

IMCZ NEWS



MARCH 2016



EDITORIAL Springtime

Looking out of my window and seeing the snow falling, it is hard to imagine that the tidings of spring shall be with us in three weeks' time, but come they will in spite of the late winter and the rather unusual weather we are going through these times, thanks to climate warming. Soon we shall hear the birds singing again, the trees shall blossom and the flowers open up welcoming the long awaited sunshine.

March is the best month for skiing, the days are no longer very short, the pistes are full of snow and generally well prepared, what is more the temperatures are much kinder. For all skiers, we wish you 'Ski Heil'.

In many countries, March 21st is a public holiday, to celebrate the end of the cold weather and the return of warmer times. In this country we are blessed with unparalleled beautiful nature virtually at our doorsteps. It is time to make the effort and get out and marvel at how much beauty is around us. For those who fancy seeing rhododendrons in full blossom, set among myriads of flowers and trees, do make a note in your diaries for Sunday May 22nd when your Club is organising a trip to the famous Seleger Moor in Rifferswil. Do bring along your spouses, kids and friends, they all will have a great and very pleasant time there.

Muthana Kubba
Editor
newsletter@imcz.com

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FUTURE EVENTS

- WEDNESDAY MARCH 16TH • **Bowling at the White Line Bowling Centre, Meierskappel** *Stephen Butterworth*
- SUNDAY APRIL 3RD • **Expat Expo, Lorzensaal, Cham 11:00-17:00 hours.** *Ram Ramphal*
- THURSDAY APRIL 7TH • **The Swiss Traffic Laws, a presentation by Dr. Rainer Riek** at the City Garden Hotel 18:30-20:00 hours *Ram Ramphal*
- WEDNESDAY, APRIL 20TH • **Bowling at the White Line Bowling Centre, Meierskappel** *Stephen Butterworth*
- THURSDAY MAY 5TH • **Persuasive Communication, a presentation by Ms Stefanie Egger.** City Garden Hotel, 18:30-20:00 hours *Ram Ramphal*
- THURSDAY MAY 12TH • **New Members' Reception, Introducing all new members, all members are invited.** Venue to be announced, 18:00-20:00 hours. Finger food, soft drinks and beer are sponsored by IMCZ.
- WEDNESDAY MAY 18TH • **Bowling at the White Line Bowling Centre, Meierskappel** *Stephen Butterworth*
- SUNDAY MAY 22ND • **Visit to Seleger Moor, Rifferswil 10:30 am** *Ram Ramphal*
- WEDNESDAY 15TH JUNE • **Bowling at the White Line Bowling Centre, Meierskappel** *Stephen Butterworth*
- SUNDAY AUGUST 21ST • **Annual Barbecue at the Siehbachsaal, 6300 Zug 12:00-16:00 hours** *Ram Ramphal*

YOUR NEWSLETTER GOES PUBLIC

The board had decided to make the current Newsletter available to everyone.

Visitors to our site imcz.com can read the current Newsletter under About Us -> Current Newsletter



Special Stammtisch

February 4, 2016 at the City Garden Hotel

Compiled by IMCZ Newsletter editor,
Muthana Kubba


Ms Rosemarie Wagner made a presentation on **Nutrition**.

A full complement of over 20 IMCZ members attended the presentation, which was quite informative with comprehensive power point displays. There was a lot of useful information to digest, what foods are good for the brain or the muscles, how much protein do we need daily, the dangers of eating too much meat, vegetarian or vegan food, which foods can cause or prevent depression etc. However the demand on the audience's long-term memory was somewhat alleviated by her excellent and well prepared handouts.

A lively question and answer session followed, with tapas, served courtesy of the City Garden Hotel. The conclusion of the evening was very pleasant.

The only remarks made were that Ms Wagner may need some coaching in public speaking, as her voice was quite low in volume and it was not easy to follow what she was saying from the back rows.

Ms Wagner, a mother of three adult children, is a federally certified Naturopathic Medical Expert and certified Adult Education Instructor. She teaches nutritional science as well as conventional medicine. Her approach to achieving and maintaining good health combines conventional medicine with spiritual healing.

STAMMTISCH
Every Thursday from 18:00–20:30
At the City Garden Hotel

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Zugerberg Hike

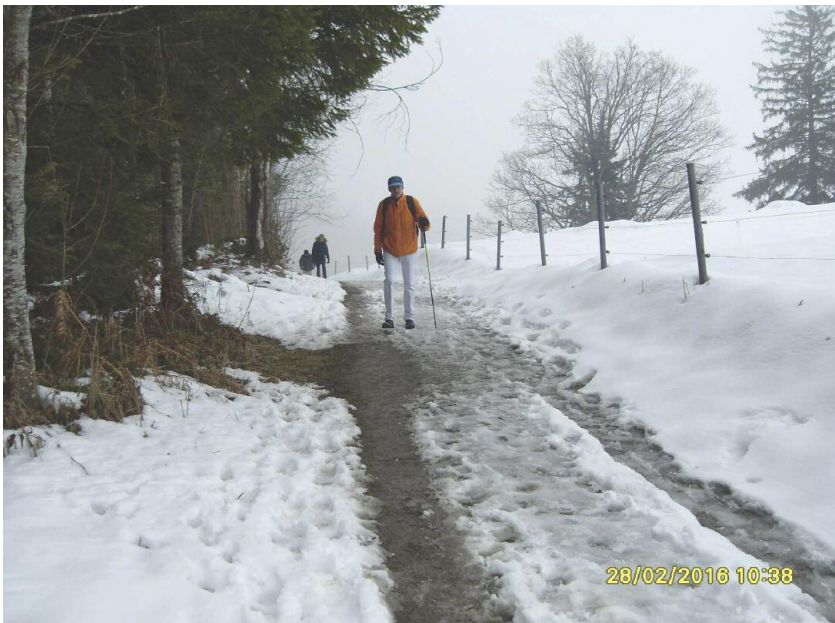
Compiled by IMCZ Newsletter editor, Muthana Kubba

On Sunday February 28, four musketeers and two spouses met at the valley cable-car station at Schöneegg in Zug. It was a cold, misty morning, with a cold breeze blowing and threatening clouds in the skies. Undeterred,

we took the fairly new cable car the top, and started our hike on the Zugerberg towards Pfaffenboden. Past the Montana International School, we walked along narrow snow covered footpaths, with lots of treacherous icy patches. For the best part of three hours, we walked through a very beautiful wintry landscape, with hoarfrost laced twigs, low lying clouds and white covered fields as far as the eye could see. It was difficult to believe what a difference and contrast an altitude change of less than 500 metres could make.

It might be due to the footwear or to mere luck, but no one slipped on the icy patches and we finally arrived at the Pfaffenboden restaurant, a well-appointed traditional restaurant, where we warmed up and enjoyed an excellent Sunday lunch.

After lunch, the weather improved and we actually did see a bit of the sun. More importantly, the mountain panorama opened up and we saw all the major mountain chains around the Zugerberg. Soon, this wonderful hike came to an end and we took the cable-car back to the earthly plane, taking with us wonderful memories of an unforgettable hike. Thanks once more to our hyperactive events' organiser, Ram for his tireless efforts.





