

Tekstboekje

GRADES

'A' Is for ...

ANYTHING GOES? FOR MORE than a decade, Ivy League colleges have been handing out superior grades for less than stellar performances. That's partly America's cult of self-esteem, where criticism is deemed harmful to a student's fragile ego. But mostly it's a response to stressed-out pupils determined to win admission to top Wall Street firms and law schools. So what's the report card on grade inflation? "A failure of honesty," Harvey Mansfield, a political philosophy professor at Harvard, calls it. This spring, he introduced a two-tiered grading system of his own: the "inflated" grade goes on a student's transcript, while a second "realistic" grade goes to the student privately. "Grade inflation is anti-intellectual," says Bradford Wilson, director of the National Association of Scholars. "If the Ivy Leagues don't care about excellence, who will?"

REPORT CARD
Students receiving an
"A" average, by percentage

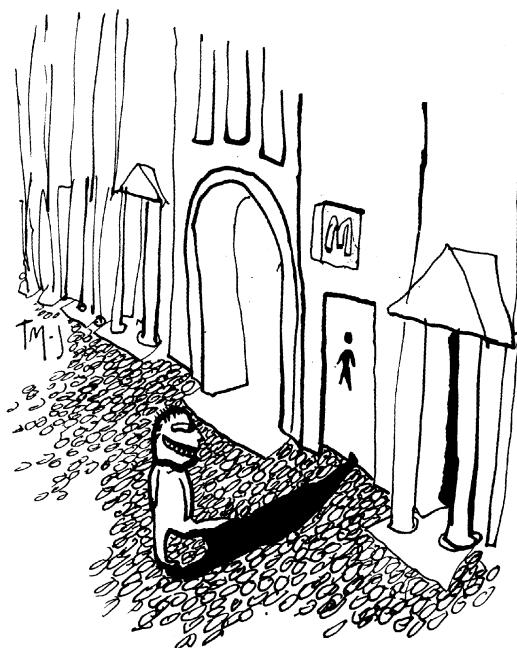
Harvard University, U.S.	51%
Stanford University, U.S.	53
Princeton University, U.S.	45
University of Tokyo, Japan	30*
Yonsei University, S. Korea	30
Moscow State U., Russia	25†
Oxford U., England	13**

***EXCELLENT THIS DATA IS FOR FRESHMEN AND SOPHOMORES ONLY.
†TOP GRADE IS A "5" **TOP GRADE IS A "FIRST"


Newsweek

Tekst 2

LOO REVIEW NUMBER 10:

McDonald's
Uncontested

I would never say that the famous McDonald's logo looks gaudily out of place among the chic designer shops in elegant Rose Crescent. Let it be known from the outset that I am not in the least inclined to be critical of this most litigious of multinationals. (For imitators and detractors have found themselves in court quicker than you can say "a bottle of fizzy chemicals and a portion of fries, please".) Staff wages as a percentage of gross profits, the environmental impact of packaging, the effect of cattle ranching on precious rain forests – none of these are my concern. Nor – even though neither Miriam nor I are fast-food junkies – is the quality of food served in the establishment (which I presume to be excellent). What goes into the body concerns us only in that the location of waste removal forms the subject of this study.

2 their toilets are wonderful. Small, though – like those in an aircraft, was Miriam's impression – but clean and well-stocked with toilet paper. Steel and mock marble grey decor, with unusual hole-in-the-wall combined hand washer/driers. Very 21st century. And there were calmic sanitisers and air-fresheners supplied by Rentokil. Generally efficient, although the door on the men's cubicle was stiff, and the flush wasn't working properly. Not that I'm complaining, you understand. And anyway, the exercise was purely academic since I had just come in to check out the loo. 

W C Rolls

The Cambridge Student

De volgende tekst is het begin van het eerste hoofdstuk van The Sweetest Dream, een roman van Doris Lessing.

