

SIDS may strike infants unaccustomed to prone sleeping, study finds

Infants unaccustomed to sleeping on their stomachs are at increased risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) when they're placed in that position, new research indicates.

In a case-series analysis of 157 SIDS-related deaths that occurred in Quebec between 1991 and 1997, Dr. Aurore Côté of the Montreal Children's Hospital found that 34 of 64 nonprone sleepers had been placed in the prone position by a parent or caregiver before death, while another 18 appear to have rolled on to their belly for the first time (*Pediatrics* 2000;106[6]:E86).

Among the 34 infants who changed to the prone position, 21 had their sleeping position switched less than 1 week before their death; 16 of 21 died the first or second time they slept on their stomach.

Côté found that in 56% of cases where an infant was changed to the prone position, a caregiver other than the parents had made the switch. Many caregivers simply were unaware that the prone position is not recommended.

"People in general, and also health professionals, are still afraid of the back position," said Côté, who has been studying SIDS since 1987. "They believe that babies can aspirate regurgitated milk, secretions or vomitus."

Côté recommends that ongoing SIDS-awareness campaigns stress the risks of switching an infant's sleeping position to the stomach. A secondary message he promotes is the danger of side sleeping, since infants frequently roll to a prone position. — *Greg Basky, Saskatoon*

A 550-year-old microbiology lesson emerges from BC glacier

University of Saskatchewan microbiologist Harry Deneer thought he'd seen it all, but then he saw tissue samples from a 550-year-old corpse.

Deneer is one of a handful of researchers chosen to study the remains of an Aboriginal man found frozen near a glacier in northern British Columbia. He will examine the normal and pathogenic bacteria in the body to learn what

diseases were common 5 centuries ago and how the pathogens that cause them have evolved since then.

"It gives you a clue to the evolution of pathogens," he says. "If you know how something came into being, you may be able to predict how it will change in the future."

The frozen man has been named Kwaday Dan Sinchi (Long Ago Person Found) by the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations. Carbon dating of his belongings place them around 1450, making him the oldest preserved human found in North America and predating known European contact on the northwest coast of Canada by 300 years.

The BC government, in agreement with the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, has approved 10 research projects, ranging from an analysis of the man's last meal to a cultural study of his hunting tools. A DNA profile will be completed and compared with that of today's indigenous people.

Deneer's project team, which includes an anthropologist, is the only one to

Eating disorders present tricky diagnosis

What may appear to be an eating disorder could in fact be something quite different, a psychiatrist at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO) says. Dr. Hazen Gandy made the comment during a scientific meeting on eating disorders sponsored by the Canadian Association for Adolescent Health and CHEO. Gandy noted that symptoms related to eating disorders "may only be a part of a complex of psychiatric symptoms and may or may not be the most functionally impairing or debilitating."

Gandy stressed the importance of ruling out medical conditions — panhypopituitarism is one — whose symptoms can mimic those of eating disorders. He advised physicians to keep an open mind and take a "broad view" when making a diagnosis.

According to the National Eating Disorder Information Centre, 65% of people with eating disorders have experienced some form of abuse, including physical, emotional or sexual abuse, and they may also have witnessed violence between parents.

CHEO's chief of psychiatry, Dr. Simon Davidson, said that regardless of the steps taken while treating these patients, it is essential to use an interdisciplinary approach. Humour, persistence, role modelling and guarantees of protection and safety are some aspects of the treatment protocol employed at CHEO.

Physicians seeking further information for patients can refer them to the National Eating Disorder Information Centre, www.nedic.on.ca — *Erica Feininger, Ottawa*



A.P. Mackie, BC Archaeology Branch

Frozen in time: excavating Kwaday Dan Sinchi's remains from the glacier

study microbes found in the body. It will look at tissue samples from the intestinal tract, lungs, liver and spleen. The results could take a year to compile, after which unused tissue will be returned to BC, where Kwaday Dan Sinchi will be buried according to Aboriginal custom. — *Amy Jo Eberman, Saskatoon*