



Competitive Eating

By Dr. Margaret MacKrell Gaglione, FACP

While many celebrate our nation's birth on July 4, this date also marks the date of the annual Nathan's Hot Dog Eating Contest on Coney Island. This tradition, which began in 1916, has grown so much that there are now qualifying times and quantities similar to qualifying for the Boston Marathon before one can enter the contest. One of the qualifying contests occurred here in Hampton Roads recently. It received front-page press coverage for two days as a family event to come observe at the MacArthur Center Mall. The winner, Sonya "Black Widow" Thomas, a Virginian, who weighs 105 lbs., has earned a place at the table in New York in early July.


She will try to unseat last year's winner, Joey Chestnut, who ate 66 hotdogs with buns in 12 minutes. The runner up, a Japanese

man, was disqualified for vomiting after eating 63 hotdogs. In last year's championship on Coney Island, in just 12 minutes, Chestnut ingested 20,790 calories, 1,221 grams of fat, 1,914 grams of carbohydrates and 65,340 mg of sodium. To put some perspective on the damage this man did to his body, let's consider the following. The caloric intake is equivalent to 6 lbs. To burn the equivalent in exercise, he would need to walk 208 miles. If the calories did not get him, the sodium intake will. He ingested more sodium than one should take in 29 days.


The International Federation of Competitive Eating (IFOCE), formed in 1997, oversees 100 worldwide eating competitions annually. In 2002, the IFOCE sponsored a two-hour show on the Food Network called the *Glutton*

Bowl. Members of the IFOCE affectionately call themselves "gurgitators."

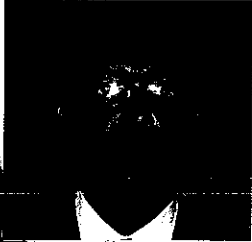
Competitive eating is has become a spectator sport. In 2006, over 30,000 individuals watched the Coney Island Hot Dog Eating Contest and an estimated 1.5 million household viewers saw it live when it was televised on ESPN. In a nation where over two-thirds of the population is overweight and obese, an eating contest that promotes self-destructive behaviors should not get such publicity. The individuals partaking in this competition did tremendous harm to themselves and the thousands that turned out to see it. Excessive eating needs to be seen as maladaptive as any other excessive activity — would we find smoking or alcohol drinking contests to be newsworthy?




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Each issue of *M.D. News* presents its own challenges in terms of finding a common thread in the articles in the national and local articles, and weaving it into a cohesive mix of stories that invite the reader to read. In this issue it was both easy and gratifying to identify the common thread that makes the publication come together.

It's not what you might think on casual inspection: true, each article speaks at length about incredible technological advances that give patients real and realistic hope for cure. The physicians at Orthopaedic & Spine Center are proud to offer their patients the most advanced minimally invasive techniques that allow doctors to perform a wide range of procedures through incisions that are often three or four times smaller than the open incisions typically required for the same surgeries.

In "The Next Generation of Breast Imaging," you'll read about the Hybrid SPECT-CmT system, a modality that uses a very, very low amount of radiation to create a three-dimensional image of the breast; and about an important advance in the diagnosis of invasive lobular carcinoma — breast-specific gamma imaging — which can help detect this lobule-developing cancer in its earliest stages.

In our cover story, Dr. Scott Williams describes the CyberKnife, a computer-controlled radiosurgery that delivers radiation to tumors in the brain, spine and anywhere in the body with submillimeter accuracy, while avoiding damage to surrounding healthy tissue.

Reading these articles, it's easy to become overwhelmed at the rapid rate of technology and how it is changing the way physicians practice. But it becomes increasingly clear that it is not merely the technology that excites these physicians, but rather the opportunity to offer their patients significant physical comfort and psychological care along with their treatment.

As Dr. Carlson of Orthopaedic & Spine Center says, "We designed a space that is much more efficient in terms of patient flow. Patients don't have to walk very far to get anything they need, so they are not expending energy they don't have to. That makes a big difference, especially for patients who are in pain."

Dr. Tornai of the Duke Multi-Modality Imaging Lab understands well the importance of making mammogram patients as comfortable as possible: "We want to lower the fear that women experience regarding mammograms in hopes that an even greater number of women will opt to have this vital screening."

And Dr. Williams can assure his patients that they don't have to leave Hampton Roads to find the highest-quality care. They can stay close to the comforts of home while they're receiving treatment. "You can't put a price on that," he says.

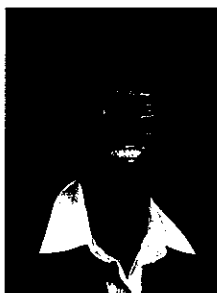
At the end of the day, these articles demonstrate that physicians are quick to embrace new technologies and treatment options to offer patients, but their primary focus is foremost and always the most basic: relieve their patients' pain and increase their comfort during the most arduous treatment and care.

As a final note, I want to mention how critical it is that physicians and patients alike heed the words of Dr. Margaret MacKrell Gaglione, writing about competitive eating. Almost every physician who is interviewed for this magazine mentions the dangers of overweight and obesity, and how severely they compromise patients' ability to fight disease or trauma. America (and particularly America's teenage population), is at great peril unless current trends are reversed. To those of you who routinely educate your patients about nutrition and weight control, you are doing them a tremendous service. May we soon see the day when events like competitive eating contests are a relic of a less-informed age.

Blessings,



Holly Barlow
Publisher



M.D. NEWS

Hampton Roads Edition

Publisher: Holly Barlow

Photographer: Abejon Photography

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SUNSHINE MEDIA

M.D. News is published by Sunshine Media, Inc.

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Scottsdale, AZ 85258

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