Science & Technology

Study Hall: Fall 2015

Research Briefs

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|
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Lonely at the Top

Companies that already have a top female executive may be much less likely to appoint one. According to research from Columbia Business School and the University of Maryland, a woman's chances of landing one of the top five spots at a firm drops by 51 percent if another woman is already on the team.

The Sniff Test

According to a new study led by Davangere Devanand, the director of geriatric psychiatry at the New York State Psychiatric Institute at Columbia University Medical Center, the inability to identify smells may predict death. The results, published in *Annals of Neurology*, show that adults over the age of sixty-five with a deteriorating sense of smell have a higher mortality rate than their peers.

High Times (But No Higher)

Legalizing medical marijuana does not increase its use by teens, according to a study in *The Lancet Psychiatry*. Research by Columbia epidemiologist Deborah Hasin '80SW, '86PH shows that states that legalized the drug do have a higher rate of teen marijuana use than states that did not legalize it (16 percent vs. 13 percent). But those rates did not increase once the laws went into effect.

The Secret to Productivity

People who keep secrets may be less productive at work. According to Michael Slepian of Columbia Business School, who coauthored a new study in the *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, “the burden of secrecy can make things around you appear more challenging, and if you’re less motivated to tackle these challenges, your performance can suffer.”

A History of Violence

A study in *Behavioral Sciences and the Law* shows that 9 percent of American adults both have anger-management issues and own guns. Scientists at Columbia, Duke, and Harvard also found that 3.7 million people in this category typically carry their guns in public.

Pathway to the Cure

Researchers at CUMC and Weill Cornell Medical College identified genetic mutations that drive a rare, aggressive form of non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma. Raul Rabadan, an associate professor of systems biology and biomedical informatics who coauthored the study in *Cancer Cell*, says that doctors can now envision a new, personalized genomic approach to the treatment of this specific disease.

Stress Shot

A single low-dose injection of the anesthetic ketamine could help prevent stress, which is a major risk factor for psychiatric disorders like PTSD and depression. For the proof-of-concept study, researchers simulated stress-related disorders and found that ketamine was more effective as a prophylactic than as an antidepressant. The study, led by Columbia neuroscientist Rebecca Brachman ’14GSAS, appears in *Biological Psychiatry*.

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