ZIWC Carioca Carnival Party

Contributed by IMCZ President Roger Brooks
with photos courtesy of ZIWC member Margareta Pfander

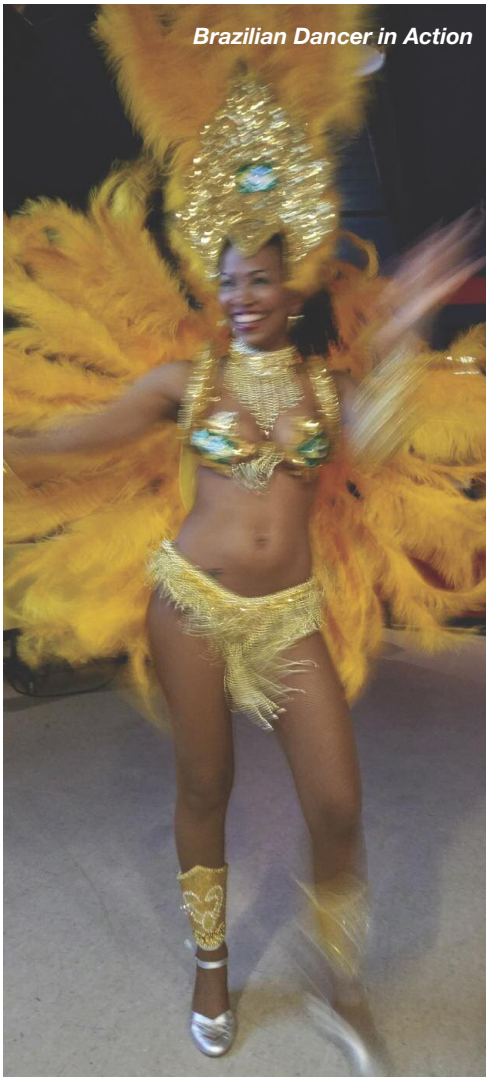
Those who missed both the Luzerner Fasnacht and the Basler Fasnacht got a third chance to celebrate on Friday, 28 February (well into the Lenten season, regardless of which calendar you use). A dozen members of the Zug International Women's Club and their partners met at the red-x in Rotkreuz to enjoy each other's company at a Carioca Carnival Party. Carioca (not to be confused with karaoke) means in the style of Rio de Janeiro. The festivities included a DJ (who also turned out to be a talented dance troupe leader), a genuine Brazilian dancer and lots of food and drink, including Caipirinhas made with genuine Brazilian Pitú Cachaça. After appetizers and cocktails, we enjoyed a dinner of salad, chicken, beef and ribs followed by an amazing dance performance by our Brazilian dancer. Then everyone hit the dance floor for numbers ranging from conga lines to lambada, limbo and meringue. For dessert, crème caramel was served. Thanks to Valerie Gitter, Annual Events Coordinator of the ZIWC, for organizing this memorable (at least for those of us who didn't have too many Caipirinhas) and enjoyable celebration!



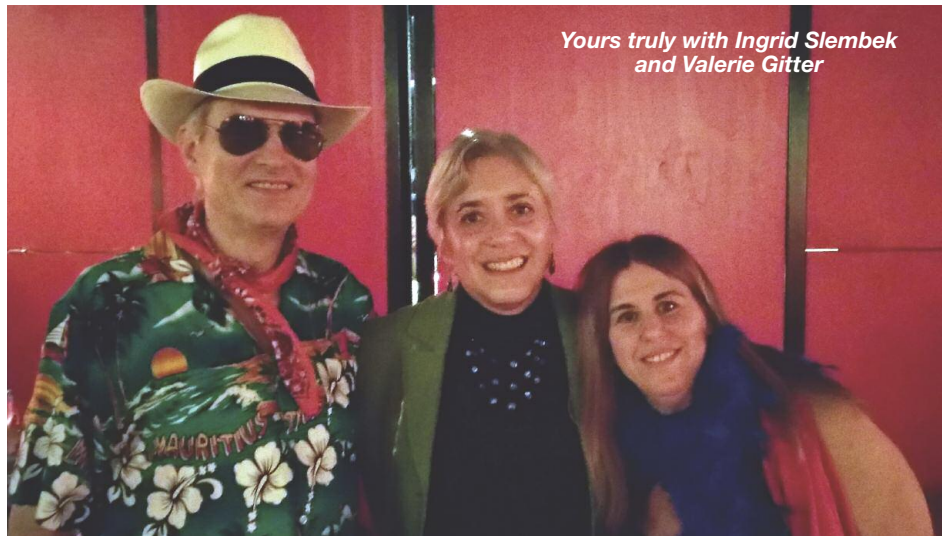
Brazilian Dancer Surrounded by Fans



DJ with (Colombian) Panama hats, for those lacking appropriate headgear



Brazilian Dancer in Action



Yours truly with Ingrid Slembek and Valerie Gitter



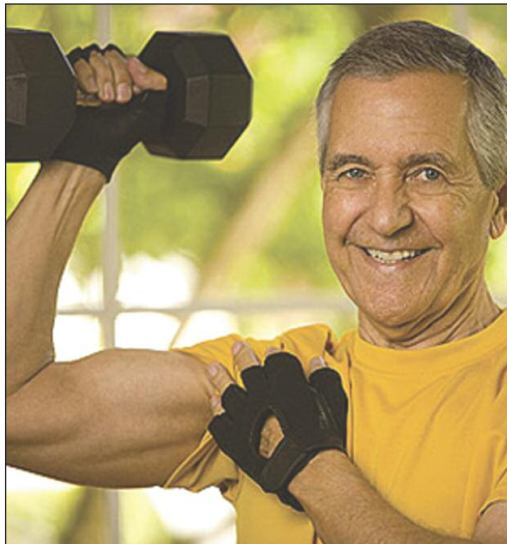
Party Guests Dining

Cholesterol helps to build muscle in the elderly

Contributed by IMCZ member Remo P. Jutzeler van Wijlen, Head R&D Sponser Sports Food Ing. Appl Food Sciences, MAS Nutrition & Health ETHZ

Low-density lipoprotein (LDL) is almost always referred to as the “bad” cholesterol, but in fact, it is just one of five existing transport vehicles of cholesterol in the blood. Hence cholesterol is a different molecule. However, LDL-cholesterol tends to build up in the walls of arteries, eventually, through a cascade of reactions, narrowing the arterial pathways and causing a slowing of the blood flow which often leads to heart disease and heart attacks. Then there is HDL-cholesterol, which is usually called the “good cholesterol,” since it helps to remove cholesterol from arteries.

