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In this month's issue:

- [Mr. O'Lucky saved my miserable life](#)
- [Mr. O'Lucky's power](#)
- [Press releases from CSICOP](#)
- [What's new](#)
- [Skeptical ink](#)

Mr. O'Lucky saved my miserable life

By Virginia Barnett

I was once a lost soul without direction or hope. I had become an atheist and when I became ill and had to be hospitalized, I told them I wanted no pastors or prayers sent in my behalf. In spite of this directive, one of our best friends brought to me a totem that proved to save my life. He's Mr. O'Lucky and from the day he was hung on my IV pole, my health began to improve. Oh, they kept telling me that fluids and medicine were working, but I know better. Mr. O'Lucky saved my life!



See, right on his backside is "Mr. O'Lucky," and boy is he ever.

I heard a rumor that I'm sure is true that the recently released Third Letter of Fatima contains a special message from Our Lady that being in possession of Mr. O'Lucky will not only prevent harm to the owner during the terrible Tribulation but will actually save the world if we just believe. I also noticed when I was at my most ill in the hospital that the many needle punctures on my rear end, if you squinted and connected the purple dots, actually looked like Mr. O'Lucky. I showed it to a lot of people and they all said they could see him. People were lining up to view my sacred butt. And a considerable number of men said they felt something. I'm sure that was due to the Grace of O'Lucky. Now I carry Mr. O'Lucky with me everywhere. A bus from the Rehab clinic nearly ran over me in the breezeway at work this afternoon because I had unwisely left Mr. O'Lucky in my purse upstairs.

Oh, the doctors made fun of me all right. But I know in my heart that Mr. O'Lucky has real power to heal. I'm living proof!

[\[Back to top\]](#)

Mr. O'Lucky's power

By John Blanton

Ginny's tale about her experiences with Mr. O'Lucky was an amazing revelation to me. Previously I was not aware of Mr. O'Lucky and the wonderful power he has exerted over my personal fortunes. Allow me to tell you how Mr. O'Lucky changed my life.

Two years ago, while traveling on the freeway, a large crate dropped off a truck in front of us. We dodged the crate, but ended wheels-up on the service road. The car was totaled, but we weren't even killed.

I realize now that our good fortune was due entirely to the wonderful influence of Mr. O'Lucky. And this was two years before we even knew of the existence of Mr. O'Lucky. What more compelling proof of Mr. O'Lucky's power do you need?

I am sure most of you reading this have your own stories of how Mr. O'Lucky has affected your lives. Write to us and tell us about your own experience with the power of Mr. O'Lucky. We will print your inspiring messages in a future issue.

John Blanton —

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[\[Back to top\]](#)

Press releases from CSICOP

*The following two articles are press releases from CSICOP — Contact Kevin Christopher for more information
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Two Philadelphia Psychologists Challenge Thought Field Therapy

AMHERST, NY (June 15, 2000) — Two Philadelphia psychologists challenge the claims of Thought Field Therapy (TFT) — an alternative psychotherapy with a growing number of adherents and spin-off techniques. James Herbert, associate professor of psychology and Brandon Gaudiano, doctoral candidate for clinical psychology, both from MCP Hahnemann University, question TFT's effectiveness and criticize the therapy's science. Their article appears in the new July/August issue of *Skeptical Inquirer* magazine.

Thought Field Therapy is a psychotherapy treatment developed and promoted by Dr. Roger Callahan over the past 20 years. Practitioners tap various parts of the body in particular sequences, called "algorithms," in order to correct unbalanced energies, known in TFT as "thought fields." The idea is that perturbations in these thought fields are the cause of psychological disturbances. Spin-off alternative therapies include Gary Craig's Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) and Callahan's trademarked — and zealously guarded — Voice Technology techniques.

Gaudiano and Herbert note that TFT is not a coherent scientific theory, but rather a "hodgepodge" of concepts. Thought fields and points tapped on the body are modeled on the Chinese concepts of qi and acupuncture meridians. TFT combines these concepts with the terminology of psychology and physicist's David Bohm's theory of active information to explain how small "perturbations" can affect thought fields.

