

**Keywords:** cardiac tamponade; right atrial rupture; sternal fracture.  
*Prehosp Disast Med* 2002;17:s26-27.

### The Effects on the Central Nervous System Induced by Tetrodotoxin Poisoning

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**Objective:** Tetrodotoxin (TTX) is a neurotoxin known to cause food poisoning. It is found in a variety of both freshwater and marine species. Patients with tetrodotoxin intoxication generally have a very typical course of illness involving the cardiovascular, respiratory, peripheral and central nervous systems.

**Methods:** A 59-year-old, male, taxi driver presented to the emergency department with dyspnea and numbness after eating some porridge cooked with Takifugu niphobles. On arrival, he was tachypneic, hypertensive, consciousness clear, and was able to give a coherent history. He immediately was intubated, but respiratory effort ceased several minutes later. About one hour later, he was in deep coma with Glasgow Coma Scale (GCS) Score = 3, had a sinus bradycardia, and became severely hypotensive.

**Results:** During the next two days, he continued to have fluctuating blood pressure, hypothermia, and polyuria. At 36 hours after admission, he regained consciousness and some upper limb motor function, but still had no spontaneous breathing effort. An EEG showed "minor diffuse cortical dysfunction likely to be metabolic in origin". Later in the day his vision recovered spontaneously. Ventilatory function returned and the patient self-extubated on the following day. On day 10, he was discharged after a follow-up EEG that showed "no evidence of focal cortical dysfunction". Tetrodotoxin measured by bioassay was 300 mouse units per gram (MU/g).

**Conclusion:** To our knowledge this is the first report of a human that demonstrated this cortical dysfunction on EEG during tetrodotoxin poisoning.

**Keywords:** central nervous system; intoxication; takifugu niphobles; tetrodotoxin  
*Prehosp Disast Med* 2002;117:s27.

### Six Years Experience with Telemedicine in an Emergency Department in Taiwan

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**Objective:** To observe telemedicine in an emergency

department between Taipei-Veterans General Hospital and Kinmen-Granite, County Hospitals in Taiwan.

**Methods:** This clinical study was carried out from July 1996 through to September 2001. Data for total of 920 teleconsultation cases were collected using a questionnaire. Evaluation elements included: 1) consulting quality; 2) duration of the teleconsultation; the benefit to the patients; and 4) the charges. The purposes of the teleconsultation project were to establish electronically an exchange of medical information and to conduct clinical examinations and consultations.

**Results:** The peak interval of the ages of the patients was 21–30 years. Radiological consultation was the most frequently involved area of consultation, followed by chest medicine, neurosurgery, orthopedics, dermatology, and general surgery. The questionnaire indicated that 74% of the time, teleconsultations was used to obtain a the second opinion. More than 95% of the physicians involved believe that the telemedicine system will affect the quality of the consultation and that the consultation is helpful. The doctors in Taipei-VGH were more satisfied with the teleconsultation facility than were the doctors in Kinmen Hospitals.

**Conclusion:** The consultation doctors confirm that the clinical evaluation using the telemedicine is positive and has the potential to help during a disaster period.

**Keywords:** consultation; questionnaire; telecommunication, telemedicine.  
*Prehosp Disast Med* 2002;17:s27.

### Covering Disasters: A Look at Disaster News Reporting in the Philippine Media

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**Objectives:** The study aims to find out how disaster news are framed in the Philippine print media and the media practices that inform the framing of such news.

**Method:** The study qualitatively content analyzed several disaster news reports from different broadsheets within 2001.

**Results:** The regularity of events that result in disasters that strike the Philippines for the past years reveals a pattern that the press applies in framing disaster news. Emphasis is given to statistics regarding the number of persons affected by these events. It also showed a tendency to place emphasis on personalities, spending precious ink to highlight the activities of politicians and officials who often use such disasters as photo opportunities to further their political careers. Disaster news, on the whole, is presented as an 'event', given prominence for a while until a new event takes its place in the public spotlight.

**Conclusions:** The tendency of the press to treat disaster news as 'events' has the potential to instill a feeling of fatigue among the populace towards disasters. Instead of communicating information that will help people make critical and informed choices during such disasters, the press focus on simple cause and effect explanations as to why such disasters happen. This has not translated into

vigilance, but into apathy.