An early evening in autumn, and the street below was a scene of small yellow lights that suggested intimacy, and people already bundled up for winter. Behind her the room was filling with a chilly dark, but nothing could dismay her: she was floating, as high as a summer cloud, as happy as a child who had just learned to walk. The reason for this uncharacteristic lightness of heart was a telegram from her former husband, Johnny Lennox — Comrade Johnny — three days ago. SIGNED CONTRACT FOR FIDEL FILM ALL ARREARS AND CURRENT PAYMENT TO YOU SUNDAY. Today was Sunday. The ‘all arrears’ had been due, she knew, to something like the fever of elation she was feeling now: there was no question of his paying ‘all’ which by now must amount to so much money she no longer bothered to keep an account. But he surely must be expecting a really big sum to sound so confident. Here a little breeze — apprehension? — did reach her. Confidence was his — no, she must *not* say stock-in-trade, even if she had often in her life felt that, but could she remember him ever being outfaced by circumstances, even discomfited?

On a desk behind her two letters lay side by side, like a lesson in life’s improbable but so frequent dramatic juxtapositions. One offered her a part in a play. Frances Lennox was a minor, steady, reliable actress, and had never been asked for anything more. This part was in a brilliant new play, a two-hander, and the male part would be taken by Tony Wilde who until now had seemed so far above her she would never have had the ambition to think of her name and his side by side on a poster. And *he* had asked for her to be offered the part. Two years ago they had been in the same play, she as usual in a serviceable smaller role. At the end of a short run — the play had not been a success — she had heard on the closing night as they tripped back and forth taking curtain calls, ‘Well done, that was very good.’ Smiles from Olympus, she had thought that, while knowing he had shown signs of being interested in her.

But now she had been watching herself burst into all kinds of feverish dreams, not exactly taking herself by surprise, since she knew only too well how battened down she was, how well under control was her erotic self, but she could not prevent herself imagining her talent for fun (she supposed she still had it?) even for reckless enjoyment, being given room, while at the same time showing what she could do on the stage, if given a chance. But she would not be earning much money, in a small theatre, with a play that was a gamble. Without that telegram from Johnny she could not afford to say yes.

The other letter offered her a niche as Agony Aunt (name still to be chosen) on *The Defender*, well paid, and safe. This would be a continuation of the other strand of her professional life as a freelance journalist, which is where she earned money. She had been writing on all kinds of subjects for years. At first she had tried her wings in local papers and broadsheets, any place that would pay her a little money. Then she found she was doing research for serious articles, and they were in the national newspapers. She had a name for solid balanced articles that often shone an unexpected and original light on a current scene.

She would do it well. What else had her experience fitted her for, if not to cast a cool eye on the problems of others? But saying yes to that work would have no pleasure in it, no feeling she would be trying new wings. Rather, she would have to steady her shoulders with the inner stiffening of resolve that is like a suppressed yawn.

How weary she was of all the problems, the bruised souls, the waifs and strays, how delightful it would be to say, ‘Right, you can look after yourselves for a bit, I am going to be in the theatre every evening and most of the day too.’ (Here was another little cold nudge: have you taken leave of your senses? Yes, and she was loving every minute.)

Welcome to the Fat Slob Way of Life

1 **T**here are many reasons to take with an unhealthy pinch of salt the warning from Yvette Cooper, the minister for public health, that the life expectancy of today's children will be years lower than that of their parents.

2 With a few exceptions – sub-Saharan Africa as a result of the Aids epidemic, and Russia which has its own reasons – there has not been a significant decline in life expectancy anywhere. Rather, the great majority of countries have seen a continuous increase in the lifespans of their populations for several decades.

3 So what was the reasoning behind the health minister's statement?

4 National surveys have established beyond reasonable doubt that children's diets are far from optimal: kids do not eat enough fruit or vegetables, and eat too much salty, sugary and fatty food, usually pre-packaged. Many children take little or no exercise, and an increasing percentage of them are very fat.