The authors also question why there have been no controlled studies of TFT, despite the miraculous claimed rates of effectiveness (up to 97 percent). The studies that have been conducted are seriously flawed. Two Florida State researchers, J.L. Carbonell and Charles Figley conducted a study which they later posted on their Web site, but this study lacks placebos or controls, so there is no way the Florida State researchers could determine whether patient improvements correlate to the TFT therapy.

In fact, EFT guru Gary Craig maintains that a control placebo "algorithm" may be impossible because tapping anywhere on the body would affect the body's "energy meridians." According to Gaudiano and Herbert, "This position conveniently renders Craig's theory unfalsifiable and therefore outside the realm of science." Callahan has also ruled out the possibility of placebo controls.

Gaudiano and Herbert note that "no research has ruled out factors that are common — to greater or lesser degrees — in all psychotherapies. These include placebo effects resulting from the mere expectation of improvement, therapist enthusiasm and support, therapist-client alliance, and effort justification (i.e., the tendency to report positive changes in order to justify the effort exerted...)." Until controlled clinical trials are made, these psychotherapy techniques cannot be taken seriously by the scientific community.

Die-hard Skeptic Bears Stigmata

AMHERST, NY (June 15, 2000) — Joe Nickell, senior research fellow of the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP), claims that he himself bore stigmata during his research into these miraculous wounds for an upcoming TV documentary. He gives a less-than-miraculous explanation in his "Investigative Files" column for July/August 2000 issue of *Skeptical Inquirer*.

There has been a recent revival of media coverage and interest in the miraculous appearance of these wounds on believers, which imitate the crucifixion injuries of Christ. Film and television events include the motion picture *Stigmata* (1999) and a major segment of the Fox TV documentary "Signs from God (July 28, 1999)." Last year, the Roman Catholic Church beatified famous Italian stigmatic Padre Pio.

The first stigmatic was the medieval Italian saint, Francis of Assisi. After forty days of fasting and prayer on Mount Averno in 1224, St. Francis had a vision of Christ and five wounds then appeared on the saint's body—four crucifixion wounds and a fifth wound on his side representing the spear thrust of a Roman soldier recorded in the Gospels. Stigmata have been appearing on select faithful ever since.

Skeptics and faithful alike have questioned stigmata claims, and Nickell notes that there have been several instances of fraud in the long history of stigmata. In 1543, during a life-threatening illness, stigmatic Magdalena de la Cruz confessed that her stigmata had been deliberate deceptions. Maria de la Visitacion — "The Holy Nun of Lisbon" — was discovered by a sister nun painting fake wounds on her hands. Says Nickell, "Although initially defended by doctors in 1587, she was brought before the Inquisition, whereupon her wounds were scrubbed and the coloration washed off, revealing 'unblemished flesh beneath.'"

Skeptics do not necessarily attribute all stigmatic cases to fraud, but they are unanimous that these wounds are natural, rather than miraculous. Nickell, asked to appear on a TV program about stigmatic Katya Rivas, decided to test whether he could reproduce convincing stigmata on himself prior to his appearance. Noting the typical nature of stigmatic wounds in the case of Rivas and others, he found that he could reproduce sizeable stigmata with very slight cuts on the back of his hand. These cuts were so small that they could easily be covered by a cosmetic ointment and healed very quickly, consistent with the fact that all the stigmatic wounds ever examined by physicians have been superficial.

Nickell concludes, "My examination of the video showing Katya Rivas' alleged stigmatization and the simple experiments I performed persuaded me that not only could her stigmata not be authenticated, but, indeed — like other instances of the alleged phenomenon throughout history — they cannot be distinguished from a pious hoax."

[\[Back to top\]](#)

What's new

From Robert Park's What's New at <http://www.aps.org>.

Alternative medicine: "consumer demand" drives NIH program.

