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"I will make you fishers of men."

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Harbinger's column

Harbinger is York University's peer counselling and referral service. Drop in at 214 Vanier residence or phone 667-3059-3632. Open 10-6, Monday to Friday.

Heed those hormone warnings

By CAROL BIANCO
It seems that every time one glances at a newspaper or magazine there is yet another article alerting us that some substance, previously considered harmless, may lead to some form of cancer. Many of us adopt a fatalistic approach to these reports as we light our cigarettes and gulp down a Tab. However, it is

important not to desensitize ourselves to these warnings, especially those where the evidence and effects are exceptionally frightening. This particular warning is directed at every woman under 30. Between 1945 and 1965 several million North American women who showed symptoms of any difficulty during pregnancy, were given a hormone supplement which was believed to help prevent miscarriage. This synthetic estrogen DES, (or diethylstilbestrol), has since been proven to be fairly ineffective in saving fetuses, but is still used by some doctors for this purpose.

The long-term effects of this hormone are like a time bomb which has started to explode this decade. Since 1970 a rare type of vaginal or cervical cancer has been discovered in hundreds of young women. This particular cancer was virtually unknown before this time, and those who are afflicted with it have one important thing in common: while they were in the womb, their mothers took DES to prevent miscarriage. There have also been indications that DES caused sterility and genital abnormalities in the sons of women who took it during pregnancy.

In addition to the development of vaginal and cervical cancer, another peculiar condition known as

adenosis is visible in many DES daughters. This is the existence of abnormal vaginal cells which may be pre-cancerous.

Unfortunately, these conditions can not be detected by a usual gynecological exam and papsmear. Many women who have regular exams, and think they are normal and healthy, may actually have adenosis, or early vaginal cancer. This is very important for DES daughters to know. So far, 90 per cent of these particular women who have been tested for adenosis received positive results.

Despite this fact, there is precious little known about adenosis. No one is sure how the abnormal cells will be affected by the hormonal changes occurring during pregnancy and menopause. Many DES daughters are taking birth control pills which might effect other cellular changes. The Toronto chapter of the Canadian Cancer Society had no information about tests and treatment for adenosis; in fact they were unaware of its existence.

There are two tests to detect this condition which are presently being used. The most common procedure is the Schiller test, which involves staining the walls of the vagina and cervix, letting it dry, and then looking to see if the cells took the stain. If the test is positive, a biopsy will likely be performed to insure against cancer. There is also available a highly effective, but still controversial test called a colposcopy, which lights and magnifies vagina walls after the stain. It is recommended that DES daughters have one of these tests twice a year.

All women under 30 should ask their mothers if they took any hormonal supplement while pregnant with them. If so, then consult their medical records to see whether or not it was DES. If you find that you were exposed to it, consult your general practitioner, who will probably refer you to a gynecologist for the tests. If you would like more information, come talk to us at Harbinger.



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Cocaine cuts business

NEW YORK (ENS-CUP) — New York bar and restaurant owners are

worried because customers have been spending less money on food and liquor. The reason, says the Village Voice, is the abundance of cocaine.

The Voice talked with some Manhattan proprietors who said that, "As more and more customers come in under the influence of coke, which depressed both the appetite and any desire for the old-fashioned kind of intoxication, table and bar checks are getting smaller."

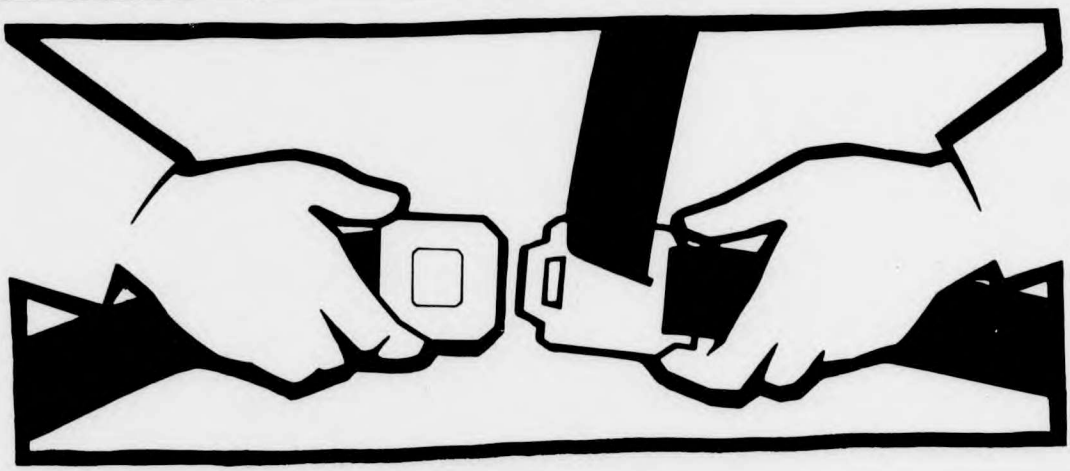
The Voice described one bistro where a table of four used to spend about \$30 a night. Now that same table can be expected to spend only ten dollars.

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