

JAMES B. DUKE MEMORIAL LIBRARY
JOHNSON C. SMITH UNIVERSITY
CHARLOTTE, NC 28216



NOT THE NEEDLE

For some, the point of treatment is no joke

By Ranit Mishori
THE WASHINGTON POST

Old Hollywood gag: Doctor approaches patient with big hypodermic needle. Patient sees needle, faints and hits the floor with: a loud crash, taking along everything within reach; a soft whump, landing flat on his back; or, least often, the quiet sighing crumple to the floor.

Woody Allen whumped in "Sleeper." Hugh Grant crumpled in "Nine Months." So did Robin Williams in the same movie, same scene — except he was the doctor.

It's a big laugh, unless you take this sort of thing seriously, which a good number of us happen to do — enough that the medical dictionaries have come up with a term for it: aichmophobia. It means, in plain English, fear of needles, pins and other pointed objects doctors might need to stick in patients.

"It is one of the most common medical disorders in the human population" said James Hamilton, a family physician from Durham, N.C., who has made a serious study of aichmophobia (also called belonephobia or trypanophobia). In 1995, the condition was officially recognized in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, fourth edition (DSM-IV), the reference book that is a bible to psychiatrists. The diagnosis is characterized by such strong reactions to injections, injuries or blood that patients will either avoid such situations — and go to extremes to do so — or tolerate needles only under extreme emotional duress.

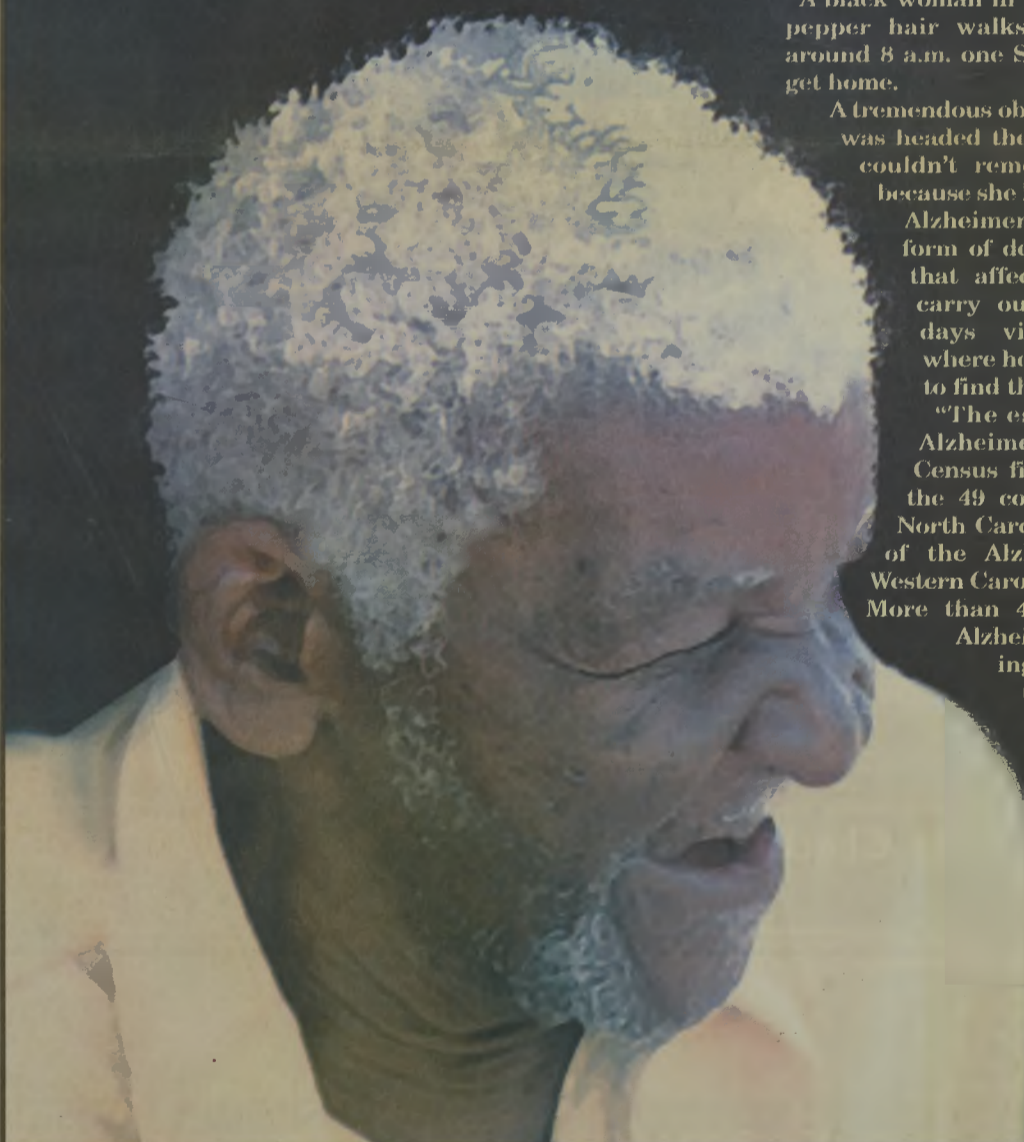
Researchers estimate that between 7 and 22 percent of the general population has this degree of needle phobia. Hamilton suspects the percentage is higher: "They tend to select themselves out of the patient population," he said, "so you'll see them only when there's absolutely no choice, when they need to go to the hospital." He bases this finding on his research, but owns up to another source of information: He's a needle-phobe himself.