It had the feel of a post-game celebration. Arlen Specter (R-PA) and Tom Harkin (D-IA), chair and ranking member of the Senate Labor, HHS Appropriations Subcommittee, held a hearing this week devoted to self-congratulations on having created the new National Center of Complementary and Alternative Medicine at NIH, with a budget of \$68.7M. It's "for the people," they exulted, 42% of whom spend some \$27B annually for therapies ranging from magnets to herbal supplements. No mention was made of the growing number of fatal reactions to untested supplements (WN 24 Mar 00). The Center replaces the Office of Complementary and Alternative Medicine that was headed by Wayne Jonas, a homeopath. The new Director, Stephen Strauss, an NIH virologist, is reputed to be a serious researcher. In addition to such CAM gurus as Dean Ornish and Andrew Weil, there was the usual parade of grateful patients: "I was a shattered woman," one testified, "angry at God." Then she discovered Herbert Benson's Mind-Body Institute and had a baby. Benson wants studies of the placebo effect, to show how the mind heals the body, but Harkin proposed discarding the term "placebo effect." "It's real medicine," he insisted. The next Specter-Harkin goal? Complementary and alternative medicine in the curriculum of every medical school.

Warp drive: the Brits also pursue propellantless propulsion.

If the laws of physics are standing in the way of progress, it's time to change the laws of physics. Clearly, spewing out rocket propellant isn't getting us to the stars. So BAE Systems, formed by merging British Aerospace with Marconi Electronic Systems, created "Project Greenglow," patterned after NASA's Breakthrough Propulsion Physics program (WN 20 Nov 98). Like BPP, BAE is attempting to replicate the Podkletnov gravity shield (WN 15 Aug 97). If you can build a gravity shield, of course, you can build a perpetual motion machine thus defeating the First Law of Thermodynamics. It won't be the first war the Brits have lost.

Creationism: Oklahoma house casts a vote for monotheism.

You will recall that last fall the Oklahoma state textbook committee voted to affix a statement to any biology text warning unwary students that "evolution is a controversial theory" (WN 12 Nov 99). The Oklahoma Attorney General, however, ruled that the committee lacked the authority to require such a statement. This week, the Oklahoma House of Representatives voted unanimously for a bill that gives the committee authority to insert "a summary, opinion, or disclaimer" into any textbook they please. What's more, the textbook committee was directed to "ensure that the textbooks include acknowledgment that human life was created by one God of the universe." The Representatives showed admirable restraint in not specifying which God they had in mind. They then voted narrowly to send the bill back to a House-Senate committee, whose chair vows she will not allow it to resurface.

Dietary supplement: the return of "vitamin O."

In November of 1998, USA Today carried a full page ad for "Vitamin O." What was it? "Vitamin O contains stabilized oxygen molecules in a solution of sodium chloride and distilled water" (WN 27 Nov 98). After we called attention to the ad, the Federal Trade Commission charged the supplier, Rose Creek Health Products, with fraud (WN 19 Mar 99), and the company was shut down. This week, we became aware of a new oxygen supplement, BiOxygen, offered by Beverly Sassoon & Co., <http://www.bsassoon.net>. And what is BiOxygen? "The components of BiOxygen are water, sodium chloride, and activated oxygen molecules." One difference: a two ounce bottle of BiOxygen costs \$34.95, compared to only \$20 for "Vitamin O." The recommended dose is again 15-20 drops, twice a day, or roughly 0.0000002% of your minimum daily requirement for oxygen.

Global warming? As Earth warms, the rhetoric may be cooling.

Five years ago the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), an international group of climate experts sponsored by the United Nations, issued a report suggesting that warming of the climate by a degree or so since 1860 is the result of human activity. Conservative organizations promptly opened fire on the integrity of the IPCC (WN 21 Jun 96). The preliminary draft of a new IPCC assessment, now circulating among its several hundred members for comment, reaches about the same conclusion, but with much less uncertainty, yet complaints are likely to be muted. Science is doing its thing: moving toward consensus between groups with very different initial expectations. As long as both sides stick to the scientific process, the intensity of the debate serves as a powerful motivation for better climate research. The debate seems to be shifting from whether global warming is

taking place to whether warming is such a bad thing.