**Keywords:** attitudes; disaster; media; news; politics; reports  
*Prehosp Disast Med* 2002;17:s27-28.

### Monitoring of Cabinet X-Ray Users

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**Objectives:** To determine the sensitivity and applicability of the use of film badges for the assessment of radiation exposure to cabinet x-ray users. The use of x-ray film badge for personnel monitoring of cabinet x-ray system users is a requirement of the local Department of Health (DOH) in the Philippines as per Administrative Order DOH AO No40 s1996.

**Method:** Radiation exposure assessment of cabinet X-ray users was done using the film badge for personnel monitoring.

**Results:** 252 x-ray film badges that were gathered in 1998 and 1999 at Intel factories in the Philippines showed that the results all were <0.15 mSv for the period which is the lower limit required for detection. The Derived Working Limit (DWL) for the monitoring period is 1.7 mSv/month.

**Conclusion:** The use of film badge to monitor exposure to x-ray radiation is not sensitive enough to measure the limit of detection for the method, and therefore, is not practical for personnel monitoring of cabinet type of x-ray machine users. It is recommended that the semiconductor and electronics industry association request the DOH to review their requirements for cabinet x-ray systems users based on the results gathered and the limitations of the film badge.

**Keywords:** cabinet x-ray; electronics; film badges; monitoring; personnel; radiation; semiconductors  
*Prehosp Disast Med* 2002;17:s28.

### Traditional Surgical Practice and Adverse Health Outcomes Among Refugees in Tanzania

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**Introduction:** In Tanzania, the UNHCR provides protection and assistance to some 415,000 refugees from Burundi (285,000), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC); 118,000), Rwanda (7,600), and Somalia (4,200). Although Tanzania Red Cross Society and other international NGOs provide medical care in refugee camps, traditional healing practices are popular among and depended upon by the refugees. Among such procedures, uvulectomy is practiced widely by traditional healers, and it is suspected to cause sepsis or neonatal tetanus and subsequent death.

**Objectives:** To clarify knowledge, belief, attitude, and practice of uvulectomy and its health outcomes.

**Methods:** In May 2001, structured interviews were con-

ducted with 149 traditional healers and 400 randomly sampled persons in a Congolese refugee camp with a population of about 50,000 in eastern Tanzania.

**Results:** Among the 149 traditional healers, 39.6%, 45.6% and 14.8% were registered, non-registered traditional healers, and plea leaders. Of the total, 56.8% learned their skills from their family; 25.0% from a traditional healer; and 6.8% were self-taught. Of the traditional healers, 86.6% and 24.1% used herbs and exorcism respectively for treatment of their patients. Of the total number of participants, 73.0% felt that some of their treatments were more effective than were those provided by western medicine; 63.3% trusted and 56.9% cooperated with western doctors. Uvulectomy was practiced by only 4.8% of the healers, but these healer had performed the procedure an average of more than six times, 19.1% thought uvulectomy was effective, 36.9% while believed it to be harmful. The respondents noted that the indications for uvulectomy included vomiting and respiratory problems of infants; an adverse effect was throat pain, bleeding, and death.

Among the 400 refugees respondents, 65.7% had any family member given a uvulectomy; 16.1% answered that it was provided by a traditional healer, but more than half were done by family or other lay persons. More than two-thirds of the respondents thought uvulectomy was effective, while less than half thought it was harmful.

**Conclusion:** Uvulectomy was a popular, traditional, surgical practice to treat infants with respiratory problems in a Congolese refugee camp. It was performed not only by traditional healers, but also by lay persons, and might lead to increase in infant mortality. Collaborative work was suggested between on-site medical services and traditional medical practitioners.

**Keywords:** healers; infants; mortality; refugees; respiratory illnesses' surgery; Tanzania; uvulectomy  
*Prehosp Disast Med* 2002;17:s28.

### Education and Training

#### Meeting New Challenges in Disaster Medicine Education

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Disaster Medicine has become a recognized sub-specialty area of emergency and trauma medicine in many countries. Increasingly, the basics of disaster medicine are included in the education of physicians-in-training and routinely are a part of examination questions leading to certification in emergency medicine. More advanced educational opportunities come in the post-graduate level fellowships and master's level programs. Unfortunately, few educational programs or their graduates were prepared to offer the needed expertise in meeting the demands required of current disasters. Yet, medical professionals are assuming more and more leadership positions in state and national governments and in national and international agencies and organizations as decision-