

By means of shrewd lies,
unremittingly repeated, it is
possible to make people be-
lieve that heaven is hell --
and hell heaven. The
greater the lie, the more
readily it will be believed.
*Adolph Hitler (1889 - 1945),
Mein Kampf*

Phactum

The Newsletter of the
Philadelphia Association for Critical Thinking
November/December 2008

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The next **PhACT** meeting will be hosted by Dr. David Cattell, Chariman of the Physics Department at Philadelphia Community College on **Saturday, November 15, 2008 at 2 PM** at Community College of Philadelphia, 17th and Spring Garden Streets, in room S2-03 of the Winnet Student Life Building, the round building on 17th Street just south of Spring Garden Street. Admission is **FREE**.

Dr. Pamela Freyd, a psychiatrist and Executive Director of the Philadelphia based **False Memory Syndrome Foundation (FMSF)**, will discuss the FMS Foundation and ruinous dangers associated with “recovered memories”.

In the early 1990s, there was an explosion of accusations of childhood sexual abuse based only on claims of “repressed memories” made by adults against their parents. Most of these “memories” had been excavated in therapy, generally with use of hypnosis. Thousands of families were destroyed, and the courts were filled with lawsuits based on “recovered memories.” By the end of the 1990s, however, the exponential growth of such accusations and the subsequent lawsuits had slowed. Just when it seemed likely that the problem would slowly fade away as a consequence of the mounting evidence that there was no scientific basis to support the claims, the clergy abuse scandal grabbed the headlines, keeping the notion of “recovered repressed memories” in the news.

Dr. Freyd’s presentation will review briefly the history of the false memory problem and the conditions that allowed it to flourish. It will highlight several significant research studies on the topic and discuss the role of the FMS Foundation in the acrimonious debate.

The FMS Foundation is located at 1955 Locust Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103-5766. Telephone: 215-940-1040, Fax: 215-940-1042. The Foundation is funded by membership dues and contributions from families and friends. Dues constitute less than half the income. Because the FMS Foundation is a 501 (c) (3) institution, contributions are tax deductible. The FMSF website is <http://www.fmsfonline.org/>

**We can remember minutely and precisely only the things which
never really happened to us. Eric Hoffer (1902 - 1983)**

The PhACT Council

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Ray Haupt, Treasurer
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Harry Rothwell, Becky Strickland

Phactum is, in theory, printed 6 times a year and is the main propaganda organ for the Philadelphia Association for Critical Thinking.

If you are not a member/subscriber we invite you to become one by sending \$15 for a one year membership to PhACT, \$10 for students. Donations are welcome.

Send letters of rebuttal, ideas, short essays, poetry, opinion pieces, complaints, and lavish praise to Ray Haupt, Phactum editor, at phactpublicity@aol.com.

PHACT CALENDAR

The **Physics Department of Community College of Philadelphia** hosts meetings of **PhACT** - at 2:00 PM on the third Saturday of most months at Community College of Philadelphia, 17th and Spring Garden Streets, in room S2-03 of the Winnet Student Life Building, the round building on 17th Street just south of Spring Garden Street. **Meetings are free and open to the public unless otherwise noted.** Parking is free at all PhACT events at CCP. Enter the college parking lot on 17th Street which is one way south bound. At the meeting be sure to get a free parking voucher from Dr. Cattell. This meeting site is handicap accessible.



Saturday, November 15, 2008 at 2 PM. **Dr. Pamela Freyd**, a psychiatrist and Executive Director of the Philadelphia based **False Memory Syndrome Foundation (FMSF)**, will discuss the FMS Foundation and ruinous dangers associated with "recovered memories". **FREE.** See page 1 for more information.

Sunday, December 14, 2008 - Annual PhACT Winter Solstice Party. This event is free, but is reserved for PhACT members and their guests.

Saturday, January 17, 2009 - TBA

Thursday, November 13, 2008 at 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm. At the University of Pennsylvania Museum, 3260 South Street, Philadelphia. Petersen Lecture : **Breaking the Mind Barrier: The Archaeology and Evolution of Our Social Brain.** Professor Clive Gamble, Department of Geography, Royal Holloway College, University of London, argues that the time has come for archaeologists and other scholars to focus on the "bigger picture" of human evolution, investigating the minds and emotions of our earliest ancestors. Drawing upon a wide range of disciplines, he answers the question, 'when did hominid brains become human minds?' For more information: www.phf.upenn.edu. Free. Pre-registration required. Information: 215/898-4890.

Friday, November 14, 2008 at 8 PM. Delaware Valley Mensa General Membership Meeting. **Scientology.** Christopher Owens is a professional Dianetics Auditor (counselor), and has worked for the Church for the last 14 years in many capacities. He is currently the Public Contact Director of the Church of Scientology of Pennsylvania, where his duties include contacting people new to Scientology and answering questions, giving lectures and workshops and other introductory services to help people get started in Scientology.

The General Membership Meeting will be held at the Police Administration Building, 750 Race Street, Philadelphia, PA. This meeting is DVM's only activity specifically open to the public, so feel free to invite your friends and relatives. Free. <http://dvm.us.mensa.org/>

Wednesday, November 19, 2008 at 7:00 PM. At the Franklin Institute, 20th Street and the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, Philadelphia. The Franklin Institute, Discover Magazine and the National Science Foundation present a fascinating neuroscience symposium. **"Unlocking the Secrets and Powers of the Brain."**

Moderated by award-winning journalist Carl Zimmer, the discussion features Dan Levitin (best-selling author of *This is Your Brain On Music*), Michael Gazzaniga (Director for the SAGE Center for the Study of Mind at UC Santa Barbara), Rebecca Saxe (Assistant Professor of Cognitive Neuroscience at MIT), Sam

Wang (Welcome to Your Brain) and Ron Mangun (Interim Dean of Social Sciences, a Professor of Psychology and Neurology, and the Director of the Center for Mind and Brain at the UC Davis). A book signing will follow.

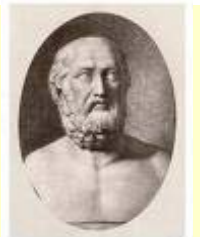
Free with advanced registration, please call 215.448.1254

Wednesday, December 3, 2008 at 5:00 pm to 6:30 pm. At the University of Pennsylvania Museum, 3260 South Street, Philadelphia. Penn Humanities Forum on Change : Changing Who We Are. **What Is Genetics Doing to Us?** Ian Hacking, Professor of Philosophy, University of Toronto, looks at our rapidly changing world and suggests that for the first time the sciences, rather than the humanities, are defining the human condition. For more information: www.phf.upenn.edu. Free. Pre-registration required. Call for more info: 215/573-8280

Friday, December 12, 2008 at 8 PM. Delaware Valley Mensa General Membership Meeting. Program TBA. See November 14 listing for address and website.

Thursday, February 26, 2008 - Program from 4-7 PM, Lecture at 5:30. Weeknights at the Wagner. At the **Wagner Free Institute of Science**, 1700 West Montgomery Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19121 Guest Speaker, Dr. Alan Mann, Princeton University. **"The Origin of Humanness"**. Anthropologist Dr. Alan Mann will join us as part of the Year of Evolution. He will speak about the beginnings of uniquely human behaviors in our evolutionary ancestors by examining prehistoric art, ornamentation, and other evidence. Free. ph 215-763-6529 www.wagnerfreeinstitute.org

Every Monday, except holidays, at 7:00 PM . **Socrates Cafe** is moderated by PhACT member Sam Frederick at the Springfield Township Library at 1600 Paper Mill Road, Wyndmoor, PA 19038. This discussion group is free and open to the public. Bring an open mind and positive attitude.