5 Inactivity, obesity and high-fat diets are all associated with the fatal degenerative diseases of civilisation, such as cardiovascular disease and non-insulin-dependent diabetes. It stands to reason, does it not, that the life expectancy of children who are fat and lazy must be reduced in comparison to that of their lean and active forebears?

6 What might be called the Fat Slob Way of Life (FSWL) has been prevalent for much longer in the United States than in Britain, but life expectancy there has not decreased; on the contrary. Even in Britain, the rate of heart attacks has fallen, and the whole pattern of the rise and decline of such attacks during the 20th century was, some epidemiologists have suggested, more characteristic of an infectious disease than one brought about by the wrong diet.

7 Cooper discounts the possibility that advances in medicine will be able to save people from the consequences of the



Never mind the length,
Theodore Dalrymple
is more concerned about the
quality of our lives

FSWL. She is almost certainly wrong to do so. Nevertheless, she has pointed to an alarming cultural phenomenon.

8 The FSWL is gaining ground. However, it is not the alleged health consequences that should alarm us so much as what it tells us about the soul of modern man. But the health minister is a member of a government with an ideological belief that one way of life is as good as another; that to make no judgement is the highest moral quality; and

that what the common man does cannot be wrong. Everyone, however, is in favour of health, so it is safe to warn about the health consequences of the FSWL.

What is the characteristic smell of modern Britain? It is that of stale fat in which fast food has been fried too many times. Travel on an evening train, and the carriages will smell of the fat of greasy hamburgers; high streets up and down the land smell of it.

10 The eating habits of a large proportion of the British population are appalling, from almost every conceivable angle. But what is worrying indeed is how they eat it. For millions of people, meals are solitary, poor, nasty, British and short.

11 A sociologist told me recently that fewer than half of British households have a dining table. When I go on house visits to patients, I see little sign of cooking ever having gone on, or of meals taken as social occasions (unless the family is of Indian origin).

12 Wherever I walk, the litter in the streets reveals that an Englishman's street is his dining room. Gutters and gardens contain the remains of scores of hastily consumed snacks, with tins, bottles, paper wrappers and polystyrene containers dropped where the last morsel was eaten.

13 This is an extraordinary change in my (not very long) lifetime. Eating in the street was once regarded as uncouth and anti-social. Is it that modern man suffers

stronger, more insistent pangs of hunger than his immediate ancestors?

14 Certainly not. What has changed is his willingness to exercise self-control. I feel a twinge of hunger, and so I must, here and now, assuage it (and it is my right to do so). I have no duty to control myself for the sake of my fellow citizens: if they don't like it, the problem is theirs and they should see a psychiatrist. As for the litter I leave, do I not pay taxes so that it might be cleared up?

15 It is not a question of poverty (except of spirit, imagination, emotion, culture and education). Fast food is not cheap nourishment. Eating properly is almost entirely dependent upon social structure. My wife and I make considerable efforts to eat freshly cooked meals. But if one of us is away, the quality of what we eat declines immediately. The unutterable vileness of the FSWL diet derives, therefore, from two social trends: the

break-up of the family and the spread of radical, indeed solipsistic, individualism, according to which the only guide to a person's actions should be his whim of the moment. And the two trends strongly reinforce each other.

16 It is scarcely any wonder that the public health minister confined herself to spurious concerns about the health consequences of the FSWL. To have addressed the real cultural problems that have resulted in the FSWL would have required great courage: it would have been to question the assumptions upon which the government bases its policies.

17 The most important thing about the FSWL is not that it shortens life by a month, a year or a decade. The Fat Slob Way of Life is symptomatic of a world in which, increasingly, we are solitary when we should be social, and collectivist when we should be individualist.

