

Summer news

News travels fast nowadays, but not everybody may know (or care) that in mid-July Chicago's 18 year old Mauyak gave birth to a five foot long beluga baby whale weighing 125 lbs, her previous breech birth having been unsuccessful. Paternity tests are underway, as there were two male whales present when she became pregnant.

Meanwhile animal advocates are trying to find homes for 47 cats abandoned in cages in a one car garage. Wizards are everywhere, and quid ditch is threatening to replace football as teenagers are crowding into bookstores to read about Harry Potter and his muggle family. Akhenaten has moved in at the Art Institute and will interview 125 000 visitors this summer.

Tobacco companies are still reeling from the shock of the \$145bn (£97bn) punitive damages awarded to their innocent smoking victims, and dental associations are warning teenagers against tongue piercing a fashionable trend that may cause infections, damaged teeth, dysphagia, dysphonia, or suffocation from dislodged tongue rings.

In Illinois the governor has declared a moratorium on executions until the legal system is fixed to avoid mistakes. Several Chicago beaches had to be closed because of high *E coli* counts. A judge has banned fishing in parts of Hawaii to save endangered turtles, to the great indignation of the fishing industry and sashimi gourmets. Everybody here is complaining about the high cost of drugs, and presidential candidates are promising free drug schemes for senior citizens. The latter will need to stay alive longer because of various proposals to gradually eliminate the death tax over 10 years. In Africa 19 million people have died of AIDS and 34 million are infected in an epidemic reminiscent of the bubonic plague.

There is some excitement about statins possibly preventing fractures; disappointment about the platelet inhibitor clopidogrel causing thrombotic thrombocytopenic purpura; hope that the new antibiotic linezolid will eliminate vancomycin resistant enterococci; lingering uncertainty about how to treat most prostate cancers; questions on whether sildenafil should be given away free in public hospitals; continuing debate about whether angiotensin receptor blockers are as good or better than ACE inhibitors; and doubts about how effective oseltamivir will really be in preventing influenza.

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