Area 51: Is that a tennis court?

Commenting on the first commercial satellite images of the super secret site, a Pentagon spokesman didn't do much to squelch UFO rumors: "we have had more than 40 years to learn how to deal with overhead surveillance."

Nuclear phobia I: no excess cancers from Three Mile Island.

A 13-year study of people living within five miles of the Three Mile Island nuclear plant found no increase in cancer deaths due to the 1979 accident. You will not be surprised to learn that the University of Pittsburgh researchers called for continued monitoring of the residents' health, while nuclear activists insisted the study must be flawed and called for expanding it to ten miles from the plant. There have been no calls for similar studies around coal-fired power plants, which deposit vastly greater amounts of radioactivity as well as other carcinogens.

Nuclear phobia II: children kept away from Hall of Science.

The Alameda County Board of Education called for a moratorium on field trips to the Lawrence Hall of Science where hundreds of children are shown the wonders of science each day. The Board acted at the urging of the Berkeley-based Committee to Minimize Toxic Waste which claims the area is contaminated by tritium from the nearby National Tritium Labeling Facility. Astounded LBL and EPA officials explained to the Board that levels comply with federal guidelines, but the Board was unmoved.

Los Alamos: Congress believes in the polygraph.

Whatever the security problem is, Congress seems convinced that the polygraph will cure it. Tuesday night, the House Armed Services Committee approved the Nuclear Secrets Safety Act, which would require polygraph exams "for individuals who have access to any vault containing Restricted Data." A number of senior scientists at Los Alamos insist they will take early retirement rather than submit to a procedure they regard as pseudoscientific garbage. Meanwhile, the Lab is having trouble trying to recruit new staff.

Campaign 2000: John Hagelin takes on Pat Buchanan?

While the power brokers inside the Beltway battle over budgets and missile defenses, the Reform Party is about to begin a month-long primary process. Ross Perot and Jesse Ventura have fallen. Pat Buchanan now faces new-age physicist John Hagelin, vying for a \$12.6M taxpayer-financed campaign fund. Can Buchanan's Brigade meet the challenge of Hagelin's corps of yogic flyers (WN 9 Apr 00)?

Climate change: the feds weigh in on global warming.

"Climate Change Impacts On the United States," the first thorough federal assessment of the potential consequences of warming, was released this week for 60 days of public review. Weighing in at 4.73 kg, the massive tome is not light reading. It offers something for everyone. For the technological optimists, a persuasive argument that the planet is indeed getting warmer is coupled with the cheery prognosis that this could lead to increased agricultural productivity. But for the Malthusian pessimists, there is plenty of gloom and doom; e.g., "For the worst-case scenario category 3 hurricane, surge levels could rise 25 feet above mean sea level at JFK Airport..." Today, on the floor of the Senate, Chuck Hagel (R-NE) ridiculed the report as an "evangelical document with apocalyptic overtones." The fourth secret of Fatima maybe?

Alternative medicine: herb-cancer connection.

Recent evidence that use of Chinese herb Aristolochia fangchi led to kidney failure and cancer among dozens of unwitting Belgian dieters is cause for alarm. The 1994 Dietary Supplement Act prohibits FDA from evaluating the efficacy of a "dietary supplement" before harm has been demonstrated- is a "shut the gate after the cows have escaped" strategy a viable approach to public health?

Dietary supplements: stealth bill moves forward. The 1994 Dietary Supplement and Health Education Act tied the hands of the FDA in regulating supplements, leading several states to impose their own safety warnings and labeling requirements. Now the Senate Agriculture Committee, without hearings or debate, has approved the "National Uniformity in Food Act" (S.1155), which has the effect of knocking down the state restrictions. And to further limit exposure and insure passage, the bill will probably be attached as a rider to some piece of unrelated legislation. Ironically, the committee action coincides with the release of an independent study showing that 8 of 22 brands of ginseng sold in the US were seriously contaminated with pesticide residues. (Maria Cranor contributed to WN.)