New Statesman

GLOBALISATION

Local must replace global

Colin Hines argues that globalisation cannot be tamed; it must be stopped in its tracks

We have seen them on the streets in Seattle, London and Melbourne. We shall soon see them in Prague. But it is time for the anti-globalisation protesters to move from opposition to proposition. What is it that will achieve all the goals – job security, a less polluted planet, the relief of poverty – sought by the disparate coalition that mounts the protests? The answer, I believe, is to replace globalisation with localisation.

This alternative insists that everything that can sensibly be produced within a nation or region should be so produced. Long-distance trade is reduced to supplying what cannot come from within one country or geographical grouping of countries. Technology and information would still be encouraged to flow, but only where they can strengthen 14. Under these circumstances, beggar-your-neighbour globalisation would give way to the potentially more co-operative better-your-neighbour localisation.

Globalisation cannot be tinkered with. Campaigns for labour standards or “fair trade” or voluntary ethical codes 15 the nature of the trade liberalisation beast. These attempts are like trying to lasso a tiger with cotton. We should aim, instead, to return the tiger to its original habitat.

International trade was originally a search for 16; Europeans went to India for spices and other exotics, not for coal. That is precisely the “localisation” approach, but without the disastrous social effects of colonialism. Long-distance trade should be only for acquiring what cannot be provided within the region where people live.

We must play the 17 at their own game. They have a clear goal: maximum trade and money flows for maximum profit. They frame policies and trade rules that will achieve this. Those who want a more just, secure, environmentally sustainable future must have an equally clear goal and equally detailed policies for achieving it.

The policies for localisation 18 the reintroduction of protective safeguards for domestic economies (tariffs, quotas and so on); a “site here to sell here” rule for manufacturing and services; the development of local currencies so that more money stays within its place of origin; local competition policies to eliminate monopolies from more protected economies; increased democratic involvement at local level; the introduction of resource taxes.

This will not be the old-style protectionism that seeks to protect a home market, while expecting others to remain open. The global emphasis will be on 19. Any residual long-distance trade will be geared to funding the diversification of local economies.

All opponents of aspects of globalisation should recognise that this is the only way forward. It is no use their fighting the specific issues that concern them. Trade unionists must recognise that “labour standards” are an impossibility under globalisation, because countries have to lower standards to compete. And 20 should see that globalisation, and its commandment that every nation must contort its economy to outcompete every other nation, blocks any chance of dealing with climate change, the greatest threat to the planet. High taxation on fossil fuels will always be trumped by threats from big business to 21. Under localisation, that would not be an option, for companies would not be allowed to sell their goods in a region they had deserted.

The 20th century was dominated by conflict between the left and the right. The big battle of the 21st century should be fought between the globalists of today’s political centre on one side, and an alliance of localists, red-greens and “small c” conservatives on the other. Only if the latter win will we have any chance of a fairer, greener world.

The writer’s Localisation: a global manifesto is published by Earthscan (£10.99)

New Statesman

‘I found it hard to stay awake’

1 **T**HIS TIME, unlike the last time I saw it in 1972, Stanley Kubrick's infamous *A Clockwork Orange* did not shock at all, which is itself a bit shocking since it suggests that in the intervening 28 years we have become much more inured than we used to be to scenes of extreme sex and violence.

2 Just how little this was so in 1972 I have cause to remember well. As a member of the Lord Longford Pornography Commission it fell to me and my first wife, Claudie, to accompany Frank to a special private showing of the film. So great was his horror at the brutal rapes, horrific beatings – not to mention the first ever reference to homosexuality in prisons – that I don't think he would have survived without having my wife's supportive hand to cling on to.

3 My own, scarcely-less-extreme, sense of shock and outrage was summed up later in *The Sunday Telegraph*, under the heading "Muck in name of Art". I wrote then: "The cult of sentimentality has given way to the cult of sensuality, the dangers of hagiography to the dangers of muck-raking, the pretence that man is far better than he is to the pretence that he is far worse."

4 Why do I have no temptation today to replay that record? Partially, as I say, because muck in films, television dramas, novels and advertisements is now so much an everyday occurrence as no longer to be worthy of note. But just as great a reason, for me, is that in the intervening years I have come to suspect that rubbing the public's nose in muck may do more good than harm.

