

Battalion Classifieds

Doctor says drugs might be to blame for cardiac arrests

WASHINGTON (AP) — Up to 3,000 patients may have died prematurely in a nationwide trial of two drugs designed to prevent irregular heart beats, but which actually caused heart attacks, according to a survey of cardiac specialists.

Dr. Joel Morganroth, director of cardiac research at the University of Pennsylvania's hospital in Philadelphia, said Tuesday in an interview that he arrived at the estimated mortality toll after surveying 1,000 cardiologists to find who had prescribed two heart medicines, encainide and flecainide, during the trial.

"Fifteen hundred to 2,000 died, if all the assumptions are appropriate" in the last 12 months of the trial, he said. For the previous year, when the drugs were not as widely used, he estimates the premature deaths at 750 to 1,000.

Physicians Weekly, which reported on the survey, called the drug trials a "sudden-death debacle." The magazine said that "before a trial found that two drugs to block sudden death actually triggered it, thousands may have died prematurely."

Morganroth and other cardiologists have said they were shocked and surprised when the CAST studies determined that the drugs may actually have caused more, not less, deaths among a certain class of patients.

Patients in the CAST studies, which were initiated by the National Institutes of Health, had all suffered a type of heart attack and then experienced very mild irregular ventricular heart beats. These arrhythmias caused no noticeable problems to the patient and were thus called asymptomatic.

Morganroth said it was known that the sudden death rate among such patients was 1.5 to 2 times greater than among heart attack patients who had no such arrhythmias.

"CAST's objective was to take people with these arrhythmias, give half of them sugar pills and half a drug that suppresses (the irregular heart-beats)," he said.

Encainide and flecainide were approved in 1987 for preventing a type of cardiac arrhythmia that features extra ventricular beats. A national study of the drugs, called the cardiac arrhythmia suppression trial, or CAST, was started in June 1987. It was halted abruptly last April when data showed sudden death rates increasing among patients taking the drugs.

Since then, Morganroth said he conducted a randomized survey to determine how many patients may have died prematurely from the use of the drugs.

He said 250 cardiologists responded to his survey and that half said they had prescribed the drugs. Based on these results, Morganroth said he extrapolated the number of premature deaths by factoring in national heart attack death rate statistics and the prescription record for the two drugs.

Two former PTL aides convicted of tax evasion

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) — Two former PTL aides were convicted Tuesday of evading \$525,000 in income taxes on money they took from the television ministry to buy condominiums, furs, jewelry and nearly \$100,000 worth of shoes.

A federal jury deliberated five hours before convicting the brothers, James and David Taggart, on identical charges: conspiracy to defraud the government and impede the IRS by willfully evading income taxes, and filing false tax returns for the years 1984, 1985, 1986 and 1987.

"Greed doesn't pay," said federal prosecutor David Brown after the verdict. "No matter how rich you are, you've got to pay your taxes."

The statement was not about PTL; it was about David Taggart and James Taggart's obligations to pay their taxes no matter how much they own and what kind of lifestyle they live."

Brown said he wasn't surprised the jury took just five hours.

"They didn't need to spend a lot of time looking at the documents," he said. "A person can omit \$200 (in income) on their tax return, but it's hard to miss \$1 million."

"They were innocent going in and they are innocent coming out," said defense lawyer Ben Cotten. He said he was to blame for the guilty verdict, citing "my ineptitude and too very capable and competent government counsel backed with unlimited resources."

United jet lands at DFW after hydraulic failure

GRAPEVINE (AP) — The pilot of a Houston-bound United Airlines jet that experienced hydraulic failure Tuesday went to a backup system and diverted the plane to Dallas-Fort International Airport for a "precautionary" landing, the airline said.

United Flight 275, en route from Chicago O'Hare to Houston Hobby Airport, landed at DFW at about 3:40 p.m., said United spokesman Sara Dornacker.

The Boeing 737 was carrying 64 passengers, two pilots and three flight attendants. No one was injured, she said.

A complete hydraulic failure forced the emergency landing last Wednesday of United Flight 232 in Sioux City, Iowa. The DC-10 somersaulted, broke apart and burst into flames, killing 111 people.

'Friendship' motto receives more criticism; Richards says slogan too 'wimpy' for Texas

AUSTIN (AP) — The plan by state highway officials to emblazon "The Friendship State" on Texas auto license plates is getting more heat, with the latest blast coming Tuesday from a gubernatorial candidate.

