benefit. It appears that many more people are interested in wearing magnets and reverse magnets on their heads to lose weight than to think better. We can again talk about "cosmetic neurology," although once reimbursement codes are determined it will undoubtedly become a behavioral medicine procedure.

April Fool.

– Joseph H. Friedman, MD

Disclosure of Financial Interests

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A Tale of Two Stricken Cities

It was a magnificent harbor where the Tagus River emptied into the eastern Atlantic Ocean. Archeologists tell us that Celtic tribes had peopled its shores, building great stone dolmens to honor their gods. About three millennia ago it became the site of a Phoenician trading post called *Allis Ubbo* (safe harbor.) The port assumed great mercantile importance since the Phoenicians—disseminators of civilization—used the harbor as their point of departure to the fabled tin mines in what is now southwestern England. Greek mariners knew the community as Olissipo; and the Romans, now designating the Iberian province as Lusitania, called the community, Olissipona. And when Portugal was conquered by the Islamic Moors in 711 CE, they referred to the site as *al-'Isbunah*, a name than morphed finally to its current title, Lisbon, when the coastal city was recaptured by Christian forces in the Reconquista of 1147 CE.

Mid morning of November 1, 1755, All Saints Day: The citizens of Lisbon, Portugal, were not unfamiliar with periodic earth tremors; and fourteen times in the prior five centuries the tremors were sufficiently intense to do structural damage within the city limits. But it had been many years since the last earthquake of note had touch the city; and Lisbon, on this holy day, was unprepared for the intensity of this quake, which in retrospect, was the most damaging quake afflicting a European city in recorded times.

The citizens of Lisbon witnessed the physical destruction of much of their baroque city; but nature had not yet completed its veil of lethal terror. The epicenter was located on the floor of the Atlantic Ocean some 200 kilometers southwest of the Portuguese shores. The temblors were experienced as far northeast as Finland. The Atlantic shores of Portugal, however, were then struck by a massive tidal wave, a tsunami, that engulfed the Algarve coast, destroying many fishing villages and flooding habitations along the Tagus River. Superimposed upon the destruction wrought by quake and flood were devastating fires beginning shortly after the quake-initiated destruction. The separate fires coalesced, razing much of the center of Lisbon including its central hospital, the Royal Hospital of All Saints. An estimated 40,000 Portuguese died.

The three-fold tragedy befalling Lisbon—earthquake, tidal wave and fire—brought the Portuguese to reappraise their political views, their religious tenets, and certainly their newly experienced intimacy with a nascent science called seismology. The ruling monarch, King Joseph, had his palace utterly destroyed, and for the remainder of his life he refused to dwell within customary masonry structures, remaining instead in a small tent city. Widespread fear dominated Lisbon's urban population, many believing that their unhappy fate was an act of divine punishment for their emerging intimacy with the Age of Enlightenment.

Lisbon's tragedy was well known to the remainder of the western world . Voltaire wrote poetic condolences and a century later in the United States, Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr.,—poet and physician of renown—makes mention of the Lisbon earthquake beginning in the second stanza of his enduring poem, "The Deacon's Masterpiece," which begins with the memorable lines: "Have you heard of the wonderful one-hoss shay, That was built in such a wonderful way, It ran a hundred years to a day ?"

Holmes' second stanza declares, somewhat irreverently:

Seventeen hundred and fifty-five.
George Secundus was then alive,
Snuffy old drone from the German hive.
That was the year when Lisbon town
Saw the earth open and gulp her down.

Over a millennium before, in the year 79 CE, another proud city was felled by natural forces. Pompeii, a prosperous city of some 20,000, situated on the southern reaches of the Bay of Naples, provided many summer villas for the Roman elite. The city stood figuratively in the shadow of Mount Vesuvius, a volcano with a reputation for unanticipated eruption. In November of the year 79—historians think that it was November 23—Vesuvius erupted sending a cloud of superheated ash in a southeastern direction killing the inhabitants of Pompeii and neighboring cities such as Herculaneum. Pompeii was buried under a 22 meter layer of hot ash; and it was then lost to memory except as a footnote in the writings of the late Roman scribes. The physical existence of Pompeii was only verified, by accident, in 1599.

Two cities, one pious and one voluptuary, were felled by indifferent natural forces. In nature, said Ingersoll, there are neither rewards nor punishments, there are only consequences.

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Disclosure of Financial Interests

Stanley M. Aronson, MD, and spouse/significant other have no financial interests to disclose.

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