



• • • HEALTH DIGEST • • •

An American survey found that up to 80% of US blacks and 52% of whites believe they will be used as medical guinea pigs without their consent. Scientists said fears stem from the notorious Tuskegee study in which Alabama blacks were left untreated for syphilis for 50 years so that white doctors could study the natural course of the disease.

The first Japanese woman was infected with HIV after faulty artificial insemination treatment using sperm from her HIV-positive husband. The hospital allegedly skipped the swim-up stage in which active sperm filtered in a centrifuge are stripped from leucocytes and lymph cells with the virus.

Women suffer less from stress than men because of the prevalence of oestrogen in their systems. A British study found that this hormone significantly reduced the chances of the production of cortisol and adrenalin.

Researchers in Chicago discovered that the children of people who live to be 100 have strikingly fewer problems with heart-related and other diseases than those whose parents die in their 70s.

With the help of new 4D scanning machines, parents across Asia can now get realistic, four-dimensional videos and photographs of their babies smiling and playing, weeks before birth. The scans - which cost about R2 000 per session - even allow parents to tell who their babies will resemble.

According to a United Nations global report, vaccines reach fewer than one in 20 children living in isolated parts of sub-Saharan Africa.

The prolonged use of cannabis by teenagers can lead to depression, anxiety and schizophrenia later in life, according to three separate research projects conducted in Australia, New Zealand and Sweden.

A letter published in *The Lancet* warned that laptop computers can inflict burns even through clothed skin. This followed a case of a Swedish scientist who scorched his penis and testicles while writing a report in his armchair. It took about an hour for him to obtain blisters on his foreskin and scrotum.

In the country's first public autopsy since 1830, a German professor defied British authorities by publicly doing an autopsy on a 72-year-old man in an abandoned brewery in London. He could be imprisoned for three months for contravening the Anatomy Act. A fascinated audience of about 350 paying spectators witnessed the morbid display.

Two American scientists plan to create a new form of life in the hope of providing a molecular definition of life. The single-celled, partially man-made organism will be modelled on mycoplasma genitalium and be monitored for its ability to survive and reproduce.

Instead of using drugs and nasal sprays, hayfever sufferers may soon get relief from nose plugs that filter out pollen. Scientists in Australia said they have developed nose plugs with sticky filters that do not impede breathing, according to *New Scientist*.

After a ban on chewing gum in Singapore for the past 10 years, legislation to allow the sale of gum strictly for therapeutic reasons on prescription, could be underway in 2004.

It may not be the caffeine in coffee that raises blood pressure levels because decaffeinated coffee seems to have the same effect, according to researchers at Zurich's University Hospital.

Researchers who tested the drug Ecstasy on monkeys found that it dramatically curbed the uncontrollable movements associated with Parkinson's disease. The study was done after a television documentary showed the dramatic effects of the drug on former stuntman Tim Lawrence.

Cancer patients who are urged to adopt a fighting spirit, have just as much chance of surviving as their fatalistic counterparts. According to study in the *BMJ*, there is little convincing evidence to support the idea.

A *Top Sante* magazine national survey of 2 000 women showed that one in six admitted to having been unfaithful to their long-term partners - 10% more than men. Women were also better at 'covering their tracks'.

An American scientist told the World Autism Congress that by the time an autistic child is 4 years old, the size of his/her brain is equal to that of a normal 12-year-old child. This means that the size of a baby's skull could be an early warning sign of autism.

Every alcoholic drink a woman consumes daily increases her risk of breast cancer by 6%, the world's largest study of the link between alcohol, tobacco and breast cancer found. The study also showed that smoking does not contribute to breast cancer, even though it is linked with 15 other types and is thought to be the cause of a third of all cancers.

From *MediaScans*, *IOL* and other sources.