

Dirty air triggers more heart attacks than cocaine

Air pollution triggers more heart attacks than using cocaine and poses as high a risk of sparking a heart attack as alcohol, coffee and physical exertion

Researchers say that sex, anger, marijuana use and chest or respiratory infections can also trigger heart attacks to different extents, but air pollution, particularly in heavy traffic, is the major culprit. The findings, published in *The Lancet* journal, suggest population-wide factors like polluted air should be taken more seriously when looking at heart risks, and should be put into context beside higher but relatively rarer risks like drug use.

Tim Nawrot of Hasselt University in Belgium, who led the study, said he hoped his findings would also encourage doctors to think more often about population level risks. "Physicians are always looking at individual patients — and low risk factors might not look im-

portant at an individual level, but if they are prevalent in the population then they have a greater public health relevance," he said. The World Health Organisation describes air pollution as 'a major environmental risk to health' and estimates that it causes around 2m premature deaths worldwide every year.

Mr. Nawrot's team combined data from 36 separate studies and calculated the relative risk posed by a series of heart attack triggers and their population-attributable fraction (PAF) — in other words the proportion of total heart attacks estimated to have been caused by each trigger. The highest risk PAF was exposure to traffic, followed by physical exertion, alcohol, coffee, air pollution, and



A woman walks with her bike wearing a mask

then things like anger, sex, cocaine use, smoking marijuana and respiratory infections.

"Of the triggers for heart attack studied, cocaine is the most likely to trigger an event in an individual,

but traffic has the greatest population effect as more people are exposed to it," the researchers wrote. "PAFs give a measure of how much disease would be avoided if the risk was no longer present."

China's smokers keep Cuban cigar sales growing

Cuba's cigar makers say sales are increasing despite the effects of anti-smoking laws coming into effects in many countries

Organisers of the annual Cigar Festival in Havana said sales rose two percent last year, increasing in China and the Middle East. Habanos, jointly owned by Cuba's Government and UK based Imperial Tobacco, dominates sales for hand-rolled, premium cigars, except in the USA, and the company's joint President, Jorge Luis Fernandez Maique, seemed unphased by new smoking restrictions in their number one customer Spain, where sales fell by a third in January. He said, "There are anti-smoking campaigns but smokers keep finding legal solutions to smoke the products, whether it's in places outfitted in accordance with the law. We have markets — like Spain, Germany, Belgium, Holland and others — where they've really adapted to conditions and we expect the Spanish market will react the same way."

China has now become the third largest market for Cuban cigars behind Spain and France, knocking Germany down into fourth place. Habanos generated 268m Euros in sales last year, an important source of foreign currency for the communist led island, but it is blocked from the USA, the world's biggest single consumer of cigars, because of a trade embargo.

Christchurch quake: dead are buried as weather worsens



A rescue worker (R) looks through the rubble of the church

The New Zealand city of Christchurch has begun to bury its dead following the devastating earthquake

The first service was for the youngest victim so far — baby Baxtor Gowland, born just after last September's quake. The death toll from February 22nd is now over 150 people. Rescue teams continue to search for survivors but aftershocks have hampered their efforts and a forecast windstorm could add to the hazards they face. No survivors have

been rescued since mid-afternoon on February 23rd.

The opening of new cracks in a cliff overlooking some outer suburbs and continuing aftershocks have kept residents nervous. People are still trying to leave the city following the magnitude-6.3 earthquake that wrecked the centre of the city. Young Baxtor Gowland was one of two infants named as casualties in the quake. He was killed by flying masonry as he slept at home. His family and friends gathered at a chapel for

a service at which a slideshow of his short life was shown. It was the first of several services to come.

Former New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark said the country had 'suffered a tragedy of monumental proportions'. "The building damage I've seen compared with Haiti," she told. "It's going to require every ounce of recovery in this country to push through from this," she added, after a visit to Christchurch. Prime Minister John Key says the cost of the quake is expected to reach NZ\$20bn (\$15bn, £9.3bn).

He has announced an initial NZ\$120m package of subsidies that will pay the salaries of those who cannot return to work because of the damage caused by the earthquake. He said there was still a glimmer of hope survivors could be found, but rescuers found only bodies. Engineers say at least a third of the buildings in the centre of Christchurch will need to be demolished. Hundreds of damaged suburban homes may also have to be pulled down.

Mr. Key said the disaster 'may be New Zealand's single most tragic event', outstripping a 1931 quake in Napier which killed 256.

Discovery embarks on historic final flight

Space shuttle Discovery blasted off from the Kennedy Space Centre at Cape Canaveral in Florida for the last time

The oldest of NASA's three surviving shuttles is taking six astronauts and supplies to the International Space Station. Discovery is regarded as the 'flagship' of the fleet. First launched in 1984, it has completed 38 voyages and travelled around 230 million kilometres in the process. Discovery was entrusted with the 'return-to-flight' missions after the Challenger and Columbia



XINHUA - BELTA

Discovery making its final flight accidents. Discovery's sister-shuttle Endeavour is expected to make its historic final flight in April and Atlantis should go no later than June.

Samsung launches ultra-slim notebook, targets Apple

Samsung Electronics Co Ltd launches an ultra-slim notebook, seeking to bolster its presence in the high-end mobile computer segment dominated by Apple Inc

Samsung has launched the lightweight 9 Series notebook to compete with Apple's ultra-thin MacBook Air, introduced in October. Samsung said the new laptop would cost \$2,218 in Korea and would soon launch globally in the Americas and Europe.

Apple displaced Hewlett-Packard Co last quarter as the world's top mobile PC maker, propelled by strong sales of its iPad tablet. It shipped more than 10m notebook and tablet computers last quarter for a 17 percent market share, nearly a million more than HP, which had a 15.6 percent market. Samsung said that it wanted to become the global number six player in the mobile PC market this year from last year's seventh place.