PHACT CALENDAR

The Big Questions in Science and Religion: 2008-2009 Metanexus Senior Fellow Lecture Series with Keith Ward

“How Does Morality Relate to Religion?”

Wednesday, November 12 at 7:30 pm

Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church

Congregation Hall, 625 Montgomery Avenue, Bryn Mawr PA

“Has Science Made Belief in God Obsolete?”

Thursday, November 13 at 4:30 pm

Swarthmore College, Science Center 101

500 College Ave., Swarthmore, PA

“Can the ‘Cruelty and Waste’ of Evolution Be Reconciled with Creation by a Good God?”

Friday, November 14 at 7:30 pm

Chestnut Hill College, Social Room – Fournier Hall

9601 Germantown Avenue, Philadelphia, PA

“Materialism and Its Discontents”

Saturday, November 15 at 11:00 am

Christ Church Ithan

536 Conestoga Road, Villanova, PA

“Is It Still Possible to Speak of the Soul?”

Sunday, November 16 at 4:30 pm

First Unitarian Church, 730 Halstead Road

Wilmington, DE

Keith Ward is a fellow of the British Academy, the Regius Professor of Divinity Emeritus at the University of Oxford, an ordained priest of the Church of England, and a member of the Council of the Royal Institute of Philosophy. He has doctorates of divinity from Cambridge and Oxford Universities. He has written more than twenty highly acclaimed books. He lives in Oxford, England.

All lectures are free and open to the public.

For more information, please contact us at info@metanexus.net or (484) 592-0304.

Calling All Astronomers! Rittenhouse Astronomical Society Monthly Meetings! Bring all of your out-of-this-world questions!

Join The Rittenhouse Astronomical Society the second Wednesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. in the Fels Planetarium. The society offers all persons an opportunity to participate in the activities of an astronomical group at the laymen's level. They aim to spread knowledge, awareness and enjoyment of astronomy and astronomical issues. It is a popular science club that keeps its members up-to-date on the latest developments. No experience is necessary to attend the FREE meetings. Come with your astronomy questions!

www.rittenhouseastronomicalsociety.org/

The **PhACT Calendar** is open to members and non-members who wish to announce meetings and events of other groups of which they are interested or affiliated. These events should be of some general interest to the Skeptical or Scientific community and should be within a reasonable radius of Philadelphia. Send submissions to the editor at phactpublicity@aol.com. Keep the announcements brief. Space is limited and insertions will be made on a first come-first served basis after the needs of PhACT are accomplished.

Wagner Free Institute of Science

1700 West Montgomery Avenue

, Philadelphia, PA 19121

ph 215-763-6529 www.wagnerfreeinstitute.org

Founded in 1855, the Wagner Free Institute of Science is a museum and educational institution that is nearly unchanged from the nineteenth century. The museum building, a National Historic Landmark completed in 1865, houses a natural history collection begun by William Wagner in the early nineteenth century and expanded by naturalist Joseph Leidy in the 1880's. The collection includes skeletons, fossils, shells, minerals and mounted animals. The Museum is open to the public Tuesday-Friday, 9 AM to 4 PM.

A few examples of the collection:

Case 63: Ichthyosaurus, accession no. 132. Purchased from J.H. Butler, Lyme Regis, England, 1889.

This ancient sea creature was a marine reptile which lived from the early Jurassic period until the early Cretaceous period, about 206-140 million years ago. Hundreds of Ichthyosaurs have been discovered in the Lyme Regis area of England, as well as in Germany, Greenland, and Alberta, Canada. The discovery of the first articulated ichthyosaur has been attributed to a twelve year old girl from England, named Mary Anning, who helped excavate a complete Ichthyosaur from a cave in Lyme Regis in the early 1800's. Ichthyosaurus, which means "fish lizard," was officially named by Charles Koenig in 1818.



Case 73 (top): African Elephant, Accession No. 104. Purchased from E. Gerard, 1889.

The African Elephant is the largest living land animal on earth. It averages ten feet tall at the shoulders, with ears shaped like the continent of Africa. These large ears not only enable the elephant to hear well, they also help to maintain body temperature, ridding the elephant of excess body heat. Elephants are excellent swimmers. As herbivores, elephants spend most of their time eating, and some bulls can eat up to six hundred pounds of plants each day. Elephants have very strong social bonds, living in family groups headed by females. They have few natural enemies except humans. Both males and females are hunted for their ivory tusks. African Elephants once roamed the entire continent of Africa; today they are only found south of the Sahara desert.

Case 73 (top): Asian Elephant. Although the label indicates that the Asian Elephant is the largest mammal in the museum, the Asian Elephant is, in fact, smaller than its African counterpart. (Its Latin name, *Elephas Maximus*, suggests otherwise.) The Asian Elephant has smaller tusks and smaller ears than those of the African Elephant. It is a nomadic creature, roaming in mostly cool, shady places and staying near water throughout South China, Nepal, India, Malaysia, and Indonesia. It will consume up to 330 pounds of vegetation a day. Like the African Elephant, the Asian Elephant has been hunted nearly to extinction, and suffers additional threats due to deforestation.

The Museum is open to visitors Tuesday through Friday from 9 AM - 4 PM for self-guided tours. Groups of more than six people are asked to phone in advance for reservations by calling (215) 763-6529, ext. 17. Admission is free; donations are encouraged.

Letters

Editor: The last few issues of Phactum have featured an article about PhACT's stance on religion and letters in response to this issue. While I find the "crooked line in the sand" concept disingenuous and cowardly, because of PhACT's wonderful programming, I can accept not agreeing with everything the leaders decide.

What I cannot accept is a Board member of PhACT denying the existence of other organizations that PhACT is fully aware of. In the October issue, Tom Napier wrote "CSICOP has a sister organization (then CODESH) which publishes Free Inquiry and does critique religion. ***No one has taken it upon themselves to found an equivalent organization in the Philadelphia area;***"

Not true! CODESH is now the Council for Secular Humanism, of which the Humanist Association of Greater Philadelphia (HAGP), an overtly non-theistic community organization, is associated. Also, the Freethought Society of Greater Philadelphia (FSGP) is another community organization which does regularly criticize religious faith as irrational.

PhACT is aware of HAGP and FSGP; they co-hosted an event with FSGP with Michael Shermer not that long ago, and HAGP has invited PhACT to co-host summer picnics and winter celebrations since we have overlaps in all our membership. And both HAGP and FSGP are part of the Greater Philadelphia Coalition of Reason (PhillyCoR), which PhACT was invited to be a part of, and ultimately declined due to the stance to not critique "fuzzy" religious beliefs.

If PhACT wants to go about looking hypocritical by advertising lectures and events which are critical of religious faith, and criticizing some aspects of religious irrationalism, while holding back on other irrational ideas because they are "fuzzy", fine. But don't pretend your friends who aren't afraid to take on religious faith don't exist.

Martha Knox

Coordinator, PhillyCoR www.phillycor.org

Director, HAGP www.hagp.org

Editor: As Martha Knox supposes, I am aware of the existence of FSGP although, not being a militant atheist, I avoid contact with it. I believe it is an independent organization that long predates PhACT. As I wrote, those who want PhACT to change its nature are free to found their own organization. They may also wish to join FSGP and attempt to change it to suit their agenda. I wish them luck.