5 How can this be so? Has it not led to more rapes, more brutality, more violence? Statistically, yes. But that increase could quite as easily be because many more crimes of that kind are now reported and they are now reported, of course, because explicit films etc have taken those most dreadful aspects of human misbehaviour – incest and sexual abuse of children quite as much as rapes and violence – out of the sphere of the unmentionable.



Malcolm McDowell as Alex, leader of the 'droogs'

6 The novels of Dickens are quite revealing in this respect. For although he shocked the Victorian conscience by portraying the cruelties (floggings, deprivation etc) perpetrated by masters in the charity institutions of the day, he stopped short of ever even hinting at sexual abuse, not because none took place – for it most certainly did – but because he, like his readers, could not bear to face that most dreadful of truths.

7 But was this refusal to go the whole hog desirable? Not if you bear in mind his enormous influence for good in other respects. Unquestionably his brave denunciation of cruelty to children in general did in time create a much gentler culture, from which many generations, including my own, benefited immeasurably.

8 Might, therefore, a denunciation of sexual abuse have done something comparably beneficial in that area as well? True, Dickens would have had great difficulty in finding a publisher for such shocking stuff, and had he been able to do so there would unquestionably have been critics eager to condemn it as "muck in the name of art". But that would have been a small price to pay for bringing forward by a hundred years or so the kind of public outrage against sexual abuse of children which is only now gathering force following recent revelations of cases in this country.

9 No, I am not disregarding the

fact that explicit portrayals of sex and violence may incite a few loonies to emulate in their lives what they have seen in celluloid or in print. That does happen, and we may well soon read about some new outbreak of gang violence following this week's reshewing of *A Clockwork Orange*. But for every loony tempted, there must be thousands of ordinary people disgusted. Seeing is believing.

10 *A Clockwork Orange* may brutalise a few, but it will also raise the consciousness – and conscience – of the many. Sex and violence have always been widespread; what has changed in recent years is that now it is more difficult to ignore them. Some are switched on; but many more, I would like to think, are switched off.

11 As to the film itself, it is – apart from the superbly crafted sex and violence bits, which are soon over – largely cliché-ridden twaddle of a standard that no reputable novelist would get away with. When caught, the leader of the "droogs" is subjected to aversion therapy, which makes him literally sick of sex and violence, thereby rendering him, against his will, entirely harmless to the public. Stanley Kubrick, very sensibly, thinks this state cure for crime by depriving a man of his free will be worse than the disease itself, and spends at least an hour and a half demonstrating the obvious.

12 No wonder, at this second viewing, I could hardly stay awake.

Andrew Hagan in
The Weekly Telegraph

OPINION

JOANNA BOURKE

- 1 IN HISTORY, nothing is clear cut. Contradiction and confusion are always present in the texts we use to interpret the past. Nowhere is this more so than when we analyse war stories. Sometimes, the letters and diaries of British
5 servicemen seem to stutter in a desperate attempt to make sense of the unutterable horror of their surroundings: 'I cannot, cannot bear this, dear wife, the cries are just awful, terrible, oh my,' scrawled one soldier during the Battle of the Somme. Then, at another point, their letters become an eager
10 hymn to the 'joy of slaughter', the 'exhilaration' and 'satisfaction' of destroying human life.
- 2 What is the historian to make of such tensions? With a few notable exceptions, military historians flinch away from distasteful subjects involving 'our men'. Discussing British
15 men and women who were both victims *and* executioners is taboo. My own case, a female historian writing about killing in warfare, elicited looks of horror and, occasionally, rage among some of my fellow historians.
- 3 We need to be more willing to discuss such topics,
20 however. There is no sense in being controversial for the sake of it (poor scholarship wrecks careers, rather than making them), but historians have a duty to men and women in the past to discuss them in a full-rounded way. Their stories may be contradictory, consolatory, and often fantastical, but
25 bewilderment, hope, and fantasy are the very stuff of human experience.

