

## **Brain Strain Falls Mainly in the Plains**

**By Lou Lombardo, LMT, NCTMB**

*“When you drive your car do you notice that people yell at you a lot? Often these people are lying on your hood”*

*- Dave Barry on “The Ten Signs That Your Are Losing It”*

I was racking my brain trying to decide on a topic for this week’s column. You think it’s easy to come up with fresh material?

Then it hit me- “racking my brain”- why not talk about my brain?

Well, reality set in rather quickly when I realized that that specific topic wouldn’t fill a whole lot of column space.

But what about a column on the basic human brain? I figured- that’s a no- brainer! (oh how I hate that phrase)

First of all did you know that your brain consists of four parts- the cerebrum, diencephalon, brain stem and cerebellum?

Unless you are a male, who’s brain has only three parts- the part that enjoys sports, the part that enjoys sex, and the part that tries to think up ways to have more of both.

I remember in 10<sup>th</sup> grade we learned that the brain was made up of the cerebrum, cerebellum and medulla. I guess as a species have evolved more since that time, which justifies the additional parts. But it wasn’t that long ago!!

The brain is the central computer of the body. Everything we say and do is initiated by the brain. It also stores all sorts of things in its memory including facts, figures and all the smells, tastes and things you have seen, heard or touched.

Everyone’s brain is divided into two sides. The left side of your brain controls the right side of your body; and the right side of your brain controls the left side. Makes sense to me.

Humans have the most complex brain of any animal on earth- with the exception, once again, of the male species.

The left side is usually better at problem solving, math, writing and understanding language. The right side is creative and helps you to be good at art or music.

That's why you sometimes hear that a person is right-brained dominant or left-brain dominant based on their inherent skills.

At about 1400 cubic centimeters in volume the brain is the size of a cantaloupe. It feels like a ripe avocado and looks pink because of the blood flowing through it. I wouldn't recommend that you grope avocados or measure cantaloupes in the grocery store to prove my point.

You may be held accountable for that.

I personally experienced it and got away with it.

The brain uses 20% of your body's energy, but it makes up only 2 % of your body's weight.

Did you know that your brain has around 10 billion nerve cells? About the same figure as the number of Super Wal-Marts being planned for this area.

Some people use the term "brain" and "mind" interchangeably. You hear some people say that they changed their mind about something.

That means they changed their thinking, which is controlled by their brain.

Early in my administrative career I worked in an office that was so small I had to walk outside just to change my mind.

Other people say: "I'd like to give him a piece of my mind". I can't say that because I can't afford to do that.

With all the junk that is found in our food supply, there are some things we can add to our diet to definitely improve the functioning of our brain.

One of America's leading proponents of natural healing, Dr. Andrew Weil, offers evidence that some foods like fish, tumeric and brightly colored vegetables can act like "brain food".

But he is a real advocate for fish because of the so-called omega-3 fatty acids it contains. Oily fish like salmon, sardines, mackerel, herring, bluefish and black cod fish are the best sources of those special fats, according to Weil.

He says that one of the omega-3s- DHA- is the main constituent of cell membranes in the brain. A deficiency of it can weaken the brain's architecture and leave it vulnerable to disease.

Some diets like the Mediterranean and traditional Oriental diets associated with good health and longevity are high in omega-3 fatty acids from fish.

The American diet is not. Think about it. When is the last time you ordered or cooked fish for dinner instead of steak? Whenever I go out to eat I order fish just for the halibut.

Weil recognizes that many species of fish may be contaminated with mercury and other toxins. He recommends sardines, herring, Alaskan black cod and sockeye salmon. These varieties are wild and have lower levels of environmental contaminants.

Vegetarian sources of omega-3 fatty acids, such as walnuts, flax and hemp, are good additions to the diet, according to Weil, but not as reliable as fish.

For some people it may be easier to rely on fish oil supplements. The best are distilled and certified to be free from mercury and other toxins. Krill oil and supplements made from algae are good sources as well.

The saying “you are what you eat” certainly holds true for food that can enhance the activity of our brains. Maybe we should all join up in a unanimous support for a law that would require that all our elected officials have at least two servings of fish each day. “Holy mackerel!!”.

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