Tom Napier

North Wales, PA

Editor: Don't you hate having to explain your jokes? By referring to the Creation Museum's Adam and Eve as "Creation porn" I was making an ironic allusion to the right-wing definition of pornography as "Images intended to cor-

rupt the mind of the viewer." To my (no doubt corrupt) mind, depicting Adam and Eve as Caucasians nurtures the popular view that all biblical characters were WASPs and that (white) Americans are God's chosen people.

Tom Napier

North Wales, PA

Editor: The benefits of vaccines are undeniable, but blanket condemnation of vaccine skeptics has gone too far in Phactum. To give two concrete examples, the doubtful overall value of shingles vaccine was published in a peer-reviewed journal: Joel M. Kauffman (2005). "New Vaccine for Shingles: Is Prevention Really Better than Treatment?" *Journal of American Physicians & Surgeons*, 10(4), 117. <http://www.jpands.org/jpands1004.htm> p117, and "Girls Paralyzed By Gardasil Vaccine Sue Merck" in which over 8000 complaints of about this new vaccine:

<http://www.theoneclickgroup.co.uk/news.php?start=2300&end=2320&view=yes&id=2816#newspost>

This website revealed an entire book devoted to the permutations of Quackbusters and support of their attacks on any alternative health topic. The book is: *Cultural Dwarfs and Junk Journalism* by Ben Goldacre, Quackbusting and Corporate Science, by Martin J Walker, Slingshot Publications, London 2008. CSICOP came in for plenty of criticism for not being skeptical.

Some notes on Skepticism Many who loudly advertise themselves as skeptics are actually disbelievers. Properly, a skeptic is a nonbeliever, a person who refuses to jump to conclusions based on inconclusive evidence. A disbeliever, on the other hand, is characterized by an a priori belief that a certain idea is wrong and will not be swayed by any amount of empirical evidence to the contrary. Since disbelievers usually fancy themselves skeptics,

I will follow Truzzi and call them pseudoskeptics, and their opinions pseudoskepticism."

Joel M. Kauffman, PhD

Berwyn, PA

Editors note: see page 7 for a brief description of Dr. Kauffman's book, "Malignant Medical Myths".

Editor: For your interest on cold fusion check out the link given below to New Energy Times.

"Hot fusion may perpetually be the promise of the future. Ironically, it may well be Cold Fusion that offers the best prospect for abundant energy. Because of the bad press gained by Fleischmann and Pons, the more politically correct label for the science is now LENR, Low Energy Nuclear Reactions. Check out Arata-Zhang; LENR Demonstration at Osaka University, May 22, 2008. He can reproduce the effect at will. It is interesting to note that some researchers have seen energy out about 10,000 times greater than energy in. Contrast those results to hot fusion which has yet to see energy break even. Who knows if LENR will ever be more than a lab curiosity. Time will tell and in the 30 to 50 intervening

years, we still need energy from wherever we can find it."

<http://www.newenergytimes.com/Inthenews/2008/Q2/PWBLOG-ColdFusionDemonstration2.htm>

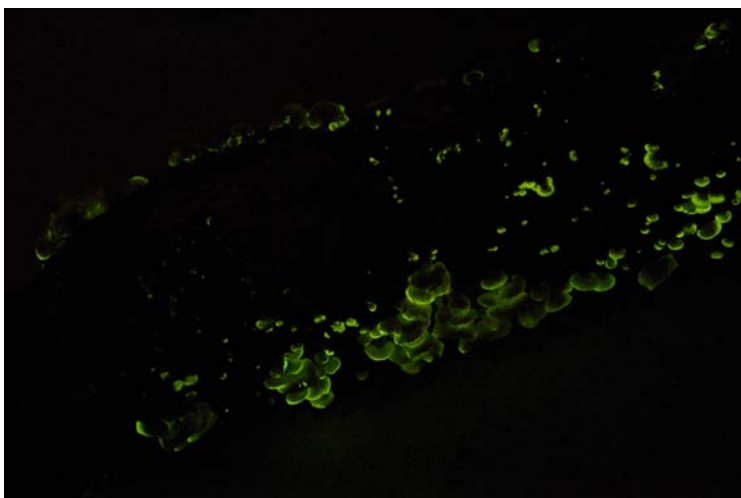
Joel M. Kauffman, PhD

Berwyn, PA

Editor: In days gone by, people wandering about the woods late at night would occasionally encounter mysterious stationary lights known as foxfire as opposed to moving lights such as the will-o'-the-wisp. The eerie glow at night in the enchanted forest was really due to bioluminescent fungi. The conditions have to be just right, such as, having the right amount of moisture and temperatures between 34 and 86 degrees and, of course, it has to be dark for the fungus to glow. There are only three species of bioluminescent fungi at Tyler Arboretum in Delaware County: Honey Mushroom, Jack-O-Lantern and *Panellus stipticus*. I recently saw the eerie glow of foxfire due to *Panellus stipticus* mushrooms on a fallen branch during an October 11, 2008 night hike at Tyler Arboretum. I was allowed to temporarily take the branch home and my cousin, Bob Clark, was able to get some time-exposure photographs of the glowing mushrooms. Anyway, while researching the subject, I came across a peculiar use for foxfire during the American Revolution when it was used to provide lighting for the first American submarine. Apparently the source for this novel idea was none other than our own Benjamin Franklin.

Don Nigroni

Glenolden, PA



Photograph of the glowing mushrooms of *Panellus stipticus* on a fallen branch which was seen during a Fall 2008 Night Hike at Tyler Arboretum. *Photograph by Bob Clark*

Editors note: See back page for more on this topic.

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Various Ruminations

Collected/written by Ray Haupt
(with help from others)

The PhACT website

PhACT's website, www.phact.org, has recently been overhauled by longtime member Wes Powers. It is easier to use and has more facilities. Be sure to check it out. Thanks for your help, Wes.

Innumeracy in the Media.

After the Phillies won the first game against the Dodgers, the MLB website announced that teams that took a 1-0 lead won the NLCS 68.5% of the time. Sounds like an important statistic, until you consider that the ratio of the number of games that they have to win compared to the number of games that their opponents have to win is 2/3 ... which is, of course, 67.7%.

No wonder the lotteries and casinos are doing so well. Let's all chip in to send MLB an autographed copy of Dr. Paulos book "Innumeracy".

More about Vaccines and Autism

The October 28, 2008 edition of Newsweek has a two page article about Dr. Paul Offit, Chief of Infectious Diseases at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. Dr. Offit was PhACT's speaker, February 2008. <http://www.newsweek.com/id/165644>

A fine way to support Dr. Offit is to request that his book, "Autism's False Prophets", be purchased by your local public library.

Human Evolution is Ending

Get a load of this news item from the Times of London. <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/science/article4894696.ece>

A geneticist, Professor Steve Jones, asserts that human evolution is over because of a lack of older fathers in the West. It is an interesting article but I am skeptical that evolution of anything living, including humans, has ended.

I ran this article by my trustworthy fonts of knowledge on matters concerning evolution, Glenn Branch, the Deputy Director of NCSE (National Center for Science Education) and Dr. Andrew Petto, Member, NCSE Board of Directors; Editor, *Reports of the National Center for Science Education*.

Andrew responded: "This is a perennial claim that goes back as far as I can remember (and that is close to 60 years!). The idea is that we have somehow conquered the environment and it no longer controls us. As true as this may seem for those of us privileged to live in the developed world (and I have my doubts), most of the people on the planet are not so lucky(?) as we are to be so insulated from the environment. Seems to me like so much hubris."

