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Arthritis Today
JOSEPH J. WEISS, M.D. RHEUMATOLOGY
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Livonia, Michigan 48152
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NEW MEDICATIONS AND RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS
Those of you with an interest in arthritis, cannot help but note the broadcast news about the new drugs coming out to treat rheumatoid arthritis. I do not want to dampen hope but must point out that the publicity comes more from Madison Avenue than from the National Institute of Health. The last two trials to date the one new drug already on pharmacy shelves, does not perform any better than methotrexate, and is five times as expensive. The new drug has known potentially serious side effects to the liver. Most likely its use in a diverse population with wide variation in the status of their health will uncover other toxicities. Another new drug is extremely expensive, costing \$500/week, must be taken by injection, and while being far better than placebo in trials to date, is still no more effective than methotrexate. The drug in small trials has not shown any serious side effects. The experience to date does not mean the drug can cause no harm, rather, the medical community must learn where to look and what to monitor when the medication comes to the market. I do not mean to dampen these new therapies. In time, both may prove valuable and live up to the promise of their introductions. However, for now, caution hope with caution, and allow your doctor to exercise temperance rather than risk in introducing these medications to your regimen.

PC TALK

MIKE WENDLAND

A major controversy is raging on the Internet over a new technology that allows near CD-quality music to be downloaded and played over the Internet quickly and easily. Critics say it encourages music piracy.

The growing legions of boosters of this technology say it's all about the freedom of cyberspace. They call it MP3, which stands for Moving Pictures Expert Group, Level 3 (or version 3). Geek-speak aside, it's simply a very efficient way of compressing files so they can be easily downloaded and played over the Internet without losing quality. Essentially, MP3 reduces audio signals to one-twelfth their original size by cutting out portions that are inaudible to most human ears. That means quick-downloading files that sound almost as good as CDs. Indeed, there are

some audio commentators who think the MP3 technology is the beginning of the end for CDs — and the companies that pre-record and sell them. To use MP3, you need a player. The most popular for the PC is Winamp. For the Mac, an application called SoundApp. You can get them both for free from shareware sites like download.com (www.download.com). Once you have your player, go to places like MP3.com (www.mp3.com) to download free music. They explain all about MP3 files.

Determining what's legal
Much of it is perfectly legal. A lot of independent bands from all over the world freely make their music available over the Net. And commercial sites online sell music in MP3 form, again, perfectly legal.

But there are also a lot of other places online that illegally bootleg copyrighted music. And that's against the law.

In fact, the Recording Industry Association of America has been busy in recent months snooping cyberspace, filing suits and shutting down many of the pirate sites.

There's another thing about MP3 that scares the recording industry.

Besides allowing users to download files, MP3 can also record music.

Shareware products legally and widely available on the Internet allow users to make

their own MP3's from CDs in their computer's CD-ROM drive, and then post these files on the Net for anybody to grab. Because this is the same as bootlegging cassette recordings and the artists get no profit when their music is ripped off like this, the recording industry types see MP3 as a huge threat.

Technological squabble

The controversy promises to grow hotter as more sounds are put online. But now special MP3 players are available, like the Rio, a Walkman-like device from Diamond Multimedia that interfaces with your PC and stores MP3 files for playback.

The Recording Industry Association of America even took Diamond to court in hopes of winning an injunction that would have prohibited the company from marketing the Rio. The trade group claimed devices like the Rio encourage piracy.

But the court didn't buy the argument. So many MP3 sounds are on the Net, the Californian federal judge ruled, that stopping the company from marketing such a device was akin to locking the proverbial barn door after the horse escaped.

Here's a list of Internet resources where you can learn more about MP3:

CNET (www.cnet.com) - Do a keyword search on "MP3" and you'll be presented with informative articles about MP3 and links to the sites offering free players and accessories.

SUGARMEGS (www.sugarmegs.org) - If you're into music, this site is the place to go. It bills itself as "An ecosystem of audio streams irrigating the ears of the net." Check it out and you'll be presented with very diverse music choices.

MP3 MUSIC WEBBING (www.webbing.org/cgi-bin/webbing?ring=mp3&list) - You can click from site to site here. More than 250 sites with MP3 music can be accessed here.

WORLDWIDE BANDS (www.worldwidebands.com/) - Search music by genre. It's all here and all down/undable.

New PC Mike addition: Have you been to my webpage lately? I've added a RealAudio link to update. Check it out at www.pcmike.com

High Tech Holiday Seminar: My next PC Mike seminar is 10 a.m. to noon Saturday, Dec. 5, from at Lawrence Technological Institute, 21000 West 10 Mile in Southfield. We'll demo the latest high tech gifts and gadgets, both hardware and software. You need to reserve a spot to attend. You can do that by calling (248) 423-2721.

Hope to see you there.

Mike Wendland covers the Internet for NBC-TV News Channel stations across the country. His "PC Talk" radio show airs Saturday and Sunday afternoons on Detroit's WXYT-Radio AM1270. He is the author of a series of Internet books. You can reach him through his Web site at <http://www.pcmike.com>

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SPOTLIGHT ON Orthodontics
by Josephine Finazzo, D.M.D.

HIGH-TECH WIRE
In recognition of the fact that misaligned bones cause more problems in the long term than crooked teeth, many orthodontists are urging that patients be treated earlier - before the malleability of facial bones ends at puberty. Prior to this, many dental and skeletal problems were addressed by extraction or jaw surgery. Now, however, overbite is characterized by an upper jaw that protrudes over a lower one may likely be corrected by stimulating the growth of the lower jaw with an appliance that holds the jaw forward. By the same token, a device known as a palatal expander can be employed to widen the roof of the mouth.

THE ORTHODONTIC GROUP
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Photographer plans book signing at Borders Dec. 5

Borders Books & Music in Farmington Hills will host a book signing and discussion with photographer Thomas Kachadurian featuring his new photography book, "Visions From The Sleeping Bear," 3-5 p.m. Saturday Dec. 5. The book contains more than 100 color photographs taken at and around northern Michigan's Sleeping Bear Dunes. This event is free and open to the public.

Borders Books & Music is at 30995 Orchard Lake Road, Farmington Hills. For information, call 737-0110.

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