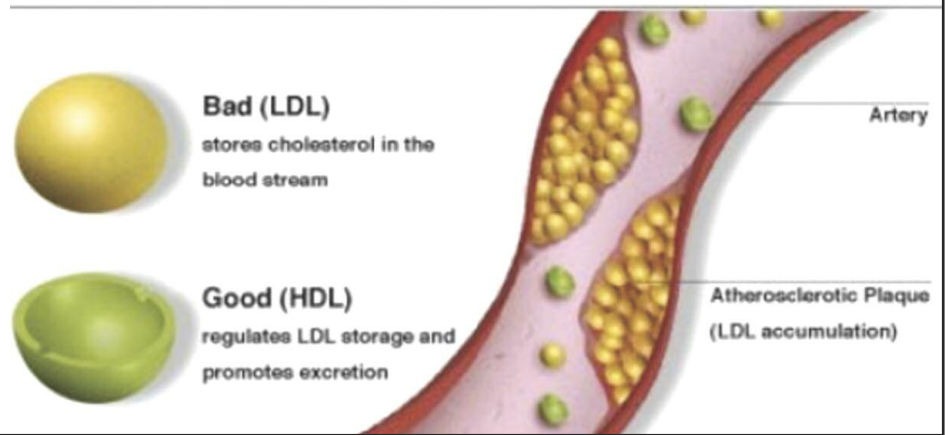
In fact, it is a bit more complicated. There are two types of LDL-cholesterol molecules, of which only the VLDL-type is critical to health. However, according to a study that casts new light on the cholesterol debate, LDL may not be the evil Darth Vader of health after all, particularly among adults who exercise. 52 adults from ages 60 to 69 were examined, who were in generally good health but not physically active. The study showed that after



fairly vigorous resistance training sessions, participants who had gained the most muscle mass also had the highest levels of LDL-cholesterol, which was a very unexpected result. The researchers concluded that a certain amount of LDL is necessary to gain more muscle mass.

The study, published in the Journal of Gerontology back in 2007, reasons that cholesterol plays an important role in the process of signalling pathways of muscular adaptation to exercise. Thus, a possible

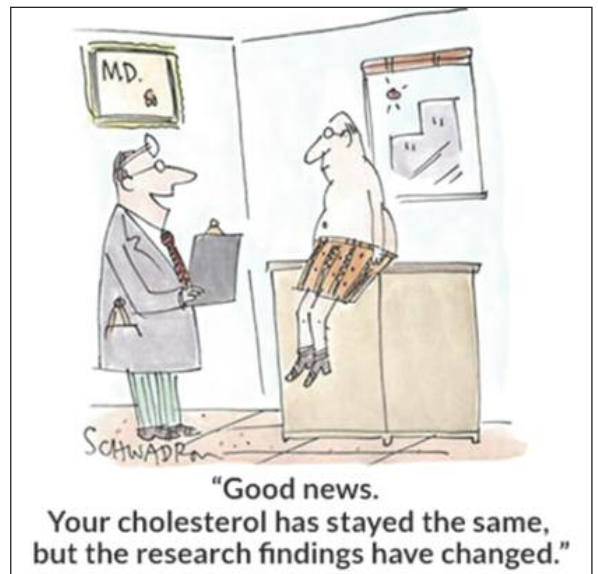
Bad vs. Good Cholesterol



explanation for the demonstrated greater muscle build-up in persons with higher serum (and dietary) cholesterol is improved cellular signalling. Whereas LDL delivers cholesterol to tissues and is strongly correlated with muscle gain, the HDL subfraction transports cholesterol away from tissues to be metabolized. A previous study found an inverse association between maximum muscle strength and HDL, thereby supporting the outcome of the aforementioned study. There's no doubt we need both – the LDL and the HDL – and the truth is, HDL- and LDL-cholesterol are both essential in their function. LDL-cholesterol serves a very useful purpose as a warning sign that something is wrong and it signals the body to these warning signs. In the case of resistance exercise, it signals the body to repair and adapt to the “suffered” stress, resulting in muscle build-up. Our tissues need cholesterol, and LDL delivers it. HDL, the good cholesterol, cleans up after the repair is done.

Of course, the evidence that serum cholesterol is associated with greater risk for cardiovascular disease (CVD) cannot be simply disregarded. But in recent years it has become clear that other factors are probably more relevant in developing CVD, such as triglycerides or lack of exercise. Notably, in the just revised “Dietary Guidelines for Americans”, upper

limits of cholesterol intake have been kicked out and the status of cholesterol mutated to “nutrient of no concern”. In this light of newer evidence it might be a healthier choice in advanced years of age to focus on some resistance exercise, rather than on a cholesterol-reduced diet, if otherwise healthy. Sarcopenia, which is muscle loss due to aging, occurs at a rate of 5% per decade after the age of 40. After the age of 60, the prevalence of moderate to severe sarcopenia is found in about 65% of all men and about 30% of all women. This is a huge concern since muscle mass is the major determinant of physical strength, and inversely related to falls and fractures in the elderly.



Pain

Contributed by IMCZ member
Dr. med. Hans Peter Wüest

Natural sciences have unfolded so many wonderful things. If you are interested in how pain „works“ this is a good starting point. Why get tangled up in philosophical and psychological questions? I shall leave these to the respective specialists. Let's try to understand the phenomenon and experience of pain in a simple but not simplistic way.

The definition of "pain" alone is a subjective matter. I can't remember my parents telling me how and what pain is. It seems to be one of those life experiences that may be accompanied by tears and crying - or by anger and depression when one grows older.

But what does it mean for our bodies? How is pain elicited? Why do we "need" it at all? I will start at an unusual corner of its long story and see where it would lead us to. Did you know that our body can "feel" the pain stimuli, even under general anaesthesia? We anaesthesiologists can easily observe this because blood pressure and heart rate rise under painful conditions. There are measures to prevent this from happening and nowadays it can be done more easily than a few decades ago.

Pain and Consciousness

So can there be pain even if we are not aware of it? Or is pain only what we can realize, what reaches our consciousness?

It depends whether you define pain as the subjective experience or as the reaction of the body to any - under normal conditions - painful stimuli.

Without a brain there is no pain; or at least it seems so.

Without consciousness there is no pain perception; or at least it seems so.

Without a physical kind of impact pain cannot be elicited; or at least it seems so.

For all three conditions there are exceptions.

Let's look at the „nano world“ of pain since this is what natural research has revealed over the last twenty years. Diving into the world of molecules is at first sight confusing. Once you have adapted to this small scale and remember what you have learned about substances and drugs you start to see what is going on, on the molecular level. We cannot deny what we find here. If it does not fit in what we have learned from a much more distant - macroscopic view - clinical view, then we must revise what we have taken for granted.

The Physics of Painful Sensation

There are a few aspects of pain which we know much more about now: Pain is elicited inside the body by molecules called pain substances that attach to other molecules called pain receptors.

It is now clear that there are not only a few pain provoking molecules but a whole bunch, and more are discovered every few months. One of the first discovered pain substance was named „substance p“. It is historically important, but many siblings have meanwhile been discovered.