Glenn responded: "Steve Jones is not only a Steve, he's a single-digit Steve: #8.

With reports from scientific addresses, even to popular au-

diences, in the press, I think that you have to use a pretty good-sized grain of salt. It was the same Times of London that misreported Michael Reiss as calling for creationism to be taught not so long ago...”.

Furthermore, Glenn states: “I note that John Wilkins is complaining about Jones on his blog:”

http://scienceblogs.com/evolvingthoughts/2008/10/not_the_end_of_evolution_again.php

My skepticism appears well founded. I thought it rather cool for a scientifically well qualified Steve to be contradicted by an equally well endowed John. Isn't that what Peer Review is all about? Scientists feud and science rages on.

The NCSE website is <http://www.natcensci.org/>.

See page 7 for brief description of “Not in Our Classrooms” edited by Glenn Branch and Dr. Eugenie Scott.

Electroconvulsive therapy

The Mayo clinic website has the following statement about electroconvulsive therapy. <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/electroconvulsive-therapy/MY00129>

Electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) is a procedure in which electric currents are passed through the brain, deliberately triggering a brief seizure. This seems to cause changes in brain chemistry that can alleviate symptoms of certain mental illnesses. Yet 70 years after it was first introduced, electroconvulsive therapy remains controversial.

Much of the stigma attached to electroconvulsive therapy is based on early, brutal treatments in which high doses of electricity were administered without anesthesia, leading to memory loss and death.

Electroconvulsive therapy is quite different today. Although electroconvulsive therapy can still cause side effects and complications, it now uses precisely calculated electrical currents administered in a controlled setting to achieve the most benefit with the fewest possible risks.

My point in this brief discussion is not to challenge that particular medical practice, but to point out that medical experimentation with electroshock far precedes the 70 years stated. If you were to browse the writings of none other than Philadelphia's greatest citizen, Benjamin Franklin, you would find a letter to John Pringle, a prominent Scottish physician, dated December 21, 1757 describing Franklin's experiments with just that kind of medical treatment. Sir John Pringle has been called the “father of military medicine”. On June 5, 1766 John Pringle was created a baronet, and in 1774 he was appointed Physician to His Majesty King George III.

See Page 14 for the text of Franklin's letter.

Cholesterol-lowering "dietary supplements" pose serious problems.

Dr. Stephen Barrett reports in his Consumer Health Digest #08-43, October 21, 2008 of yet another dangerous unregulated alternative medicine compound in the form of a dietary

supplement. Anyone for slow acting suicide?

ConsumerLab.com <http://www.consumerlab.com/index.asp?claffid=101024> has found that the amounts of the cholesterol-lowering substance in ten red yeast rice products sold as dietary supplements varied by more than 100-fold, with some products providing as much as prescription medication and others containing very little. The tests also found that four of the products contained citrinin, which can cause kidney damage. [Product review: Red yeast rice supplements. ConsumerLab.Com, July 18, 2008] Red yeast rice contains the cholesterol-lowering statin compound lovastatin, the active ingredient in prescription Mevacor. Although lovastatin is a very useful drug, it is not suitable for self-medication because optimal cholesterol-control should be tailored to individual risk factors and be medically monitored. The FDA has ordered at least eight marketers to stop marketing red yeast wine products for cholesterol control. However, the Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act of 1994 permits their sale as "dietary supplements."

Quackwatch and Dr. Barrett need your help. If you haven't already done so, please read <http://www.ncahf.org/digest07/07-48.html> and send a contribution to support this valuable work.

The Mentalist, psychic detection with a twist.

Here is a little item contributed by Tom Napier.

TV is flooded with crime dramas and too many pander to popular taste by having a psychic as a lead character. New this season is The Mentalist on CBS. (Currently Tuesdays at 9 but it may have been cancelled by the time this appears in print.) This stars Simon Baker as Patrick Jane, a one-time psychic who now earns an honest living as a police consultant. Jane does the usual TV psychic's job of solving crimes that have the police baffled. The twist is that he admits to using his ability to observe people and make deductions about them. He exploited this ability in his previous career, we are even shown a flash-back of him doing the "speaking to the dead" schtick, but at least once per show he declaims that there are no real psychics.

Perhaps The Mentalist is the show skeptics have long been waiting for but I watch it with a certain sense of duty. I'm not a great fan of crime drama, although I make an exception for the high camp and pretty ladies of NCIS. Jane is too smug and too good-looking to be a sympathetic character. I wonder if CBS has fallen between two stools with what, on one level, is just another crime show, and on another, is a slap at its woo-woo audience. I await with trepidation some future episode in which the writers bow to popular demand and have Jane admit he was a "real psychic" all along. Will the concept last? Only time (or a psychic) will tell.



Sir John Pringle,
Scottish Physician
(1707 - 1782)

Soundbites

Compiled by Becky Strickland

♦ "The anti-vaccine mercury militia is not a group persuaded by scientific evidence, and so performing a scientifically dubious study to satisfy them is a fool's errand" Steve Novella, of Yale University, supporting the decision by NIMH to decline human testing of chelation therapy as a treatment for autism. Some parents have subjected their autistic children to chelation. The NIMH reviewed animal studies of chelation that suggest it causes cognitive damage. Reported in *New Scientist*, September 27, 2008

♦ "Stem cell research that would ultimately end in destruction of life, I couldn't support" Sara Palin in a 2006 debate during her campaign for governor of Alaska. "I refuse to believe the majority of people believe this malarkey." Joe Biden comments on intelligent design, on HBO's *Real Time with Bill Maher*, in 2006. Both were reported in *New Scientist*, September 27, 2008

♦ "The top half of the students are well-educated, the bottom half receive extra help, but the middle half we are leaving out" From an article in the Pueblo, Colorado *Chieftain* about a retired schoolteacher seeking a seat on the State Board of Education. Reported in *The New Yorker*, October 6, 2008. (the candidate must come from the middle half)

♦ More on chelation therapy..... A trial of a controversial therapy for heart disease has been suspended. Backed by the National Institutes of Health, it was attempting to determine whether the chelation agent disodium EDTA can dissolve fatty plaques in arteries. There were complaints that the consent form failed to point out that some patients had died after being injected with the drug. Reported in *New Scientist*, October 4, 2008.

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On Poetry: A Rhapsody (1733)



So, nat'ralists observe, a flea
Hath smaller fleas that on him prey,
And these have smaller still to bite 'em
And so proceed ad infinitum.

— Jonathan Swift (1667 - 1745)

Not in Our Classrooms: Why Intelligent Design is Wrong for Our Schools

edited by Eugenie C. Scott and Glenn Branch

Beacon Press, 2006 * \$14.00
ISBN 0-807-03278-6

More than eighty years after the Scopes trial, creationism is alive and well. Through local school boards, sympathetic politicians, and well-funded organizations, a strong movement has developed to encourage the teaching of the latest incarnation of creationism--intelligent design--as a scientifically credible theory alongside evolution in science classes. Although intelligent design suffered a serious defeat in the recent *Kitzmiller v. Dover* trial, its proponents are bound to continue their assault on evolution education. Now, in *Not in Our Classrooms*, parents and teachers, as well as other concerned citizens, have a much-needed tool to use in the argument against teaching intelligent design as science.

"If you're concerned about scientific literacy, read this book. The authors of *Not in Our Classrooms* are authorities on the various battles fought over the teaching of evolution--biology's fundamental discovery."