"It's wimpy," said Democratic state Treasurer Ann Richards, who joined the chorus of opponents speaking up since last week's vote by the State Highway and Public Transportation Commission.

"When I first saw it, I thought, 'Well, why would we want to do that?'" Richards said. "Obviously, it's not an earth-shattering decision. But I think 'The Lone Star State' has served us well."

The new slogan has generated hundreds of phone calls from Texans outraged over the idea, many of whom have suggested replacing the current slogan with those bearing the "Lone Star" nickname.

Attorney General Jim Mattox, who's also expected to seek the Democratic gubernatorial nomination, had a different idea.

What's Up

Wednesday

NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS: will meet at 8:30 p.m. For more information contact the C.D.P.E. at 845-0280.

CAMPUS CRUSADE FOR CHRIST: will meet at 7:30 p.m. in 301 Rudder for a CCC weekly meeting.

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS: will meet at noon. For more information contact the C.D.P.E. at 845-0280.

Thursday

TAMU SAILING TEAM: will meet at 8 p.m. in 104 Zachry.

ADULT CHILDREN OF ALCOHOLICS: will meet at 6 p.m. For more information contact the C.D.P.E. at 845-0280.

MUSLIM STUDENTS ASSOCIATION: will meet at 6:30 p.m. in 704 AB Rudder to watch a video presentation on the concept of God in Islam. For more information contact Moosa at 846-3350 or Brad at 846-1404.

NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS: will meet at 8:30 p.m. For more information contact the C.D.P.E. at 845-0280.

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS: will meet at noon. For more information contact the C.D.P.E. at 845-0280.

Items for What's Up should be submitted to The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald, no later than three business days before the desired run date. We only publish the name and phone number of the contact if you ask us to do so. What's Up is a Battalion service that lists non-profit events and activities. Submissions are run on a first-come, first-served basis. There is no guarantee an entry will run. If you have questions, call the newsroom at 845-3315.

Pilot: United 232 crew went by book in crash

SIoux CITY, Iowa (AP) — The United Airlines crew who flew a DC-10 jumbo jet with no hydraulic controls went by the book until they ran out of standard procedures and then improvised, the plane's pilot said Tuesday.

"We realized we had more than just an engine failure," pilot Al C. Haynes said at his first public comment on the crash, a news conference, in Sioux City, where Flight 232 crashed a week ago. "It was apparent to all of us we had lost all of our hydraulic fluid."

Haynes, co-pilot William R. Records, flight engineer Dudley Dvorak and off-duty United pilot Denny Fitch brought the plane down at Sioux Gateway Airport, where it crashed, flipped, broke apart and burst into flames. Of the 296 passengers and crew, 185 survived and 111 were killed.

Haynes said the crew never contemplated not making it to the airport.

"We were just going to go in and land, and that's what we tried to do," he said. "How could we operate if we didn't believe that?"

He would not discuss the cause or technical details of the crash because the National Transportation Safety Board is still investigating.

Investigators searched corn and soybean fields about 60 miles from the airport again Tuesday for important pieces of the DC-10's No. 2 engine, the tail-mounted engine that apparently blew apart and severed lines of all three hydraulic systems.

Those hydraulic systems allow pilots to set key wing and tail panels that control the aircraft's altitude and direction.

Without them, the pilot has little control over the airplane other than his throttles.

Meanwhile, in Washington, Transportation Secretary Samuel Skinner said Tuesday that nothing about the crash indicates that other DC-10s are unsafe or that anything more now needs to be done to make them safer.

He defended a declaration by new Federal Aviation Administration head James Busey that the DC-10 is a safe aircraft even though the cause of the crash has not been determined.

"Let's have all the daily newspapers around the state run ballots that the public can fill out and mail in," he said, adding that the ballots could offer several options for the slogan.

"That way, we wouldn't have to go through an expensive ballot proposition of having the public actually vote on the matter, but the people would have the decision-making in their hands," Mattox said.

Richards said she agrees with those who say "friendship" is too generic a term for Texas, where the tough "Don't Mess With Texas" anti-littering slogan has proven so popular.

"I think the reason the don't mess with Texas thing has been so successful is that it sort of continues that image that we're great, we're wonderful, we think we are," she said. "The friendly state — you could put that on Kansas, Ohio..."

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