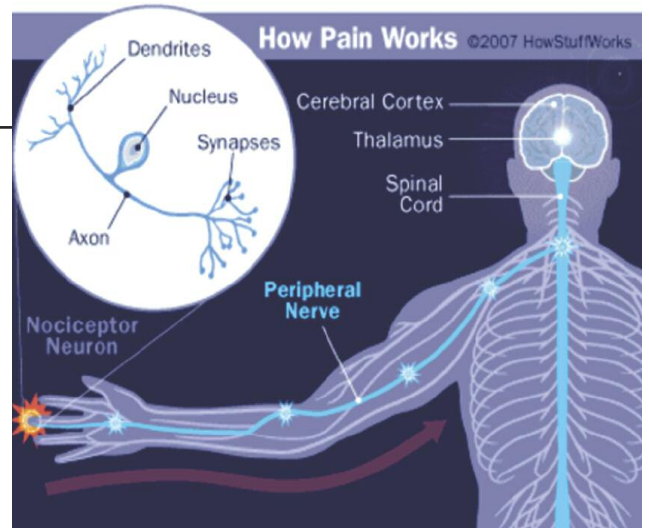
Whenever a cell suffers e.g. because of inadequate on- and off-transport of substances, or because of an injury, molecules get extruded from the injured cells and float away through the interstitial space (like the foot-path between a group of houses). When these molecules reach a nerve cell or one of its dendrites) they interact with receptor molecules built into the walls of nerve cell (nerve cell = neuron). The receptor molecules are proteins drilled into cell walls.

When such a „waste“ molecule, coming from the upstream damaged cell gets in contact with a receptor molecule (pain receptor) it docks to the receptor. This event triggers a signal through the cell wall since the other end of the receptor molecule extrudes into the inside of the cell.

This on-docking of a molecule to a pain-receptor-molecule leads to a long cascade of events, starting at the neuron to which the pain eliciting substance got docked, traveling along this peripheral nerve, reaching the nerve cell body inside the spinal cord, then switching to the next neuron and spreading to more neurons within the spinal cord. These neurons carry the signals along their fibres up to one of the brain centres. There they are passed to other groups of neurons (more centres with a specific function)and possibly find their way to the cerebral cortex where they reach conscious expression.

Pretty simplified description; but let's imagine we can sit in the middle of all these events between molecules. Back to the suffering (sick or injured) cell. Cells stay healthy if they get the right nutrition, which includes amino acids, fatty acids, glucose or fructose, dietary minerals, vitamins, oxygen, water and many other molecules.

Suffering cells can signal if they need „help“. If the pain signals reach our consciousness we are able to react consciously and possibly meaningfully. Sometimes automatic reactions occur, so-called reflexes. When you burn your fingers you withdraw your hand and arm immediately, unintentionally. This is called a reflex. There are many forms and locations of reflexes to pain. Muscular tension of the abdominal wall (the stomach) can result when



the bowel has a problem - i.e. its cells suffer. Of course there are many other reflexes, not elicited by pain.

No matter what the doctor diagnoses as the cause of your pain, the molecular mechanism behind it remains the same.

Conclusion: pain means that somewhere in the body cells are suffering.

Another conclusion: even if you wish to get rid of the pain as soon as possible, your doctor and you will look after the suffering cells of the suffering organ.

If an organ suffers repeatedly or continuously pain becomes chronic. As mentioned, the brain is always involved if you are aware of pain. Sometimes the last few „stations“ along the pain signal to the brain's cortex get irritated locally without receiving pain signals from the periphery. We call this „central pain“. Pain without a peripheral cause.

The Definition of Pain

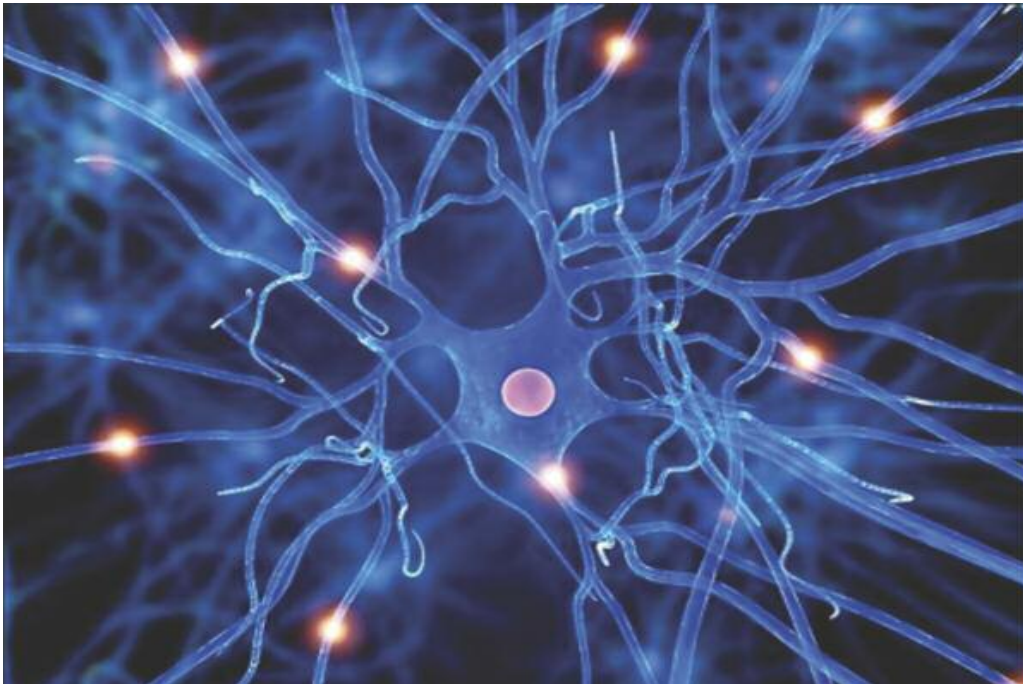
We still haven't defined what pain is. There is a standard definition by the IASP (Intl. Assoc. for the Study of Pain). „An unpleasant sensory and emotional experience associated with actual or potential tissue damage, or described in terms of such damage.“

Disappointed?

Emotions are complex and are based on experiences in the present and the past. And this is what makes pain such an individual, personal experience. Yes, emotions are generated in the brain - and in some other regions of the body, especially in the nervous system of the chest and belly.

The nervous system of the inner organs consists of at least as many neurons as the brain! The vagus nerve transmits about nine times more messages from the belly to the brain than from brain to belly.

Since we are in midst of astonishing discoveries of the last twenty years of natural sciences research, let me mention another.



Pain drugs can create mild to severe side effects and serious health problems if used repeatedly and over weeks or months – and if not used in an adequate pain-relieving dosage. The advice to take the pain drug when you need it is especially dangerous for opioid drugs. You will get dependent because your brain learned that pain relief is such a wonderful feeling. So it's better to keep a constant sufficient level of an opioid.

There is one class of drugs which I don't recommend using as a first choice, not even against chronic pain: corticosteroids. It's said that corticosteroids can reduce or abolish inflammation. That's true, but how. By killing any cells they contact.

We carry about five pounds of living micro organisms in our body with us; most of these micro organisms reside in the intestines. These little guys train our immune system, among other „duties“ they have. Whether you feel comfortable or not depends largely on this collection of microbes, called microbiome.