—Bill Nye the Science Guy

Malignant Medical Myths: Why Medical Treatment Causes 200,000 Deaths in the USA each Year, and How to Protect Yourself

By Joel M. Kauffmann, PhD

Paperback: 326 pages \$24.95 Infinity Publishing
January 2006 ISBN-13: 978-0741429094

A fearless exposé of mainstream medicine's most revered dogma, *Malignant Medical Myths* is solidly based on trusted medical and nutritional books and journals. Americans spend \$2 trillion per year on health care, about \$7,000 each, yet it buys almost the poorest healthcare among developed countries, with 200,000 deaths per year from medical treatment. Find out why advice from authorities on screening tests, drugs, diet, exercise, alcohol, radiation, radon, and water fluoridation is often wrong and commercially motivated. See how clinical trials are slanted. Understand how "sickness" is created to sell treatments, and which government agencies support these shenanigans.

Joel M. Kauffman obtained a BS in Chemistry from the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and Science, now called University of the Sciences in Philadelphia (USP), and a PhD in Organic Chemistry from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. After 11 years of experience in the chemical industry, Dr. Kauffman joined USP in 1979, rising to Professor of Chemistry. His experience includes about 10 years of exploratory drug development at USP and 4 years at the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences. He obtained grants and contracts from many sources including the National Institutes of Health, the Department of Energy, the Office of Naval Research and the Army Research Office and several manufacturing companies. With 80 papers on chemical and medical topics, and 11 patents, including 2 on anti-tuberculosis drugs, Dr. Kauffman has turned his attention to exposing fraud in medicine.

The Delaware Valley Witchcraft Cases

By Don Nigroni

Below we'll examine the witchcraft cases which occurred in the Delaware Valley and see how their defendants fared.

According to the *Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania*, on February 7, 1684 Margaret Mattson and Gertrude Hendrickson were examined as to their being witches before the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, with William Penn present, and instructed to reappear before a grand jury. On February 27, 1684, Mattson was indicted by the grand jury and pled not guilty, though Hendrickson apparently was a no-show, and her trial was held for practicing witchcraft. Both women were of Swedish descent, presumably descendents of the Swedes who once ruled the area when it was known as New Sweden. Mattson needed a translator since she couldn't speak English.

Basically, after some hearsay testimony accusing her of bewitching cows, "The jury went forth, and upon their Returne Brought her in Guilty of haveing the Common fame of a witch, but not guilty in manner and forme as Shee stands Indicted." Apparently the jury thought that she really did try to make others believe that she was a witch, presumably to scare and intimidate them, but that she wasn't actually in league with the Prince of Darkness. Her husband and son were forced to put up fifty pounds each to ensure her good behavior for the next six months and Hendrickson's husband had to put up fifty pounds for the same purpose and time limit for her.

Also in the *Minutes* we read of the case of a couple who on May 21, 1701 appeared before the Council in Philadelphia, with William Penn and Caleb Pusey present. They claimed they were accused of witchcraft by another couple who supposedly said that they were responsible for what happened to a woman who had recently arrived in town and became ill, "Several Pins being taken out of her Breasts". However, "the matter was inquired into, and being found trifling, was Dismissed."

Then there is the anonymous article, *A Witch Trial at*

Mount Holly, which appeared in *The Pennsylvania Gazette* on October 22, 1730, dateline Burlington, October 12. According to this account, a man and a woman were to be tested in Mount Holly, New Jersey for practicing witchcraft "charged with making their Neighbours Sheep dance in an uncommon Manner, and with causing Hogs to speak, and sing Psalms, &c." They agreed to undergo two tests only if two of their most adamant accusers, a man and a woman, also underwent the same tests.

William Penn
(1644 - 1718)



William Penn was a leading figure of the English Quakers and founder of the American colony, Pennsylvania.

William Penn was a tireless writer who expounded his theories on religious tolerance and the Quaker ideals in books, essays, and pamphlets written throughout the course of his life.

Involved in the politics of England and the colonies, William Penn traveled back and forth between both places, often embroiled in the controversies of the day.

First, each was put on a scale and weighed against a huge Bible but each outweighed the Holy Book and thus passed that test. Next was a trial by water where they were all bound hand and foot and placed in a mill pond to see if they would float or sink. Witches float in water, whereas the innocent sink. The women had to strip to their shifts, a white cotton or linen undergarment with sleeves down to the elbow and a hem below the knee.

Out of the four, only the accusing man sunk while all the others floated which indicated that they really were witches. A rope, which had been tied around their waists, was presumably used to save the accusing man from drowning. The accusing woman contended that the accused had bewitched her to make her float "and that she would be duck'd again a Hundred Times, but she would duck the Devil out of her."

The accused man was surprised that he floated and said, "If I am a Witch, it is more than I know." Nonetheless, the general belief was that the two women didn't sink simply because their shifts and the garters used to bound them had helped to support them in the water and "it is said they are to be tried again the next warm Weather, naked." The author of this satirical piece was most likely none other than the owner and publisher of the newspaper, Benjamin Franklin.

Don Nigroni received a BS in economics in 1971 from St. Joseph's University and a MA in philosophy from Notre Dame in 1973. He retired last year after working 32 years as an economist for the US Bureau of Labor Statistics and now has much more time to enjoy hiking, mountain biking, kayaking and bird watching.

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Readers of Phactum might remember a recent three part series written by long time PhACT member and physicist Tom Napier, entitled ***Radiation: Myths and Misunderstandings***. The articles were in the May/June, July/August, and September 2008 editions of Phactum. Tom clearly explained many facets of that mysterious topic, radiation.

Meanwhile, in London, Sense About Science, a small charity dedicated to promoting evidence and good science for the public has developed a document of similar intent to Tom's fine piece. The SAS document is entitled ***Making Sense of Radiation – A guide to radiation and its health effects***

Sense About Science staff has worked with a group of scientists that are keen to change the current climate of discussion and bring science back to the forefront of such a debate. All the information can be found at their webpage. The link is <http://www.senseaboutscience.org.uk/index.php/site/project/256/> and to directly download the document please go to <http://www.senseaboutscience.org.uk/pdf/makingsenseofradiation.pdf>.

Making sense of science stories in and out of the classroom

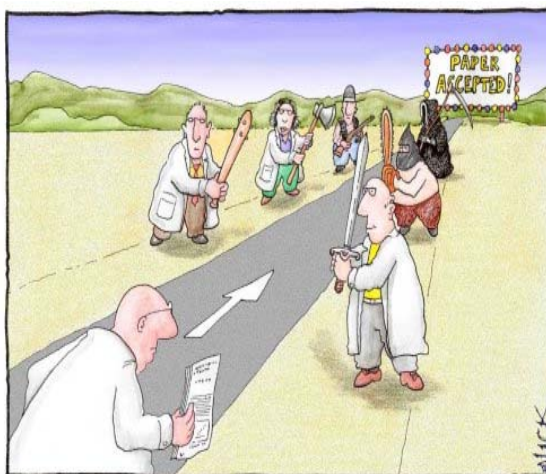
Meanwhile, as cosmic rays and other mysterious radiations bombard the world, we are also bombarded by the more dangerous bad vibrations of misunderstanding and fear propagated by ill informed journalists and even worse, folks with self serving agendas such as Free Energy hucksters who rely on ignorance to sell their wares. The time to address bad science as presented to the public is now, and the very best forum to do so is in the schools.

