertile

couples then I would accept it very well. However, I think we need to draw the line where it is used, and I believe a lot of ethical groups would draw the line." This just goes to show that one can be very intelligent in one area while totally ignorant in others.

Genetically Engineered Breast Cancer Immunity

The Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Indianapolis IN, recently genetically engineered mice to be immune from many common types of breast cancer. These immune mice lack a protein that tumors need to grow. This protein is also linked to 50% of all human breast cancers. Researchers are looking for ways to target this protein in humans with breast cancer. They also envision a day when Doctors could create molecular profiles of their breast cancer patients and create tailor-made treatments for each individual.

FDA Wants Comfrey Off The Shelves

Comfrey is an herb used by some to treat a variety of skin, bone and ligament ailments. All forms of Comfrey (*Symphytum officinale* (common comfrey), *S. asperum* (prickly comfrey), and *S. x uplandicum* (Russian comfrey)) contain pyrrolizidine alkaloids, substances which are firmly established to be hepatotoxins (liver toxins) in animals.

Reports clearly associate oral exposure of comfrey and pyrrolizidine alkaloids with the occurrence of veno-occlusive disease (VOD) in animals. Moreover, outbreaks of hepatic VOD have been reported in other countries over the years and the toxicity of these substances in humans is generally accepted. Inquiries should be directed to Dr. Robert Moore in the Office of Nutritional Products, Labeling, and Dietary Supplements (202-205-4605; email rmoore2@cfsan.fda.gov).

Depression /Osteoporosis Link To Be Studied

The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) has launched a new study of women ages 21 to 45 who are suffering from major depression to find out whether low bone mass is related to depression or stress hormones, such as cortisol. During a 12-month period, researchers will monitor bone loss and the effects of depression and stress on physical health. The trial involves 6 visits to NIMH, where participants will receive a psychological evaluation, a bone mineral density test, and measurements of stress hormones.

In a review of published research, NIMH-funded scientists report a strong association between depression and osteoporosis. The literature suggests that depression may be a significant risk factor for osteoporosis, a progressive

decrease in bone density that makes bones fragile and more likely to break. Low bone mineral density (BMD), a major risk factor for fracture, is more common in depressed people than in the general population. For more information on the study of women, depression, and osteoporosis, call 1-800-411-1222 or 301-496-5645, e-mail prpl@mail.cc.nih.gov or write to Dr. Giovanni Cizza, Principle Investigator, NIH, Building 10, Room 2D 47, 10 Center Drive, Bethesda, MD 20892.

LGBT Medical Conference

The Gay and Lesbian Medical Association (GLMA) will hold its 19th Annual Conference and celebrate its 20th Anniversary at the Sheraton New Orleans September 29th - October 1. "Commitment, Caring, and Advocacy: 20 Years of GLMA" is expected to draw hundreds of LGBT physicians, medical students, researchers, and allied health care professionals from around the country and the world.

www.glma.org for more information.

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