Now consider that how you perceive pain depends not only on the elicited pain signals of a suffering organ but also on how much the microbiome influences the brain centres that deal with pain.

You have pain, maybe chronic pain – and want to get rid of it or at least diminish it.

How?
For relieving pain there are many drugs. A doctor trained in pain medicine can usually help you quickly. But just killing pain is not always the most desirable goal. You want to

know where the pain comes from and you want to get healthy so the pain will not come back. And, if smart, you want to become proactive. Prevention is always superior to healing. And healing is always superior to suppressing symptoms.

If you just kill your pain with a “painkiller” and do not look for the source of pain, you run into two problems.

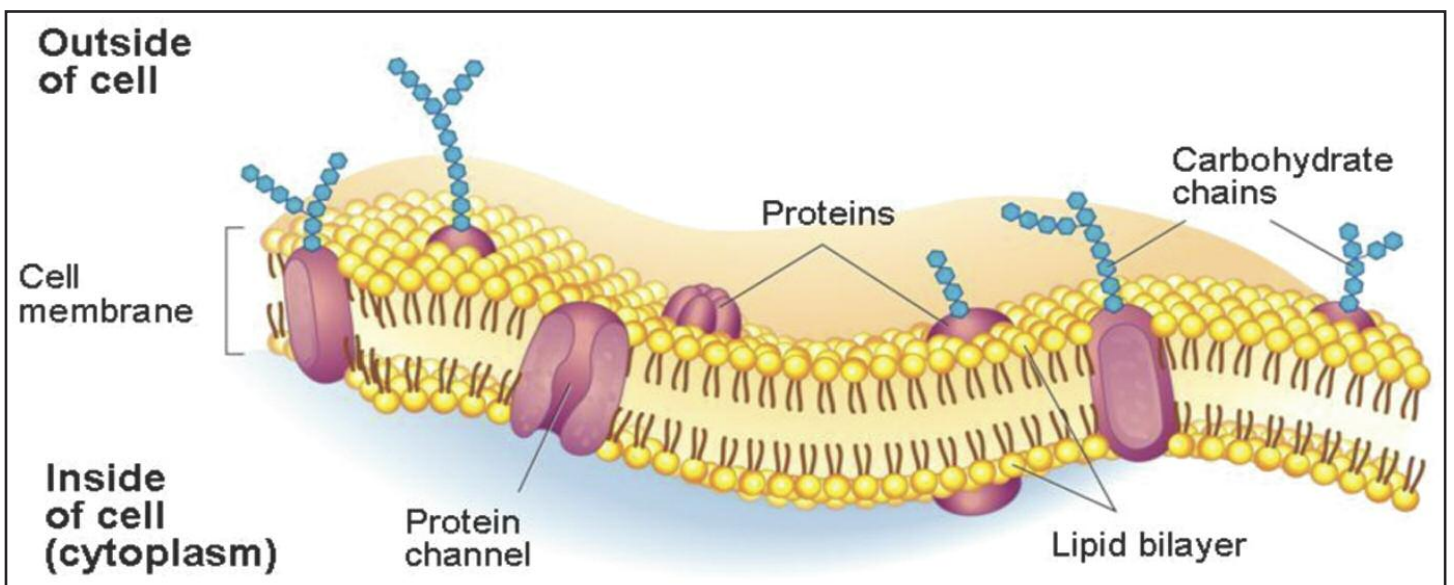
1. The pain generating organ will not get the necessary treatment for healing.
2. A non-natural molecule is induced into your body. Conventional drugs are foreign molecules, not coming from a natural source and different from the molecules in your body. Patented drugs must be different from naturally occurring substances, otherwise they do not get patented. The drawback is that non-natural molecules can provoke unforeseen reactions in your body.

I have written about the “painkiller” corticosteroid in an earlier issue of this newsletter.

All cells in our body love movement. Did you know that cell walls are rather like lakes or oceans than like walls? They are fluid compositions of molecules, hydrophilic at the outer-most layer and inner-most layer and lipophilic in the middle layer.

Keep your cells moving, your muscle cells, your tendons and all fascias, your circulation, your breathing, your bowels and your kidneys – and of course your brain. And that way the chance to stay healthy is much greater. Now add the right food in the right quality and amount and you'll be a happy man or happy woman.

Have a pain free time.



Li-Fi Technology

Contributed by IMCZ honorary member and Newsletter editor Muthana Kubba

We have grown used to taking the ubiquitous WiFi for granted. A 'good' restaurant which does not have free WiFi, no longer deserves the designation of 'good'. Even public places like railway stations, ski resorts, supermarkets etc. offer free WiFi.

I remember when crossing the bridge separating Armenia from Georgia on foot, dragging my 'roller', a few years ago, my iPhone suddenly connected to the Internet, the provider's name was, "Welcome to Georgia". I was not the only tourist who was both relieved and impressed. Relieved because of the poor WiFi coverage in Armenia, and impressed that there was such an unexpected welcome to Georgia.

Well, in spite of the fact that WiFi has become virtually indispensable almost everywhere on the globe, its days might still be numbered. It soon might be facing fierce competition from what is now being referred to as LiFi. The "Wi" in WiFi stands for Wireless, and the "Li" in LiFi stands for Light, visible light that is. Yes, LiFi will increase the speed of the Internet connection by at least two orders of magnitude (224 GB/s) and make it even more widely available.

How does Li-Fi work?

In contrast to the ordinary common incandescence lamps, or the gas discharge ones, like neon or halogen lamps, LED (=Light Emitting Diode) lamps, which are becoming increasingly more popular due to their low energy consumption, can be easily 'modulated', at tremendously high speeds. 'Modulated' means they can be switched off and on at such high speeds that the human eye doesn't notice.

Of course two objections pop up immediately if visible light were used for communication. The first objection would be that it will be limited to line of sight connections and the second is what happens during daylight when the lights are normally switched off. As to the first objection, it turns out that light reflected from walls, ceilings, windows and furniture would normally be adequate for communication. To the second objection, light can be dimmed during daylight, so that people do not even notice that the lights are actually on, but would be sufficient for communication.

Another issue which has to be addressed is the fact that both Internet and phone communications are duplex, i.e. two way communication. Not only does your iPhone



LiFi-X

receive the WiFi signal, the WiFi modem must also be able to receive the signal from the iPhone as well. In other words besides the 'downlink' an 'uplink' is needed as well.

Limitations

With present-day technology, LiFi has many limitations. It does not work in the presence of sunlight. This means it can't be used in open spaces or outdoors. Additionally, the duplex function is sometimes difficult to fulfil.

In addition to a modulated light source (LED) and a light sensitive photocell on the mobile device, the reverse is also required in order to receive signals from the mobile device itself, namely a light source on the mobile device and a light detector near the LED source.

Because of these limitations, LiFi will likely be used to complement rather than replace WiFi. Typically in a large environment, there will be WiFi everywhere, and a few 'hotspots' with LiFi, to download very large files.