Not getting your nose or navel pierced because of needle phobia is one thing. Not getting your regular dose of insulin is a whole other matter. Similarly, for people with multiple sclerosis (some of whom need weekly shots of interferon), and those requiring regular injections for any of a host of other medical conditions — among them migraine, allergy, erectile dysfunction, fertility problems and chronic infections — this could be a real problem.

Hamilton is a repository of stories of people who have gone to extremes to avoid the doctor's needle: the woman who refused to have a Cesarean section because she didn't want the injected anesthesia; the man who jumped out of a second-story window at a hospital in Knoxville, Tenn., rather than have blood drawn for testing; the patient who tried to punch the nurse

See POINTED/4B

Alzheimer's claims more than memory



A black woman in her late 60s with salt and pepper hair walks along West Boulevard around 8 a.m. one Sunday morning trying to get home.

A tremendous obstacle was in her way. She was headed the wrong way. The woman couldn't remember where home was because she has Alzheimer's.

Alzheimer's is the most common form of dementia, a brain disorder that affects a person's ability to carry out daily activities. Many days victims can't remember where home is and frantically seek to find things they recognize.

"The estimated prevalence of Alzheimer's disease using 2000 Census figures is 77,023 people in the 49 country region of Western North Carolina," said Lynn Grayson of the Alzheimer's Association of Western Carolina Chapter.

More than 4 million Americans have Alzheimer's. It's the fourth leading cause of death among the elderly. By the middle of this century, the number of people in the United States with Alzheimer's will reach 14 million unless prevention, treatment or a cure is found. The disease strikes regardless of gender, education, race or socio-economic background. The number of victims has more than doubled since 1980.

HELP

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION/TRINA MONTGOMERY-ARDREY

Comic strip containing racial slur stirs protest

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

PITTSBURGH, Pa. — The editor in chief and managing editor of a student newspaper at Carnegie Mellon University are considering resigning after the newspaper ran a comic strip that contained a racial slur.

Alex Meseguer, editor in chief of The Tartan, will temporarily suspend the newspa-

per's operations in light of the publication's April Fool's Day edition, which not only contained the controversial comic strip, but also included depiction of female genitalia and poems about rape and mutilation.

Meseguer on Saturday apologized to the 75 people who had gathered on the university's campus to protest the newspaper's 12-

page spoof edition. Many of the participants at the gathering, organized by the historically black fraternity Kappa Alpha Psi, were angered by a comic strip called "Harold and the Other Guy."

The cartoon, drawn by student Bob Rost, depicts a goat using a racial slur while bragging to a mouse how he had hit a black person on a

bike. Meseguer said Rost has been fired from the newspaper.

"The cartoon does not represent my personal opinion," Rost said. "The intended humor missed its mark."

The cartoon made it into print because fatigue clouded the editors' judgment, Meseguer said. He said he and Tartan Managing Editor

Jim Puls are considering stepping down.

"The Tartan has committed a grave error, one that threatens our mission, our members and our very existence," Meseguer told angry demonstrators.

Meseguer said he's taking steps to prevent similar incidents from happening.

The newspaper will hire an

Please see COLLEGE/3B