Prof Joanna Bourke is the author of *An Intimate History of Killing*

BBC History Magazine

Teaching's true vocation

Correlli Barnett (Letters, February 14) applauds Estelle Morris's "attempt to create a more equal balance between the academic and practical avenues in our schools", but does so in terms which themselves effortlessly reproduce that same old scenario, where "the practical" and "the academic" are opposed.

What are these "intensely boring academic studies"? I wonder whether there may not be a generational problem here — a tendency to look back with indignation and regret, rather than offering any hint of a teaching programme which starts from the supposition that all students need access to the full range of skills and knowledge. Some of these are reading-writing based, and include mastery of those activities; and some are grounded in mixed-mode practices — such as music technology or video production — but which also include critical perspectives and the history of the discipline, as well as mastery of its current and potential applications.

In this different scenario, Barnett's "academic" is also practised, rather than opposed to "practice"; no longer succumbed to as a dominant

code imposed from above. In some instances this is already happening. But what is needed, if that aspiration is to be widely realised, is a different language — and a better grasp of newer possibilities.

Prof Susan Melrose

● If you talk to even the most academically able 15-year-old pupils, you will find that most of them evaluate all school subjects according to their potential usefulness for future employment. This means that some subjects, such as history, English literature, even mathematics, are regarded as "useless". Any attempt by teachers to justify them in terms of usefulness results in trivialisation.

Let us by all means provide young people with training for work and let it have high prestige, but let it also be separate from education. Then the values of both may flourish in their own environments and not conflict. Perhaps, then, we could envisage the best of both worlds: a well-trained workforce of culturally sophisticated individuals.

Michael Bulley
Ashford, Kent

The Guardian

Have We Lost the Healing Touch?

By Melvin Konner, M.D.

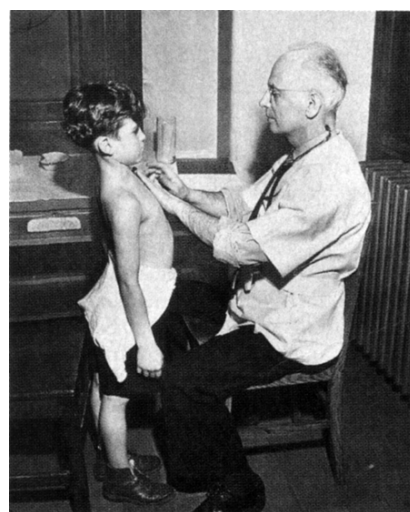
1 ADMIT IT: I LOVE TECHNOLOGY. Its potential astounds me. A friend of mine with a laparoscope takes an appendix or a gallbladder out through a couple of half-inch slits, watching the cutting end of a sleek tube on TV. Another, with his PET scanner, images people's brains every two seconds while they listen, think and talk. Still another uses the most advanced oscilloscope to guide an electrode through the brain of a Parkinson's patient, tracing the territory of the brain's motor centers. He's searching for cells he can burn out, thereby freeing someone from tremor and paralysis. Yet another monitors a dozen different measures in newborn babies' blood through a teeny cuff on a minuscule fingertip; the cuff is connected to a big bank of displays with colored blips and numbers. It's cool, it's pretty and it helps battle illness. If you haven't felt technology's power, you will. To paraphrase an old saying, there are no Luddites¹⁾ in hospital beds.

2 The question is, have we – doctors and patients – fallen so in love with technology that we are losing sight of its proper role? We reach out and touch it, as if to absorb its power. Never mind that 85 percent of the information needed to make a typical diagnosis comes from the history, a conversation with the patient. Or that the rest comes from the physical exam and some simple tests. Technology takes years to master, and doctors in training have only so many years. Will young doctors be prepared for the countless times when slick technology is not the best solution? Will they be able to guide frightened, vulnerable people through life-and-death decisions and know when to stop? Or will the machines take on a life of their own, as doctors who have never really learned to listen or to touch become appendages to computers?

