

Impotence linked to ulcer drug use

United Press International
BOSTON — Fifty percent of the men who took high doses of common ulcer medication became impotent and had swollen, tender breasts after just a few months of treatment, a study said Thursday.

All the symptoms disappeared after the drug cimetidine, the most commonly prescribed drug in the nation, was discontinued, said the study in the New England Journal of Medicine.

It found cimetidine inhibited the action of the male sex hormone androgen, causing impotence and breast changes in 11 of 21 men who were treated for severe peptic ulcers that require massive doses of the medication.

The symptoms were reported in men taking three to four times the normal daily dose and probably are not common, said a researcher from the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Md.

"This study proves the anti-androgen effects can occur in people," said Dr. Robert T. Jensen. "I think it will not be very common, though."

The drug is commonly prescribed for ulcers that plague one in 10 men and one in 25 women in the United States, Jensen said, and has replaced the use of antacids and surgery for ulcer patients. However, only one in 10,000 ulcer patients has the peptic ulcer that requires the massive doses taken in the study.

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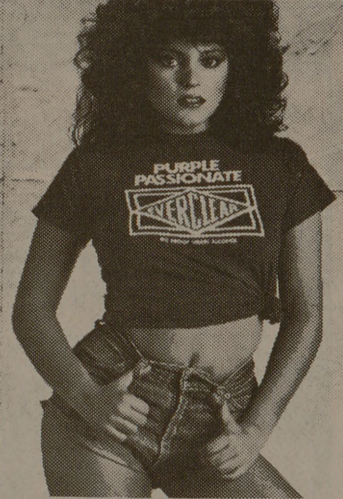
"It used to be that all these patients died because they just burned holes in their stomachs," Jensen said.

Nine of the men studied became impotent, five completely so. Nine had breast changes, and five had gynecomastia, excessive development of the male breast.

"Most of the men who had gynecomastia were bothered only minimally by it, but nearly all who became impotent wanted to discontinue cimetidine and try some other form of therapy including total gastrectomy (surgical removal of the stomach)," the researchers said.

They said switching the patients to ranitidine, another drug that blocks the secretion of gastric acids and allows the ulcers to heal, stopped the side effects.

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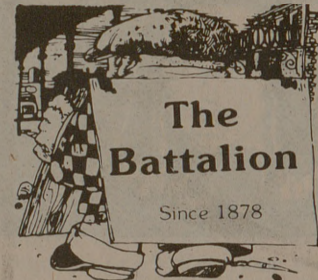
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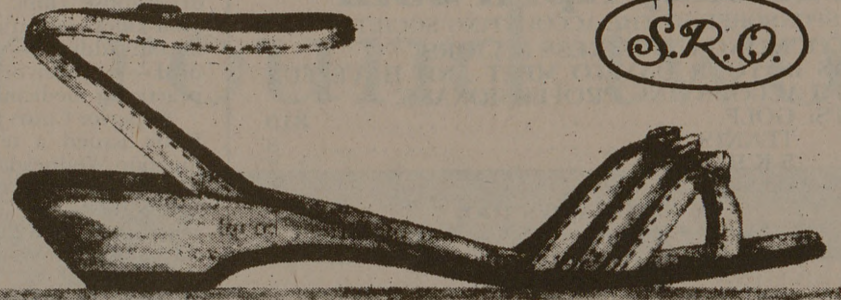
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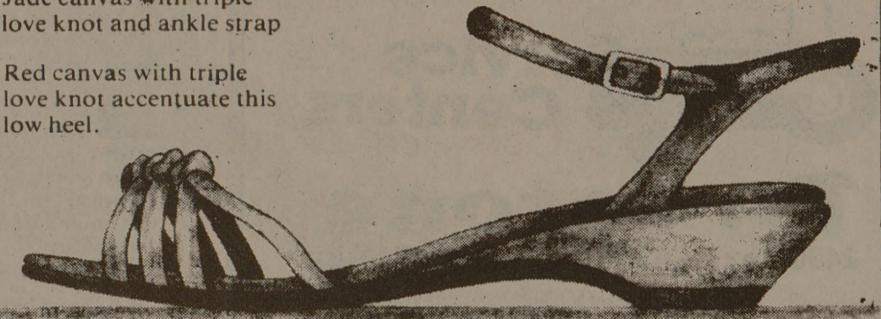
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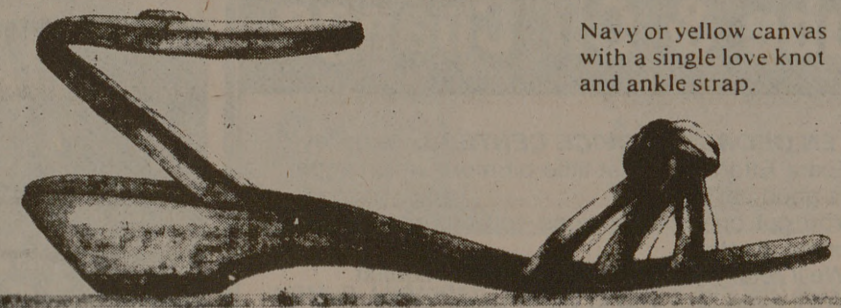
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Mixed hormone pill said more beneficial