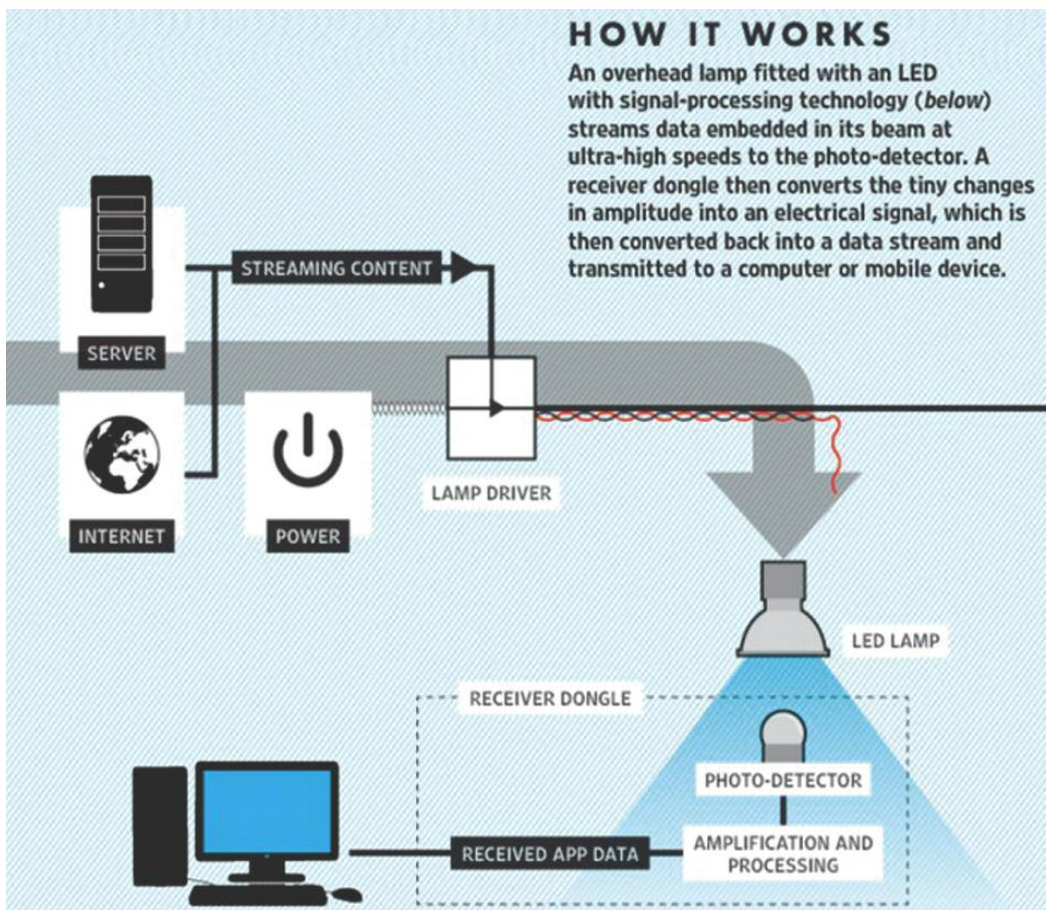
We all know, however that technology moves so fast that by the time the ink of this article has dried up, something new will crop up and change all the parameters once more.

Further reading

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Li-Fi>

<http://www.ibtimes.com/what-li-fi-meet-revolutionary-wireless-technology-100-times-faster-wi-fi-2199883>

<http://purelifi.com/lifi-products/lifi-x/>



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Cruising the Canaries, Part 1

Embarkation *Contributed by IMCZ board member and Webmaster Roger Brooks with photos courtesy of ZIWC member Margareta Pfander*

Once again we opted to briefly escape the cold and rainy January weather in central Switzerland. Having been favorably impressed by the mild climate on a brief visit to Tenerife in November 2015, we chose this time to take a cruise of the Canary Islands, with a brief digression to Funchal, Madeira to get an overview of what the other islands in the region had to offer.

The Canary Islands are all volcanic islands. They are not named for birds, as an English speaker might assume, but for dogs, although some believe that the “dogs” referred to were originally “sea dogs” or seals. In any case, the territory’s coat of arms features dogs, not seals, and the bird is named after the islands, not vice versa. Although the islands now belong politically to Spain, they are geologically considered to belong to North Africa. Human settlements date back to the Bronze Age, and included settlements by the Phoenicians and the Romans. In the early 15th century, several of the islands were claimed by French explorers for the Spanish (Castilian) crown. The Spanish then spent the better part of the century to subjugate the indigenous Guanches, who are thought to be related to the North African Berbers. The surviving Guanches were integrated into the Spanish population, and traces of their culture are still found in Canarian customs. The Canaries have been a free trade zone since the mid-19th century.

Las Palmas, Gran Canaria

Gran Canaria is almost a perfect circle, about 50 km in diameter, except for a tiny round peninsula on the northeast called “La Isleta”. The island is sometimes called a “mini-continent”, because it contains a variety of climates and landscapes. It was finally conquered by the Spanish in 1483. Las Palmas was founded already in 1478, and its Puerto de la Luz served as the port of departure for Christopher Columbus’s first expedition to the New World in 1492, as well as his first landfall upon his return across the Atlantic. It is the capital of Gran Canaria, and one of two capitals of the Canary Islands, the other being Santa Cruz de Tenerife. The current population of Las Palmas is estimated at about 380,000, almost half of Gran Canaria’s total population.

We chose to fly in a day before embarkation, both to eliminate any stress in the event of unforeseen problems with the flight, and to give us a better chance to see Gran Canaria, or at least Las Palmas. Due to the logistics of flying in and out, and of embarkation and disembarkation, the terminus or termini of a cruise often get short shrift. After a blessedly uneventful Edelweiss flight from Zürich, we

checked into the AC Hotel Gran Canaria, which now belongs to the Marriott chain. It is a tall, round tower, which is easily visible at a distance. Owing to the cylindrical form, the rooms are shaped like wedges of pie. It is evidently more of a business hotel, as it has a large number of meeting rooms, but we chose it for its proximity to the cruise port. After settling in to our hotel room, we walked down to the promenade on the Las Canteras beach, where we enjoyed a pizza dinner al fresco in the typically mild Canarian weather. Las Canteras, again, has nothing to do with singing, as one might suppose. It translates to “the quarries”, a name it acquired from the mining of sedimentary rock there.

We could already admire our ship, the AIDAsol, at its pier at the Port of La Luz, from the hotel dining room at breakfast the next day.

Our sightseeing in Las Palmas was limited, as we were anxious to get settled in aboard the AIDA Sol as early as possible and took some time to shop for a few last-minute articles at the port’s shopping center. Nonetheless, we did take time to visit the tourist bureau in nearby Santa Catalina Park, where we collected some ideas of what to do when we returned to Gran Canaria at the end of our cruise.

We also took another walk along the Las Canteras beach promenade, where we



Margareta in front of the AC Hotel Gran Canaria



AIDAsol as seen from the hotel dining room. The port shopping center is in the foreground on the left.