3 We have gotten to where we simply don't feel cared for unless we are on the frontier of technology. "No MRI scan? What's the matter, aren't I good enough?" "No genetic screen? Don't stint, Doc, I want

the best." But technology can come between us and our doctors, who may be afraid to talk to patients and their families – and even more afraid to touch them in today's litigious atmosphere. Doctors are rarely sued for applying high technology, but they are often sued for omitting it. "Why didn't you do that test, Doctor?" is one question no physician wants to hear in court.

4 As countless new gizmos come online, both doctors and patients need more and



more discipline to resist overusing them. Unproven technology can be dangerous. All tests have false positives and trigger treatments that are potentially harmful for people who don't need them. As for fixing things, the newest and shiniest tool is not always the best. Just as there are surgical fads – tonsillectomy was one, Caesarean section another – there are gizmo fads as well. The rotoblator, a whirling burr on the end of a wire to ream out clogged arteries, came and went in the '90s, bogged down by technical flaws – but not before it was tried on thousands of patients, all of whom thought they were getting the latest and the best. Increasingly, technology diagnoses problems, triggering treatments whose effectiveness is judged technologically. Patients are nodded to in passing, rarely coming to understand what is going on, and leave the hospital without knowing how to

noot 1 The term Luddite has become synonymous with anyone who opposes the advance of industrial technology.

maintain complex schedules of medication,
diet and self-monitoring that could keep
them out of the hospital longer. Education
and prevention are not as cool as screens
and buttons, but they, too, are lifesaving.

5 One of my teachers came from three
generations of German pediatricians. His
father and grandfather used to make some
diagnoses by sniffing babies' stool. I don't
know how useful this was, but since it is a
lost art, we probably won't find out.
Another of my teachers said, "Find some
excuse to touch the patient in every
encounter." But as technological diagnosis

replaces physical examination, there is less
and less excuse for touching. However
scientific they are, doctors are always
shamans too. When we are in their hands,
they are magical to us. Pre-scientific
shamans claimed to recruit spiritual powers;
scientific ones invoke high technology. And
we want them to, because this is our
wizardry. Yes, it works a lot of the time, but
our faith in it goes far beyond its
effectiveness. Unless we find a balance
between the old arts of healing and the new
technology, we may lose as much as we
gain. And the loss may be irreversible.

Newsweek

Tekst 10

Here kitty kitty...

Jonathan Heddle on a new cure for those who are allergic to furry pets

In many homes across the country lurks a health danger cunningly disguised as a fluffy ball of fun. While pets bring happiness to many, for those owners who are allergic, they can spell misery. Furthermore, the number of sufferers is on the increase.

ABOUT ONE IN THREE PEOPLE in the UK will experience an allergy-related problem in their lifetime. Up to 10% of the population are allergic to their pets, with cats being the number-one culprit. There is one obvious solution to the problem, but many people would rather suffer from sniffles, sneezes and itchy eyes than get rid of their four-legged family member.

Contrary to popular belief, pet allergies are not to the fur itself but rather to molecules of protein (called allergens) that coat the fur and usually come from the animal's urine, skin glands, or the microscopic skin cells (called dander) which they continuously shed. They are also present in the saliva, which is why the fastidious cat is the worst offender. Keeping your pet clean can help reduce exposure but the allergens are produced continuously and can never be completely eliminated.

When an allergic person first comes into contact with an animal, the allergen from the animal causes the sufferer's body to produce large amounts of an antibody called IgE. Antibodies are part of the body's natural defence system. They are usually involved in recognising and sticking to foreign invaders. In this case, as well as sticking to the allergenic animal protein, IgE attaches to some of the body's own cells, called mast cells. These are common in those areas of the body that react most strongly in allergic reactions: notably the nose, throat, lungs and skin.

