

Pharmacy Benefit News

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COMMENTARY | SPECIAL ISSUE – COMMON BELIEFS– TRUE OR FALSE?

The staff at Pro Pharma requested that we talk about common beliefs after the success of the discussion on common remedies. Is there any science behind them? Once again, the bottom line was that some beliefs are common, but a number of you wanted to know if they were correct. This is a summary of our discussion. (It is important to note that one positive result does not change the science. Random results are always possible but have a higher risk of a negative outcome.)

Belief - Cold Temperatures Bring on Colds and Flu

Reality – Colder months lead to more time in confined spaces with other people; Holidays lead to spending more time with others; Confinement leads to more transmission of infections

Conclusion – Negative. There is no scientific basis for this claim.

Belief – Going Outside with Wet Hair Gives You a Cold

Reality – People catch colds from the spreading of aerosols from one person to another

CDC recommendations are: wash hands, use hand sanitizer, don't touch mouth and eyes, cover your mouth when coughing.

Beliefs – The Flu Shot Causes the Flu

Reality – The number of people affected by the flu varies whether you count those with symptoms and those who are asymptomatic. The incidence is between 8% and 11%. Depending on the major flu antigen in a given year, you may be protected or not. Flu shots protect against the most common (A, B, C, D) viruses. A and B are the most common to cause seasonal epidemics, while type C causes mild respiratory illness, and D viruses do not cause illness in humans. An individual can contract the flu again from another antigen.

Conclusion – Negative

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COMMENTARY | COMMON BELIEFS – TRUE OR FALSE? (Part 2)

Beliefs – Coffee Stunts Childhood Development

Theory – The fear is that coffee contains caffeine that will prevent bones from fully developing.

Reality – High doses of coffee (more than 2 cups of coffee a day, or sodas, or energy drinks) contain caffeine which causes anxiety, dizziness, and interferes

with high coffee intake. (J Am Coll Nutr, 1998 Oct, 17(5): 454-7)

Conclusion – Negative. Cut back gradually. Stopping “ cold turkey’ can cause headaches, irritability and fatigue.

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Beliefs – Cracking Knuckles Leads to Arthritis

Theory – Knuckles cracking causes popping which is due to cavitation bubbles indicating that the collapse of these bubbles is cause for osteoarthritis. (Note: These bubbles persist after the sound is generated – Stanford U and Ecole Polytechnique).

Reality – Multiple studies and mathematical models have indicated that there is no correlation between cracking knuckles and arthritis. Cracking knuckles does lead to reduced grip strength, tendon injuries and dislocations.

Conclusion – Negative

Belief – Starve a Fever, Feed a Cold

Reality – Intuitively, fevers last a short time (1-2 days) so you may not want to eat, while colds last 7-10 days so you must eat. A Danish study (6 volunteers) indicated that different immunities exist for viruses (cold) vs. bacteria (fever). Fluids are the primary treatment. Food is for maintaining strength but is based on what can be tolerated. Mice studies indicate that feeding with 40% of total calories/day indicated that flu was less likely, but symptoms were worse and took longer to recover.

Conclusion – Negative

Belief – Gluten is Bad

Reality – Testimonials from Harvard U; Gluten is bad for people with celiac disease; Wheat allergy demonstrates an abnormal immune response; Non-celiac gluten sensitivity (NCGS) have signs and symptoms of headache, fatigue, and joint pain. People feel better without processed food, high caloric diet, high sugar, and unhealthy fats. Common symptoms from diets high in carbs and sugars are similar to NCGS. Symptoms include weight gain, fatigue, joint pain, poor mood, and digestive issues.

Conclusion – Negative for everyone, but positive for celiac disease, wheat allergy and NCGS

Pharmacy Analyses



Problem: A client wanted to submit rebates for specialty medical claims similar to what they were doing for the Specialty Pharmacy Claims. However, they were unable to identify which of the medical encounter claims for specialty medications were rebatable.

Methodology: Pro Pharma included rebate analysis in the Comprehensive Medical Specialty Analyses. A file of the rebatable encounter claims was made available for the client to submit to the manufacturers. The file included the NDC, manufacturer, effective and term dates along with all other applicable sterilized encounter claims data. The file also included a filter for potential 340b providers to remove from the file.

Alternatively, we also recommended that the client could include the rebatable specialty medical encounter claims with the pharmacy claims. Then the PBM could submit all the claims to the manufacturers for rebate reconciliation.

Outcome: The client was able to increase their rebate receipts by submitting both pharmacy and medical rebatable claims. The process was automated so that there was a minimal amount of manual data collection and processing.

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COMMENTARY | COMMON BELIEFS – TRUE OR FALSE? (Part 3)

Belief – Sitting is the New Smoking

Reality – Sedentary lifestyle is an independent risk factor for cardiovascular disease. So is smoking and obesity. (Dr. Anup Kanodia of Ohio State U). British J of Sports Med study found that every cigarette decreases lifespan by 11min, while each hour sitting decreases lifespan by 22minutes. Australian study in

mortality. US Study in 2010 for 120K people had shorter lifespans.

Conclusion – Positive

Belief – Eating Chocolate Gives You Acne

Reality – While data is inconclusive, there is evidence that diets high in sugars and fatty foods indicate a correlation with acne vs. diets with fresh foods. High sugar/high fat diets increase sebum production and promote inflammatory responses that can lead to acne.

Conclusion – Negative, little scientific evidence

Belief – Walking Around Barefoot on a Cold Floor Will Give You Varicose Veins

Reality – Walking on a cold floor causes loses of body heat leading to frostbite, infections, etc. Having varicose veins is genetic. Patients with so-called hypermobility disorder including Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome exhibit multiple signs and symptoms that can include vein problems but are comorbidities not diagnostic. Other comorbidities are fibromyalgia, IBS, chronic pain, anxiety, depression and autism, allergies and sensitivities. (This may or may not be related to this belief)

Conclusion – Negative. None of these symptoms are diagnostic.

Belief – Sugar Causes Hyperactivity in Children

Reality – Feingold Diet (1973) advocated removal of food additives like dyes and artificial flavors. Sugar was added to food additives. Sugar influences behavior. Studies from Yale U. indicate a severe deterioration of attention span. Sugar produces higher levels of adrenalin and symptoms like hyperactivity. (Dr. Wesnes & Tamborlane). ADHD children have higher levels of insulin. Multiple experiments indicate no relationship. Sugar leads to production of insulin depressing phenylalanine and tyrosine leading to dopamine and norepinephrine. These neurotransmitters are very active in Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

Conclusion – Negative

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