

Lightning Data Center
St. Anthony Central Hospital, Denver
January 11, 2002
Minutes

Quote of the Month:

"Mark Twain wrote about losing the beauty of the river by learning to navigate it. The loveliness of the silvered water slipped from him as he learnt to be practical about it, suspicious of it; whirling water came to signify only the sandbanks beneath."

Druin Burch, *The Lancet* 2001;358:1826

1. Meeting began at 11:30 am and adjourned at 1:15 pm.

2. Members present: Becker, Cherington, Keen, Laster, Lines, Luallin, Mains, Malisch, McDonough, Nibbe, Mouchantat, Ozel, Paton, Russon, Simons, Yarnell

3. I brought the following article from the literature (abstracted in part here):

a. Basford JR. A historical perspective of the popular use of electric and magnetic therapy. *Arch Phys Med Rehabil* 2001;82:1261-9.

"The use of electric and magnetic forces to treat disease has intrigued the general public and the scientific community since at least the time of the ancient Greeks...In each era, proof has been lacking and the prevailing medical establishment has remained unconvinced. Interest persists today."

b. Vega LA, Garcia SQ, Santamaria CT, Porras MC. Clinical picture: an unwanted tattoo. *Lancet* 2001;358:1681

"A 20-year-old man was injured by a lightning strike...He was initially paralysed from the waist downwards...The keraunoparalysis..resolved..in 30 min....Physical examination revealed...a painless, arborescent erythema on his left shoulder...The branching pattern..vanished in approximately 16 h."

4. Gene Lines reflected on the possibility of shielding houses with materials that would provide protection against lightning damage. The house, like some vehicles, would be a Faraday Cage. Gene and others spoke about the value of surge protectors in limiting damage to computers and appliances. He commented that the best protectors are located exterior to the structure, but interior surge protection is also of value.

5. Phil Yarnell raised the question of what medical treatments might be used early in the care of lightning strike patients that might reduce the subsequent development of sequelae. Rick Mouchantat, Bruce Paton, Gil McDonough, and Phil discussed the possible value of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, rest, physical therapy, etc. It was suggested that a similar treatment regimen is used in early "whiplash" patients.

6. Our guest speaker was Bruce C. Paton, MD. Bruce is Director of the Given Institute in Aspen. He had been Acting Dean and Chief of Cardiac Surgery at the University of Colorado Hospital. He is a past president of the Wilderness Medical Society. His book, *Lewis & Clark: Doctors in the Wilderness*, was just published.

Bruce gave an outstanding presentation on the Lewis & Clark expedition and the medical aspects of that historic event. All present were treated to a most educational and entertaining presentation.

7. These minutes do not reflect any official positions of LDC. They reflect the comments of members present.

8. Next meeting will be at 11:30 am on Friday, February 8, 2002 in the Main Auditorium of St. Anthony Central Hospital. It will be our 10th Birthday. We'll plan to celebrate with a birthday cake.

Our speaker will be Gilbert McDonough, MD. His topic will be "Electrophysiology of Nerve, Muscle and Vascular Tissue -- Understanding Lightning Injuries"

Respectfully submitted by

Michael Cherington, MD