The internet makes it very difficult, teachers have told us, to assess the information sources that pupils use. With the debates about creationism and predictions about the CERN super-collider precipitating the end of the world via a black hole there is a growing need to help students navigate what is and isn't scientific in a real-world setting. Sense About Science has recently launched an online education resource that provides insights into what scientific knowledge is, how it is acquired and the questions to ask of scientific information in the public domain.

Whatever reservations have been raised since the launch of the new science curriculum, for the first time there is a space to explore how science works, what's special about scientific information versus other information and how

knowledge is generated. In the resource, leading journal editors Philip Campbell (Nature) and Andrew Sugden (Science) talk directly about peer review, the system used to decide which research is published in a scientific journal bringing it into the scientific record, sharing their every day experiences. Scientists, both as referees and researchers, give their views on peer review and there is also discussion about controversies in science – with over 1 million research papers published annually, can quality be controlled? Can fraud, like the Korean cloning scandal, be avoided?

The SAS project is very extensive and may be accessed on the internet at: www.senseaboutscience.net



Most scientists regarded the new streamlined peer-review process as 'quite an improvement.'

Cartoon by Nick D. Kim, nearingzero.net.
Used by permission.

Why Evidence-Based Medicine Matters

The folks at Sense About Science have been busy bees lately and offer yet another newly unveiled project called ***Why Evidence-Based Medicine Matters*** which has been released to the public on October 25, 2008. This facility can be found at the main SAS website: <http://www.senseaboutscience.org.uk>. Look in the left hand column and click on "Evidence based medicine".

On the site you will find stories from doctors, scientists, nurses, patients, professional societies, journal editors, patient groups and other members of the public about why evidence-based medicine matters to them.

To see all the comments go to the website, which can be accessed via the Sense About Science website: www.senseaboutscience.org.

Feel free to write about it, contribute to the forum if you haven't already or forward on to colleagues and friends for their contributions. This marks the start of a two-year season of activities by Sense About Science on why evidence-based medicine matters.

For more information about this organization and its various projects please contact:

Dr. Leonor Sierra - lsierra@senseaboutscience.org

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Donations to SAS are appreciated.

PhACT's Policy on Religion – An Appeal. Part II of only II. by Don Baldino

I'd like to thank Tom Napier ("Here We Go Again!" Oct 2008 [Phactum](#)) for respectfully challenging my opinions on PhACT's Policy on Religion ("Phact's Policy on Religion – An Appeal" Sept 2008 [Phactum](#)).

I am not bothered by the fuzziness of the line that separates PhACT's realm from religion. I can live with fuzzy conceptual boundaries. To paraphrase Pres. Nixon, we are all nominalists now.

Nor am I bothered by PhACT's preference for investigating pseudoscientific claims, although it reminds me of the [Good Will Hunting](#) polymath who was employed as a construction laborer. "People need houses," said Will. And dowsers need reality checks.

No, what bothers me is the assumption that people will draw from an organization named The Philadelphia Association for Critical Thinking's refusal to examine religious claims. The refusal indicates that religion is an area to which critical thinking should not extend. It invites the assumption that even the most pernicious religious claims, such as those that inspired the 911 hijackers, are exempt from criticism.

I could probably be satisfied by a name change, or by a simple amendment to PhACT's policy acknowledging that all intellectual areas, including religion, are "amenable" to critical inquiry, whether or not PhACT investigates them.

But I would prefer to see PhACT change its policy, adopted before the atrocities of 911. I would prefer to see PhACT investigate irrational beliefs of all stripes.

Because irrational religious beliefs have for so long enjoyed a free pass from logic, scrutiny, and common sense, their boldness has become boundless. They have become far more dangerous than self-deluding pseudoscience and even outright chicanery.

Consider the following statistics (source: The Pew Research Center):

► Forty-two percent of Americans believe that God gave Israel to the Jewish people. Would you expect them to support a peace process that required the Jews to give part of the land back to the people who'd been living on it for millennia? Or would that process be a blasphemous rejection of God's beneficence?

► Twenty percent of American Christians, including the 2008 Republican Vice Presidential nominee, believe that Jesus will return to earth in their lifetimes. Why would they

care about climate change over the next century, with the end of days practically upon us?

► In Jordan, fifty-nine percent of Muslims agree that violence against civilians is justifiable in defense of Islam; in Lebanon, thirty-nine percent agree, and in Pakistan, a nation with nuclear weapons, twenty-five percent agree. Some of these people are plotting to kill us. On the level of rationality, their beliefs are no different from the murderous instructions given David Berkowitz by his neighbor's dog, Sam. I implore PhACT not to leave us intellectually disarmed in the face of fanatical aggression.

I wrote that no one can prove a negative, and Tom asked why not. He makes a good point. Sometimes, it *is* possible to prove a negative.

PhACT places great store by empirical testing. Well, empirical testing is based on logic, and logic is based on the axiom of non-contradiction. Many philosophers insist that the concept of God includes contradictory attributes. Epicurus, for example, asked, "Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then he is impotent. Is he able but not willing? Then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Whence then evil?"

If the concept of God can be shown to include contradictory attributes, then the concept of God is incoherent and impossible. This conclusion would be deductive and absolutely true, compared to the

inductive and provisional conclusions of empirical tests. You *can* prove a negative.

Would PhACT bar a demonstration of deductive logic because its proof didn't rise to the level of empirical tests? With apologies to John Stossel, "Give me a break!"

I haven't asked PhACT to take sides on the existence of God. In fact, I've avoided taking sides myself, as my argument does not depend on the specific conclusions that people might reach. Of course, I haven't asked PhACT to take sides on spoon-benders, either. I just want to hear the arguments and see the evidence. You report; we'll decide.

But as long as PhACT invites the assumption that religion should be exempt from critical inquiry, PhACT isn't promoting critical thinking. It's corrupting it.

Don has been a member of PhACT almost from its inception. He is employed as an art librarian at Temple University, where he is working on his PhD in Philosophy. He has been an adjunct professor of Philosophy at Holy Family University, LaSalle University, and Neumann College.



Ask, And Ye Shall Receive”

By Paul Schlueter III

A few issues ago, our Editor sounded a general call for examples of Evolution that are actually occurring today. Not an easy task; Evolution is generally thought to take long periods of time, spanning many generations of a species' existence. First, the variation must occur. Multiple examples must then compete within their environment. If the variation confers some advantage to the effected organism, its reproductive success is greater, allowing the new species a chance to dominate over its unaltered relative in some specific environment. Small wonder we don't see it happening right in front of us, when our own lifestyles are so short in the biological grand scheme.



Generally, the aspect of Evolution known as “speciation” (the occurrence of divergence between two family lines, splitting one species into multiple distinct species) requires some sort of environmental barrier, which serves to prevent divergent species from interbreeding while they remain capable of doing so. By some definitions speciation doesn't become complete until the species are different enough that they lose the biological ability to interbreed. For Darwin's Galapagos finches, the separation of the islands by water prevented interbreeding from island to island, so finches developed traits adapted to the island they lived on. The argument remains, whether the different finches that resulted are actually separate species, if they COULD interbreed when brought together by man's artifice. Well, it is possible for a lion and a tiger to breed (the offspring is variously called a tigon or a liger), but few people would argue that they aren't different species of cat!

