



Reading and Riding: a nauseous combination

Question: The other day I was reading a book on the shuttle bus and started to feel nauseous. Why does reading in a moving vehicle cause motion sickness?

— Eric Dickens,
senior English major



STUART
HUTSON

Answer: For those ever-diligent studiers who are compelled to catch up on their reading during those few minutes spent traveling from point A to point B, I have some bad news: You are predators.

What I mean is, while human eyes are meant to be able to focus on a point directly in front of them (presumably prey, but for college students this may more likely be a ham sandwich or a great pair of legs), your eyes are also extraordinarily sensitive to motion in your peripheral vision.

This was originally designed to warn us of attackers from the side, but was also designed to correspond with the movement in our central field of vision. In other words, if you are moving forward, you should be able to see movement in our front and side vision.

When you read while traveling in a vehicle, your central vision tells you that you are stationary while your peripheral vision tells you that you are moving. According to an October 1999 article in the Journal of Postgraduate Medicine, these contradictory signals, along with the sensations felt by the balance-sensitive organs

of the inner ear, confuse your brain.

(At this interval I would like to point out that, if you are reading this on the bus, it may be important to note that a properly-folded *Battalion* may serve as a sufficient substitute for an air-sickness bag.)

This confusion panics the brain into releasing the stress hormones that cause the muscles of the stomach to increase their movement rates from the normal three cycles a minute to as much as nine a minute. At this point, you may blow chunks.

According to information from Dr. A. Gregory Toller Jr., a fellow in the Virginia Academy of Optometry, about 38 percent of the population is born without the ability to read in a moving vehicle under any circumstances other than while medicated.

Those whose hormones are already up in arms, such as pregnant women and children (everyone undergoes hormone readjustments from infancy to post-adolescence), are also at higher risk to experience motion sickness.

However, for the rest of us who are sometimes just a little queasy, turning away from the window while reading in a car will help with the motion sickness.

It's that simple.

If you are interested in further information, or if you have another question about how or why something happens, send me an email at scifi1@hotmail.com and I will see if I can regurgitate an answer.

Tests show woman in Canada not infected with Ebola virus

HAMILTON, Ontario (AP) — Preliminary tests show that a Congolese woman who arrived in Canada and fell ill with symptoms of a hemorrhagic virus does not have Ebola, a doctor said Wednesday.

It was not yet clear what the 32-year-old woman was suffering from, Dr. Mark Lobe said at a news conference at Henderson Hospital in Hamilton.

"This greatly reduces the likelihood that this patient has been infected with the Ebola virus," Lobe said. Further tests were being conducted.

The woman, who has not been identified, was admitted to the hospital Sunday drifting in and out of consciousness, doctors said.

Earlier, a health ministry official said doctors diagnosed her as having a low-grade case of malaria and were still testing into the possibility of a sort of hemorrhagic fever.

Blood samples were sent to a Winnipeg laboratory and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, said Rosalyn Tremblay of Health Canada. Results were expected Thursday.

Ebola has never been confirmed in humans in North America.

The woman was in serious condition but was showing signs of improvement, said Lobe, an expert in infectious diseases.

She arrived Saturday at Toronto's Pearson International Airport on Air Canada Flight 735 from

Newark International Airport in New Jersey, airline spokeswoman Laura Cooke said. The flight had 39 passengers and five crew members.

Her flight had arrived in New Jersey from Ethiopia, but it was not clear how she got to Ethiopia from Congo, *The Toronto Star* newspaper

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— Dr. Mark Lobe
Henderson Hospital

reported. She apparently came to Canada on a legitimate visitor's visa.

Lobe said the woman's symptoms were "possibly compatible" with hemorrhagic fevers.

Doctors said she had not shown signs of bleeding from the ears, eyes or mouth — conditions that would suggest the Ebola virus that can be lethal in more than 50 percent of cases. A recent outbreak in Uganda killed 173 of the more than 400 people who fell ill.

Tests for meningitis — an infection of the fluid of the spinal cord and brain — have so far proved negative, doctors said.

Canadian health authorities asked for a list of passengers on the

flight, but also "advised us they not consider this passenger to be contagious for casual contact," Cooke said. The flight's crew members have been notified, but no special steps for them were ordered, she said.

"We've been told there's no public health concern," she said.

Ebola and the other hemorrhagic fevers are not transmitted through the air.

Infection occurs through direct contact with the infected person's blood or bodily fluids such as saliva or semen, and only after they have exhibited symptoms such as fever and malaise.

That's why it was a relief for health officials to learn that the woman did not fall visibly ill after arriving in Hamilton on Sunday night.

It was not until Monday afternoon that concerns about Ebola were raised and the woman was taken into total isolation.

Lobe and the others insist there was little chance that the disease would spread and almost no possibility of a widescale outbreak.

"She arrived Saturday, so the circle of contacts is limited," said Colin D'Cunha, an Ontario medical official. "Based on information at this time, I wouldn't say the danger is zero. But it would be misleading to say it's a lot. The evidence is pointing to minimal."

New rules for meat processing to be made

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Agriculture Department is moving forward with new microbial testing requirements for meat processors that were proposed in the Clinton administration's last days, then put on hold by the incoming Bush administration.

The rules would require makers of hot dogs, cold cuts and other ready-to-eat meat products to test packaging equipment regularly for *Listeria monocytogenes* and allow the government to look at company records.

Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman said Wednesday that her agency would release the rules for public comment "in a matter of days."

The department announced the rules on Jan. 19, President Clinton's last full day in office, but they were not published. The Bush administration could have killed the proposals, leaving them on hold indefinitely, or could have altered them significantly before publishing them and soliciting public comment.

The department could still change the rules after they are released for public comment. Any changes before they are likely to be small, Veneman said.

"We could make some alterations. Obviously, since we're going to release the rules in short order, we wouldn't be much," she said.

Listeria contamination kills an estimated 500 people and causes 2,000 serious illnesses each year. The standards were among a series of minute regulations put on hold by the White House when President Clinton was inaugurated Jan. 20 so his administration could review them.

"It's great news that the secretary said that this was a priority," Caroline Smith DeWaal, director of food safety for the Center for Science in the Public Interest, a consumer advocacy group.

The *Listeria* rules are "a good case for the administration on its safety policy. If they had said they would be headed for a final grade," she said.

The National Food Processors Association, which represents companies such as Kraft, Hormel, Campbell's, has not taken a position on the rules. But the industry is concerned they may require testing of products such as soups that the industry does not think pose a significant risk for microbial contamination.

"You're looking at a large amount of proposed ruling on an array of products," said Rhonda Plebaum, who monitors regulations for the association.

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