Santa Catalina Park: The white building at the right is the tourist bureau.

stopped to admire some very elaborate sand sculptures.

These belong to an annual exhibition called [Belén de Arena de Las Canteras](#), which has been held around Christmas for 10 years now, and attracts artists from all over the world. The sculpture of the three Magi above is the work of **Etual Ojeda**, a world-famous artist who is a veteran exhibitor at the Belén de Arena, and is credited with having created this art form in the 1980s. The sculptures typically take about a week of working full time to build, and were created from 25 November through 3 December for exhibition from 4 December through 7 January.

AIDASol

Like some of the other cruise lines we have sailed with, such as Costa and Princess, AIDA belongs to Carnival, the largest cruise operator. AIDA caters almost exclusively to the German market. We found far fewer passengers of other nationalities aboard the AIDASol than on other ships we have taken (including Mein Schiff 2 from TUI, which also caters to the German market). As a result, announcements were only in German: quite a contrast to Costa, where announcements were made in 6 different languages! The AIDASol is a bit smaller than the last ocean liner I reported on here, the Royal Princess. AIDASol is only about 250 m long, and carries just over 2000 passengers. Like most modern cruise ships, she has electric azipod drive motors driven by diesel electric generators. She is the fifth of seven ships in AIDA's Sphinx class, built in 2011. The Sphinx class is now being succeeded by AIDA's larger Hyperion class (carrying over 3000 passengers), whose first member, AIDAprima is expected to go into service in April of this year. The AIDAprima is nonetheless still a bit smaller than the Royal Princess.

Thanks to our early boarding, we had ample time to explore the ship before casting off. The ship is comfortably appointed, but has some interesting differences in design from the other cruise ships we have traveled on. For example, instead of having a separate auditorium / theatre forward, the atrium amidships doubles as theatre, and is therefore called the "Theatrium". As a consequence, one could sometimes observe performers rehearsing there during the day for an evening show. The pool was also quite small compared to other cruise ships. Nonetheless, it appeared to be adequate as few of the passengers used it.

After the obligatory emergency drill (which was carried out with typically German precision), we weighed anchor for Madeira and enjoyed dinner under weigh in the Buffalo Steak House, one of the specialty restaurants on board.



Sand Sculpture of the Three Kings on their way to the Nativity



Upper Deck of the AIDASol, with swimming pool in foreground

The Piste Less Skied:

Cool Alternatives, Close to the Big Swiss Resorts

Contributed by IMCZ Sports' editor Joseph Dow



Despite the slow start to the season seeming to confirm the greatest fears of the Global Warming alarmists, winter has come roaring back with some of the most significant snow cover I've seen in many years. Davos, Arosa, Zermatt are all covered in the white stuff and it feels like I've been receiving powder alarm emails every few minutes for weeks.

So, there's no reason not to book a last minute ski vacation to one of the big Swiss destination resorts. However, if you're like me, you prefer variety. Even a large resort can be well-covered in three or four days and crowds can be a problem.

So, here are a few lesser-known but superb ski areas, worthy of a day or two for a change of pace from the nearby major area ...

Zermatt >>> Grächen

Grächen is a decent-sized, family area up the valley from Zermatt. The skiing is great and it's got some very nice views and interesting rock formations.

www.graechen.ch

Verbier >>> Veysonnaz

Veysonnaz is consistently steep, but not in a terrifying way. If you want to ski fast and you have the energy, this is the place!

www.veysonnaz.ch

Crans Montana >>> Anzère

Anzère is right next to Crans Montana, across a valley, but has a laidback, cozy feel and none of the pretense of the more luxurious resorts. It also has a lot of long, relaxing runs.

www.anzere.ch

Grindelwald-Wengen >>> Mürren

Mürren is part of the Jungfrau Region, but it's separated from the other two villages by the Lauterbrunnen valley. The Jungfrau, Mönch, and Eiger group is spectacular and the wonderful skiing at Mürren treats the strong skier to an equally impressive, alternative view of the famous trio.

www.muerrren.ch

Lenzerheide >>> Arosa

Yes, I know Lenzerheide and Arosa are now technically one ski resort, but the main area of the Lenzerheide side is across a valley from the part that is connected to Arosa, making it seem difficult to cover everything in a short time. Arosa is a terrific place, especially for beginners. The novice can ride a number of lifts right in the middle of the actual mountain and enjoy scenery not always visible from beginner slopes.

www.arosa.ch

Adelboden >>> Lenk

Adelboden-Lenk is another example of two ski areas that are officially connected. I've only skied the Lenk area on the side connected by lifts and trails to Adelboden. However, that main run down to Lenk is rather unique in its length and width and the fact that it is fairly gentle. It's the perfect trail for advancing beginners and budding intermediates to rack up some smooth long runs.

www.lenk-simmental.ch

Andermatt-Sedrun >>> Disentis

Disentis seems to be a sunnier place than Andermatt with pretty scenery and plenty of skiing.

www.disentis.ch

St. Moritz >>> Diavolezza (Pontresina)

Diavolezza is quite a contrast to glamorous St. Moritz. It's quiet and relaxing with minimal lifts. Unfortunately, the Lagalb side, which has one of the most perfect runs I've ever experienced, is rumored to be closing after this season.

www.diavolezza.ch

Aletsch Arena >>> Blatten-Belalp

Belalp, like Anzère, is across a valley from its bigger neighbor, the Aletsch Arena. Boasting the longest chairlift in Switzerland, it's a cruiser's paradise and its quirky Belalp Hexe (Witches' Descent Race) sounds like a lot of fun.

www.belalp.ch

www.belalphexe.com

Flumserberg >>> Pizol

Pizol is the next ski area after the popular Flumserberg, which always gets huge crowds due to its close proximity to Zürich. A fast modern chairlift lets skiers pile up run after run at this excellent smaller area before heading back to Bad Ragaz for a relaxing stop at the Tamina Terme spa.

www.pizol.ch

www.taminatherme.ch

So, pick your combination, book the hotel and "Think Snow!"



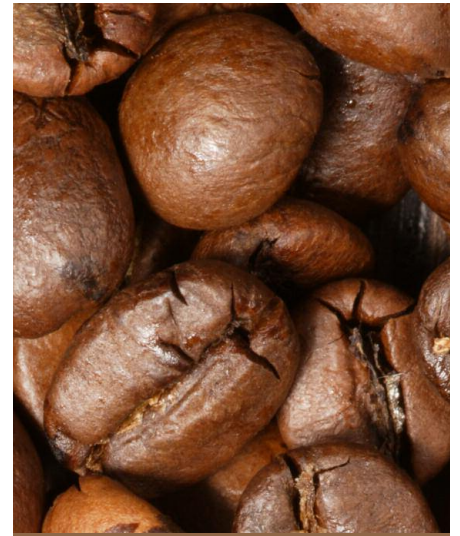
Disentis



Adelboden-Lenk



Pizol



STAMMTISCH

Every Thursday
from 18:00–20:30
At the City Garden Hotel





Great Evening

Organised and compiled by
IMCZ honorary member Stephen Butterworth

This month we were at one stage 11 people, but ended up as nine. We had a really great evening with the wine winner no. 1 being new man Andras Winkler, a suitable way to start the takeover of the event by beating everyone! The second bottle being won by Jake Frazer another new man to this event. Third was a guest Mario Gonzalez who had a great final game. These three newbies are in the Top 10!!!!