For those keeping track, it should be noted that one of the species of Galapagos finches HAS evolved since Darwin's time. Invasive plants, brought to the islands by man, have become common on one island, and some of the finches there have evolved a specialized beak to enable them to exploit that plant as a new food source. Finches on other nearby islands do not share the adaptation so they serve as a “control” against which to measure the variation of the altered variety. I regret that I cannot locate the citation for your reference, but the report only came out in the last couple of years.

Better still, there is a report that I can cite. In the October 25, 2008 issue of Science News, Patrick Barry reports on a study revealing speciation among cichlids (fresh water lake fish) in Africa's Lake Victoria. A single species has diverged into shallow and deep-water species. One is bluer, the other redder. The species in deep water (where only red

light reaches) has eye pigment adaptations that let them see redder color; they prefer redder fish for mating purposes. The shallower species, in an environment where blue light highlights the bluer coloration, has pigments adapted to seeing blue better. The two species, if given a choice, prefer not to interbreed; this is verified by genetic testing which indicates that each group has accumulated genetic changes not shared by the other species. What is unique here is that this appears to be “the first time scientists have caught evolution in the act of creating a new species because of changes in sense organs.” In other words, the species can physically reach one another in their separate depths of water; it's only that their eyes have adapted to their respective depth preferences, as have their colorations, and the species have isolated themselves.

Norihiro Okada, an evolutionary biologist at the Tokyo Institute of Technology, is quoted in the SN article. He is a member of the team that did this study, and their results are reported in the October 2, 2008 issue of Nature. The team is not proclaiming certainty about this example of speciation; their claim is that the distinctive adaptations and mating preferences are the beginning phases of speciation. So, for those who have a vested interest in refusing to acknowledge the processes of evolution, there's enough doubt in the conclusions to point to and say cichlids are not “proof” of evolution occurring today. Those with a vested interest in accepting cichlid evidence as proof have yet one more example to cite, if they so choose.

So, when will there be “enough proof” to convince those who want to deny evolution? Well, considering that they have the option of ignoring whatever evidence they find inconvenient to their argument, and of insisting on only viewing “snapshot moments of time” within which they demand the dramatic creation of a new species from an existing one in a single generation, I'd say its probably one of those debates that can NEVER be resolved to EVERYBODY'S satisfaction. But if you are like me, and prone to trying to educate the unconvinced, the humble cichlid has now provided us with yet another example of an infinitesimal step in the ongoing evolutionary process.

“I am most definitely the product of Evolution. Why, just a few generations ago, even my own ancestors believed in a world created in a mere seven days, at the hand of an unseen God!”

Paul Schlueter III is serving Life in Prison in NE Pennsylvania. His supporters have recently created a website about him. www.jaylbird.org

Gambling Away the Golden Year\$: Senior\$ Gambling

By Gary Lange, Ph.D and Darel Sorenson, Ed. D

Seniors are increasingly the target for the fun, excitement, competitiveness, independence and social acceptance of gambling as a positive activity. This is because the “Golden Years” can also involve loneliness, boredom, loss of loved ones, physical illness/pain, retirement and loss of worth, which can all trigger “trips” to gambling venues. About 85% of adults have gambled and the numbers for them and specifically seniors are growing daily. Most seniors are “escape” gamblers and gravitate toward slot machines, bingo, raffles and the lottery because they want to escape or distract themselves. By contrast, “action” gamblers prefer cards, horse racing and sports betting. For some seniors, Casino “gaming” is viewed as a safe, entertaining place where transportation is often provided and food is cheap. Unfortunately for those seniors, retirement can be lonely and boring but gambling provides an escape into a social, happy, albeit artificial world.

To differentiate among gamblers, most social gamblers risk money or something of value but don’t invest much time or money into the game whether they win or lose. Problem gamblers, on the other hand, spend considerable time and money on gambling even as they experience negative emotional and financial consequences. Pathological or compulsive gamblers have a loss of control over gambling, irrational thinking, depression, denial and continuation of the behavior despite serious adverse consequences. The pathological gambler often experiences financial problems, obtains money illegally, loses social and familial support and may feel suicidal.

Since 1980, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders have classified Pathological Gambling as an Impulse Control Disorder. Treatment requires knowledge of addiction, *plus* how to deal with behavioral patterns similar to treating an impulsive adolescent, or a distracted senior. Currently, 4-6% of youth and adults in the United States are considered problem and

pathological gamblers and these numbers are growing. (Petry, 2005). “Problem gamblers affect eight to ten other people in their lives (Lobsinger & Beckett, 1996) and need our help as much as the families of any addict or mentally ill person. Spouses and family members often have their own psychological problems, believe the gambler is having an affair or is a mythomaniac because of their lying and deceit.” (Lange, 07) Casino visits comprise the most common form of “legal” gambling, but there are many other forms of “illegal” gambling including family or college-dorm poker, sports betting, office pools, cards, and even stock market trading.



Many seniors live on a limited budget, while others may have disposable income. Their gambling losses make them highly vulnerable to the consequences of irregular eating, off-schedule medication, insomnia, embarrassment, guilt, a sedentary lifestyle, and a lowering of self-esteem. Positive, social and active lifestyles do not come from heavy losses at blackjack or the slots. The writing of bad checks, even for “little ole’ ladies” is the most common illegal act of problem gamblers. Since some elderly are lonely or isolated, they may be particularly vulnerable to aggressive marketing. Gambling, like alcohol, drugs and other disorders, may be influenced by tendencies of addictive behaviors in one’s family of origin. Different brains react differently to stress and happiness. We love pleasant activities or feelings and the brain releases more Dopamine to reduce stress and increase pleasure-full feelings like any other addiction. Seniors need to remain active, eat nutritiously, and stay involved with supportive family and friends. Contrary to the myths of aging, seniors are generally healthy, maintain their intelligence, make sound judgments and are able to problem solve effectively. Less than 20% of seniors have memory impairment or need assistance with daily activities (Machemer, 1997). A positive attitude, a support system and a healthy self-esteem greatly enhance successful aging. Regrettably, gambling like other addictions is no respecter of age or economic status, and innocent gambling can lead to out-of-control problem gambling.



The understanding and use of effective treatment techniques is limited but growing. The pathological gambler is in denial and often resists entering treatment until serious consequences have occurred. Part of the irrational thought of the gambler is that the “big win” is right around the corner. Loan me the money! The problem gambler progresses through three phases over time: winning, losing and desperation. The gambling “triggers” are everywhere including the raffles, lotteries, sporting events, office pools, computer/hand-held games, legal and illegal wagering as well as countless options on the Internet. Depression, anxiety, familial problems or aging are also common triggers, especially for the escape gambler. Counseling and treatment help the senior to identify and avoid the gambling triggers and choose healthier alternatives. The loss of control, the craving, and the persistence of gambling despite severe negative consequences is difficult to treat, but with help there is hope. “Treatment of both problem gamblers and their families is what I call “Addiction Plus”. As therapists, we need to use

all that we know about addiction, *plus* employ treatment techniques for impulsive and comorbid disorders.” (Lange, 07) Often the first clients to seek treatment are the family members who can no longer cope with the financial and emotional devastation. Families may notice blocks of time unaccounted for, missing possessions or assets, loss of interest in normal activities with family or friends, lying or secrecy. Crisis management and problem solving skills are crucial for gambling families. Rebuilding trust and communication become crucial components of recovery.

