Health Highlights: April 8, 2008

Here are some of the latest health and medical news developments, compiled by editors of HealthDay:

Dyslexia's Impact Differs, Depending on the Language

The areas of the brain affected by dyslexia differ between children who learned to read in English and those who learned to read in Chinese, say researchers who compared MRI brain scans of children, the Associated Press reported.

"This finding was very surprising to us. We had not ever thought that dyslexics' brains are different for children who read in English and Chinese. Our finding yields neurobiological clues to the cause of dyslexia," said study lead author Li-Hai Tan, a professor of linguistics and brain and cognitive sciences at the University of Hong Kong.

The study was published Monday in the online edition of the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

Children who learn English and other alphabetical languages learn the sounds of letters and how to combine them into words, while Chinese children memorize hundreds of symbols that represent words, Guinevere F. Eden, director of the Center for the Study of Learning at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., told the AP.

This finding shows that "we cannot just assume that any dyslexic child is going to be helped by the same kind of intervention," said Eden, who was not involved in the study.

-----

Magnetic Dart Boards Recalled
About 870,000 Fun 'N Games Magnetic Dart Boards are being recalled by Henry Gordy International Inc., of Plainfield, N.J., because small magnets on the ends of the darts can detach and be swallowed by young children.

If more than one magnet is swallowed, the magnets can attract each other and cause potentially fatal intestinal blockages or perforations. There have been no injuries reported, said the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission.

The recalled dart boards are about 5.5 inches in diameter and came with two 2.75-inch magnetic darts. The Chinese-made toys were sold at Family Dollar stores across the United States from September 2002 through March 2008 for about $1.

Consumers with the recalled dart boards should return them by first class mail to: Henry Gordy International Inc., 809A Market Street, Hermann, Mo., 65041 for a full refund including tax and shipping costs. For more information, contact the company at 888-790-2700.

-----

**Breakfast Cereals Recalled for Salmonella Threat**

Certain batches of Malt-O-Meal Unsweetened Puffed Rice and Puffed Wheat cereals are being recalled because they may be contaminated with salmonella. The recall affects cereals with "Best If Used By" codes between April 8, 2008 (coded as "APR0808") and March 18, 2009 (coded as "MAR1809").

The recalled products were distributed across the United States, marketed under the Malt-O-Meal brand, as well as under private label brands including Acme, America's Choice, Food Club, Giant, Hannaford, Jewel, Laura Lynn, Pathmark, Shaw's, ShopRite, and Weis Quality, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration said.

A full list of recalled products can be found at www.malt-o-meal.com/recallinfo. There have been no illnesses reported in connection with the recalled cereals.

-----

Copyright © 2008 U.S. News & World Report, L.P. All rights reserved.
**Baby With 2 Faces Born in India**

A baby with two faces born in a northern Indian village is doing well and being worshipped as the reincarnation of Durga, the Hindu goddess of valor, the Associated Press reported.

The baby, Lali, has two noses, two pairs of lips and two pairs of eyes, the result of an extremely rare condition called craniofacial duplication. It's often associated with serious health complications, but a doctor said Lali is doing fine.

"She drinks milk from her two mouths and opens and shuts all the four eyes at one time," said Sabir Ali, the director of Saifi Hospital. Lali has no breathing difficulties and the doctor said he saw no need for surgery, the AP reported.

"My daughter is fine -- like any other child," said father Vinod Singh, a poor farm worker.

-----

**Pfizer Halts Melanoma Drug Trial**

A late-stage study of the experimental melanoma treatment tremelimumab has been halted by drug maker Pfizer Inc., after a data review showed the drug was no more effective than standard chemotherapy.

Even though the trial has been stopped, study investigators will work with patients to determine if they're benefiting from treatment and should continue taking tremelimumab, the Associated Press reported.

All the data from the study is being analyzed, and more details about the results are expected to be available at June's annual meeting of the American Society for Clinical Oncology, in Chicago.

"We continue to focus on additional studies involving tremelimumab alone and in combination with other therapies which are currently ongoing in patients with several types of cancer," said Charles Baum, vice president and oncology therapeutic area head at Pfizer Global Research and Development, the AP reported.
Baum also said Pfizer "will continue to assess the study data to understand the clinical benefit seen in some patients who received tremelimumab."

-----

**Deadliest Form of Skin Cancer Largely Unknown**

Merkel cell carcinoma -- the deadliest form of skin cancer -- hasn't received much scientific scrutiny, and most people probably haven't heard of it, according to the Associated Press.

Funding is a major issue. Researchers investigating the disease have long had to rely on small pilot grants and family fund-raising.

It's only been about 15 years since Merkel cell carcinoma was recognized as distinct from melanoma. Since then, the number of diagnosed cases in the United States has tripled to about 1,500 a year. Merkel cell carcinoma is more aggressive than melanoma and requires different treatment -- intense radiation.

Last month, the first comprehensive report on Merkel cell carcinoma symptoms and risk factors was published. The disease almost exclusively develops on sun-exposed skin on Caucasians over age 50, the AP reported.

In January, University of Pittsburgh scientists announced they'd identified a possible cancer-triggering virus inside Merkel cell tumors.

Copyright © 2008 ScoutNews LLC. All rights reserved.