The rest of us enjoyed the laughter and chat as well as some of the bowling! Two lanes had constant problems with the ball return, perhaps that is why some of our scoring was not so good, plus the balls were returned quite filthy as witnessed by our coal like hands!

Well done Jake 4 strikes in a row!

Next event is #97 MARCH 16th, looking forward to a great crowd again, when I may have two new young guests (mid twenties).

HANDICAP RESULTS											
First Name	Surname	Game1	Game2	Game3	total	this months avg	overall_avg	handicap	STRIKES	SPARES	Split
András	Winkler	186	148	159	745	164		84	9	9	3
Jake	Frazer	126	148	192	718	155		84	10	9	4
Mario	Gonzalez	111	104	159	626	125		84	4	10	1
Thomas	Pezier	91	125	105	573	107	104	84	5	6	
Stephen	Butterworth	81	144	130	556	118	117	67	3	7	2
Barbara	Harris	117	101	123	545	114	84	68	4	6	4
Janis	Meier	100	116	143	542	120	124	61	2	11	1
Otto	Steuri	135	125	147	542	136	144	45	5	10	
Hans-Peter	Schobert	87	100	110	498	99	117	67		7	2

BOWLED RESULTS											
First Name	Surname	Game1	Game2	Game3	total	this months avg	overall_avg	handicap	STRIKES	SPARES	Split
András	Winkler	186	148	159	493	164		84	9	9	3
Jake	Frazer	126	148	192	466	155		84	10	9	4
Otto	Steuri	135	125	147	407	136	144	45	5	10	
Mario	Gonzalez	111	104	159	374	125		84	4	10	1
Janis	Meier	100	116	143	359	120	124	61	2	11	1
Stephen	Butterworth	81	144	130	355	118	117	67	3	7	2
Barbara	Harris	117	101	123	341	114	84	68	4	6	4
Thomas	Pezier	91	125	105	321	107	104	84	5	6	
Hans-Peter	Schobert	87	100	110	297	99	117	67		7	2



Giving up Drinking and Gambling

A man was walking in the city, when he was accosted by a particularly dirty and shabby-looking man who asked him for a couple of dollars for dinner.

The man took out his wallet, extracted two dollars and asked, "If I gave you this money, will you take it and buy whiskey?"

"No, I stopped drinking years ago," the man said.

"Will you use it to gamble?"

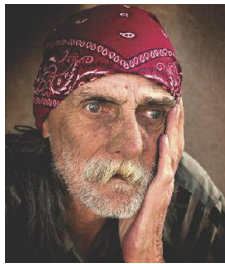
"I don't gamble. I need everything I can get just to stay alive."

"Will you spend the money on greens fees at a golf course?"

"Are you nuts! I haven't played golf in 20 years!"

The man said, "Well, I'm not going to give you two dollars. Instead, I'm going to take you to my home for a terrific dinner cooked by my wife."

The man was astounded. "Won't your wife be furious with you for doing that? I know I'm dirty, and I probably smell pretty bad." The man replied: "That's OK. I just want her to see what a man who's given up drinking, gambling and golf looks like."



Bad News

On a warm summer night, a young lady entered the butcher shop with startling news for the butcher: The baby in her arms was his. Perplexed, the butcher didn't know what to do, and eventually offered the only thing he thought he could do - he offered to provide her with free meat until the boy was 16. She agreed.

He had been counting the years off on his calendar, and one day the teenager, who had been collecting the meat each week, came into the shop and said, "I'll be 16 tomorrow."



"I know," said the butcher with a smile, "I've been counting too, tell your mother, when you take this parcel of meat home, that it is the last free meat she'll get, and watch the expression on her face."

When the boy arrived home he told his mother.

His mother nodded and said, "Son, go back to the butcher and tell him I have also had free bread, free milk, and free groceries for the last 16 years and watch the expression on his face!"

Getting Married

A single man in his early sixties proposed to younger woman.

He said, "I think it would be wonderful if we were to get married, would you marry me?"

She said: "Yes, but I want to keep my house."

He said: "That's fine with me."

She said: "And I want to keep my Mercedes."

He said: "That's fine with me too."

She said: "And I want to have sex 6 times a week."

He said: "Fine, put me down for Fridays."



Birth Control Pills

The doctor, who had been seeing an 80-year-old woman for most of her life, finally retired.

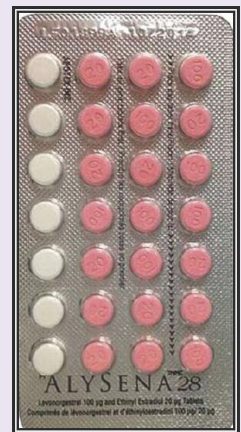
At her next check-up, the new doctor told her to bring a list of all the medicines that had been prescribed for her. As the young doctor was looking through the list, his eyes grew wide as he realized Grandma had a prescription contraceptive pills.

"Mrs. Smith, do you realize these are birth control pills?"

"Yes, they help me sleep at night."

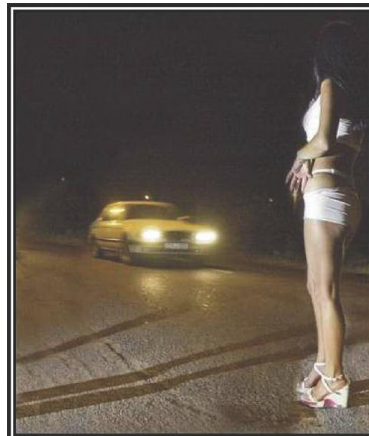
"Mrs. Smith, I assure you there is absolutely nothing in these pills that could possibly help you sleep!"

She reached out and patted the young Doctor's knee. "Yes, dear, I know that. But every morning, I grind one up and mix it in the glass of orange juice that my 16 year old granddaughter drinks ... and believe me, it definitely helps me sleep at night."



Taxi Ride

A woman and her twelve-year-old son were riding in a taxi in Detroit. It was raining and all the prostitutes were standing under awnings.



"Mom," said the boy, "what are all those women doing?"

"They're waiting for their husbands to get off work," she replied.

The taxi driver turns around and says, "Geez lady, why don't you tell him the Truth? They're hookers, boy! They have sex with men for money."

The little boy's eyes get wide and he says, "Is that true Mom?"

His mother, glaring hard at the driver, answers in the affirmative.

After a few minutes, the kid asks, "Mom, if those women have babies, what happens to them?"

Looking at the taxi driver, she said, "Most of them become taxi drivers."

The fact that jellyfish have survived for more than 500 million years, despite having no brains, gives hope to many people.



Members' Marketplace

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