In addition to psychotherapy, Gamblers Anonymous (GA) for the compulsive gambler and GamAnon for the family are wonderful adjunctive programs. Both groups provide a support system that clearly understands the problem and offers paths to freedom and serenity. Since emotional and money



management issues are top priorities, it is crucial that treating therapists know local resources that can help. Training is available to assist therapists in counseling the growing number of senior and other problem gamblers. Therapists have traditionally included questions concerning the use of alcohol and drug usage in their initial interview. Gambling activity questions also need to be included in all assessments.

Since intense resentment and suicidal thoughts are common, therapists need to monitor for the client's and their families' safety. Helping clients learn coping mechanisms, meditation, self-care, and substituting pleasurable activities are all part of a comprehensive treatment plan.

Gambling can be fun, social and entertaining for seniors at any hour of the day or night. Unfortunately, gambling can also become a devastating problem which can in turn prevent seniors from maintaining successful relationships and happiness in their golden years.

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Benjamin Rush on gaming:

“This disorder seizes gentlemen in some instances before breakfast in the morning, and continues with only short intervals for meals, till 11 o'clock at night. It affects some people in the night as well as the day, and on Sundays as well as week days. . . . This madness is of a destructive tendency, and often conducts persons afflicted with it to poverty, imprisonment, and an ignominious death.”

Dr. Benjamin Rush (1745 - 1813) - Philadelphia physician and signer of the Declaration of Independence

Electric Shocks in Paralytic Cases

To John Pringle

Sir Dec. 21. 1757

The following is what I can at present recollect, relating to the Effects of Electricity in Paralytic Cases, which have fallen under my Observation.

Some Years since, when the News papers made Mention of great Cures perform'd in Italy or Germany by means of Electricity, a Number of Paralytics were brought to me from different Parts of Pensilvania and the neighbouring Provinces, to be electrif'd, which I did for them, at their Request. My Method was, to place the Patient first in a Chair on an electric Stool, and draw a Number of large strong Sparks from all Parts of the affected Limb or Side. Then I fully charg'd two 6 Gallon Glass Jars, each of which had about 3 square feet of Surface coated and I sent the united Shock of these thro' the affected Limb or Limbs, repeating the Stroke commonly three Times each Day. The first Thing observ'd was an immediate greater sensible Warmth in the lame Limbs that had receiv'd the Stroke than in the others; and the next Morning the Patients usually related that they had in the Night felt a pricking Sensation in the Flesh of the paralytic Limbs, and would sometimes shew a Number of small red Spots which they suppos'd were occasion'd by those Prickings: The Limbs too were found more capable of voluntary Motion, and seem'd to receive Strength; a Man, for Instance, who could not, the first Day, lift the lame Hand from off his Knee, would the next Day raise it four or five Inches, the third Day higher, and on the fifth Day was able, but with a feeble languid Motion, to take off his Hat. These Appearances gave great Spirits to the Patients, and made them hope a perfect Cure; but I do not remember that I ever saw any Amendment after the fifth Day: Which the Patients perceiving, and finding the Shocks pretty severe, they became discourag'd, went home and in a short time relapsed; so that I never knew any Advantage from Electricity in Palsies that was permanent. And how far the apparent temporary Advantage might arise from the Exercise in the Patients Journey and coming daily to my House, or from the Spirits given by the Hope of Success, enabling them to exert more Strength in moving their Limbs, I will not pretend to say.

Perhaps some permanent Advantage might have been obtained, if the Electric Shocks had been accompanied with proper Medicine and Regimen, under the Direction of a skilful Physician. It may be, too, that a few great Strokes, as given in my Method, may not be so proper as many small ones; since by the Account from Scotland of the Case in which 200 Shocks from a Phial were given daily, seems that a perfect Cure has been made. As to any uncommon Strength supposed to be in the Machine used in that Case, I imagine it could have no Share in the Effect produced; since the Strength of the Shock from charg'd Glass, is in proportion to the Quantity of Surface of the Glass coated; so that my Shocks from those large Jars must have been much greater than any that could be received from a Phial held in the hand.

I am, with great Respect, Sir, Your most obedient Servant



Benjamin Franklin Drawing Electricity From the Sky - Portrait by Benjamin West, circa 1805

I support the aims of PhACT and would like to join/rejoin for the next year. annual membership is \$15 and \$10 for students. I have enclosed a check payable to **PhACT**.

Membership dues of \$ _____ enclosed to pay for _____ years of membership.

Donation of \$ _____ enclosed for additional support

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About PhACT Membership and Subscriptions

Unfortunately the times are catching up to PhACT and it will be necessary to change the dues and subscription structure for PhACT. Beginning January 1, 2009 the annual dues to PhACT will remain \$15/year which includes an email subscription to Phactum and invitations to Members Only events. **If you so desire to have a printed Phactum delivered by US Mail in addition to the email subscription the new membership and subscription rate will be \$25/year.** We hope that you will keep up with dues. Donations are, of course, welcome.

As always you are invited to participate in PhACT as an attendee at meetings, as a presenter, and to express your opinions in Phactum.

If you have a point of view on some matter in Phactum, whether in agreement or opposed, why not write it down and send it in? Do not hesitate to comment on matters that have not been in Phactum since we constantly wish to present information of interest to Critical Thinkers. We try not to get into religion bashing or partisan politics, but the rest of the Universe is fair game for civil discussion. You certainly need not be in agreement with the ill-tempered editor of this propaganda sheet. He rarely bites.

Original poetry is encouraged and do not be shy to send more **Clerihews!!** Likewise stories of history with some connection to Philadelphia and do not forget to send in some favorite recipe with lotsa pasta or your Mom's award winning meatloaf.

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Ahead of the crowd?
By Tom Napier

The mission of the JSE,
Is printing papers that would be,
Scorned by the science coterie.

To its devotees it might seem,
That concepts which were once extreme,
Should now be part of the mainstream.

Alas that wishful dream is blighted.
No "new science" has ignited.
The JSE is *never* cited.

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Philadelphia Phillies

World Series 2008 Champions

Bushnell's “*Turtle*”, first American submarine

The *Turtle* was the first American submarine, invented in Connecticut in 1775 by David Bushnell as a means of attaching explosive charges to ships in a harbor.

Named for its shape, the *Turtle* resembled a large clam as much as a turtle; it was 7.5 ft long, 6 ft tall, and about 3 ft wide, consisting of two wooden shells covered with tar. It submerged by allowing water into the hull and ascended by pushing water out through a hand pump, similarly to the use of ballast tanks in modern submarines, and was propelled vertically and horizontally by hand-cranked propellers, the first recorded use of the screw propeller for ships. It was not a large submarine, and was manned and operated by only one person. The submarine was designed as a naval weapon, and was meant to drill into a ship's hull and plant a keg of powder, which would be detonated after a certain duration. Much testing was done on the submarine by the inventor's brother, Ezra Bushnell, in the waters of the Connecticut River. After Bushnell pondered the problem of lighting the inside of the ship and after learning that using a candle would hasten the use of the limited oxygen supply of the air inside, he solicited the help of **Benjamin Franklin** who cleverly hit upon the idea of using bioluminescent foxfire to provide illumination for the compass and depth meter. Though while the light given by the material was said to be sufficient, it was likely dimmer than expected, because the ship was effectively cooled by the surrounding sea water and the metabolic rate of poikilothermic, heterotrophic organisms is highly dependant on temperature.



On September 7th, 1776, the *Turtle*, under the guidance of Army volunteer Sergeant Ezra Lee, attacked the *HMS Eagle*, which was moored off what is today called Liberty Island, but it could not manage to bore through the hull. When he attempted to try another spot in the hull he lost the ship and eventually Lee abandoned the attempt.