The over-production of IgE means that a large reservoir of the antibody, already stuck to the mast cells, will be ready the next time the sufferer encounters the pet protein. In the subsequent exposure, the allergen will again attach to IgE. The IgE in turn causes the mast cells to release a number of chemicals including histamines.

IT IS HISTAMINES that are responsible for many of the symptoms of an allergic reaction such as itching, a watery nose and problems breathing. They work by increasing the permeability of blood vessels, causing fluid to leak out into the surrounding area, leading to swelling and itching.

Histamines also trigger other cells to release further chemicals, which in turn cause allergy symptoms, thus setting in motion a chain reaction. They also cause

some muscles, such as those in the airways, to contract. This can lead to the wheezing that some people experience.

The most common treatment for allergies is in the form of anti-histamine drugs. As their name suggests, these drugs work by binding to histamine receptors. Anti-histamine drugs look similar enough to real histamine to be able to compete against it in order to attach to the histamine receptors, but different enough that, once they have replaced histamine, they are unable to trigger the allergic response.

Unfortunately, antihistamines are not always effective and, like all drugs, they are not without side effects. The early drugs caused serious drowsiness. Newer versions are much safer but people often forget to take their daily dose.

In some cases, treatment can involve anti-allergy injections. Allergy shots work by continually exposing the body's immune system to the allergen until it builds up a resistance. However, injections only work against one specific allergen and have to be continued on a monthly basis.

BUT A NEW HOPE IS ON THE HORIZON. An allergy vaccine could give a permanent cure. The vaccine is being developed by Resistentia, a Swedish pharmaceutical company. It stimulates the body's immune system to completely destroy its own IgE antibody: without IgE, most allergic responses will simply not occur. The company claims the vaccine will be effective against pet allergies as well as hay fever and other common allergies and will require just a few treatments a year.

"A vaccine lies some years in the future, but we are very pleased with the current results," says Professor Lars Hellman, whose research group at Uppsala University in Sweden is working closely with Resistentia. "If we can succeed also in coming clinical trials, it will mean a major scientific breakthrough, and it will mean that allergy-sufferers will obtain help in a completely new way."

As with all medical treatments the vaccine does not come without a cost. In this case, it may mean an end to exotic holidays. This is because IgE's natural role in the body seems to be defending against parasitic infections. Such infections are rare in industrialised northern countries but common in the developing world. But for those torn between getting rid of a beloved pet and enduring the misery of allergy it may well be a price worth paying.

The Guardian

LAN of Magic & Opportunity

Bring your magic to The Walt Disney Company's Worldwide Services Group, where we keep Disney's diverse businesses on the cutting edge of information technology! Through the following opportunity, you could provide advanced networking solutions for our European corporate offices and business units.

Network Engineer

Utilizing your 4-6 years of data communication experience, you will install and maintain network systems (hardware and software) and provide troubleshooting and on-call support for our European WAN. You will also prepare network performance reports; write scripts to automate network functions; and implement layer-3 filters in the routers.

Candidates will have a Bachelor's degree in Engineering, Telecommunications, Computer Science or Mathematics; and knowledge of LAN environments (Ethernet, Token Ring, switching, FDDI, ATM), operating systems (Netware 3/4, Windows NT, AppleTalk/Mac), and routing equipment/protocols (Cisco routers, RIP, NLSP, IGRP, EIGRP, OSPF, BGP, IP, IPX, NETBios/NetBEUI). You must be an excellent problem solver who interacts diplomatically with various business units, and operates effectively in a multinational environment. Excellent interpersonal and written/verbal communication skills are also essential. Travel required.

Get in on our exciting network and earn a competitive salary and excellent benefits! Please forward your resume with salary history to: **The Walt Disney Company, Attn: F. Bobin, Disneyland Paris, F-77777 Marne la Vallee Cedex 4, France. E-mail: francois_bobin@corp.disney.com**

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