United Press International
BOSTON — Government doctors Thursday cautioned women against taking birth control pills high in the hormone progesterin because they said it increases blood cholesterol levels and the risk of heart attacks and strokes.

Women taking oral contraceptives high in estrogen and menestruating women who take estrogen pills had lower blood levels of harmful cholesterol and higher levels of a type of cholesterol that protects against heart disease, the researchers reported.

This study confirms previous work that shows estrogens are one series of effects that might be regarded as beneficial. High progesterin may have these effects on blood cholesterol," said Dr. Basil Rifkin of the National Institutes of Health

in Bethesda, Md. The results were consistent with previous studies that found women taking estrogen after menopause had a much lower rate of deaths from all causes, including heart disease, he said.

"If one pill is as effective as another in preventing pregnancies, you may as well go on the one that has a mixture of hormones that doesn't have adverse effects and may have a beneficial effect," he said.

The results of the nationwide study of 374 women taking the pill, 284 women taking estrogen after menopause and 1,086 women taking no hormones were reported in the New England Journal of Medicine.

Rifkin said women using low-estrogen, high-progesterin birth control pills had 24 percent higher levels of low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol

than non-users. LDL has been shown to contribute to heart disease.

The women on those pills also had "significantly lower" levels of high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol that protects against heart disease by carrying the fatty deposits out of the system, Rifkin said.

"Thus, hormone preparations that simultaneously elevate LDL levels and decrease HDL levels cause the most concern," the researchers said.

The study also found significantly higher levels of the protective HDL cholesterol in all nonmenstruating women, young and old, who were taking estrogen.

Birth control pills are the most popular non-surgical form of contraceptive, used by as many as 55 million women worldwide.

Kong reclaims perch overlooking New York

United Press International
NEW YORK — Proving you can keep a good gorilla down, King Kong was back on top of the Empire State Building Thursday.

The 10-story, 2,500-pound Kong balloon was inflated Wednesday night to almost a quarter-mile into the sky, after more than a week of problems keeping him back on his perch.

The inflation of the balloon marked the 50th anniversary of the original King Kong movie. The film Kong climbed the 102-story skyscraper, then the world's tallest, with Fay Wray in his hand.

In 1976, Kong, this time in a movie by Dino DeLaurentis,

climbed to the top of the World Trade Center with Jessica Lange in his gigantic hand. That was before she won an Academy Award for "Tootsie."

Robert Vicino, creator of the latest version of Kong, said he and crews would put the "finishing touches" Thursday on the balloon beast — "turn his arm around a little, things like that," he said, adding that Kong would probably stay up about a week.

Vicino said he may even inflate Kong right on the street after his reign atop the Empire State Building.

"I feel relieved, overwhelmed, extremely excited and mostly thankful that God was list-

ening to me," Vicino said. "They say the third time's a charm."

The effort, which began 10 days ago, touched off a champagne celebration on the "Kong-course," the landmark building's concourse renamed by Kong spokesman Dan Wolfson.

Kong was just a silhouette against the illuminated tower of the Empire State Building Wednesday night. He was expected to exert his full terror Thursday.

Arthur Novell, a publicist for the project, said he had been getting calls from all over the city and New Jersey: "He's 84 feet high. How can you miss him?"

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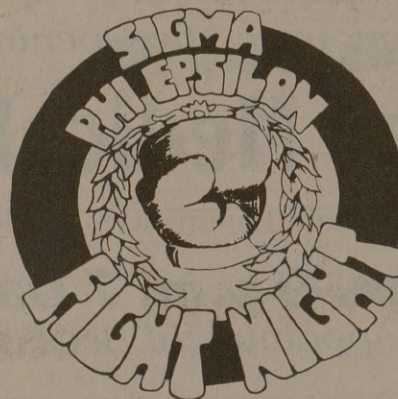
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