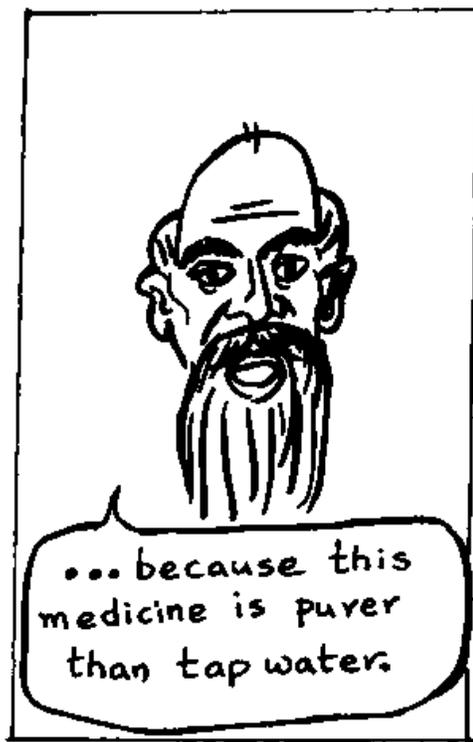
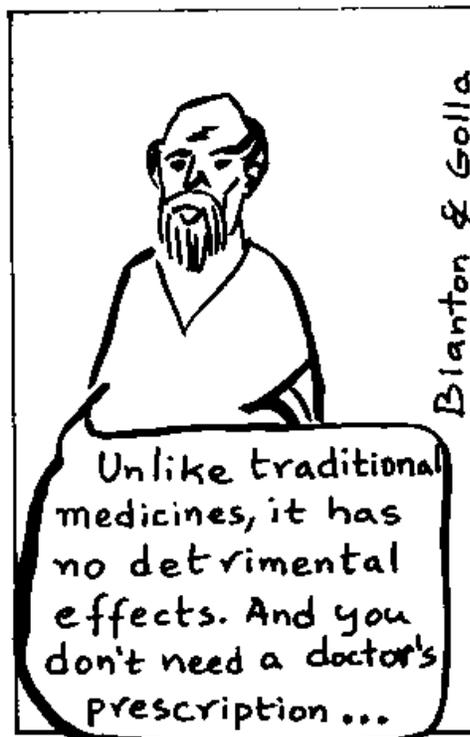
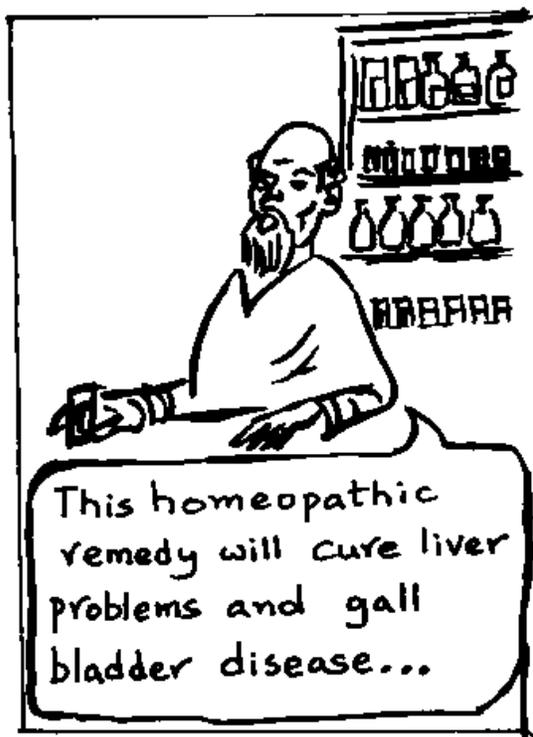
[\[Back to top\]](#)

Skeptical ink

By Prasad Golla and John Blanton

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[\[Back to top\]](#)