

editorial comments

(continued)

tors," said Dr Miller.

In a separate study, researchers at the University of Chicago found an 11% decline in factor VII levels among women who switched from a high-fat diet to a low-fat diet.

Because most heart attacks occur in the early morning hours, consuming a low-fat meal at night reduces the amount of factor VII levels, and hence, the risk of early-morning heart attack.

The fear of being sued for malpractice may play a role in the increasing number of cesarean sections being performed.

In a retrospective survey of 31 New York State hospitals in which 60,490 deliveries were performed, researchers found a positive association between malpractice claims being made against a physician and the likelihood that this physician would perform cesarean sections on patients. Furthermore, the number of cesareans performed was linked with physicians' insurance premiums: high premiums yielded greater numbers of cesarean sections while low premiums were associated with fewer cesarean deliveries.

The researchers make no claim to a cause-and-effect relationship. However, the associations uncovered cannot be overlooked.

"Our study might provide some evidence to support what the medical community is saying—that typically an obstetrician will, in a close case, decide to do a cesarean out of fear of not doing one,"

comments A. Russell Localio, JD, MPH, researcher and biostatistician at the Pennsylvania State University College of Medicine.

Complete results are published in the January 20 issue of *JAMA*.

Vascular—not Alzheimer's—disease accounts for most types of dementia, according to a large-scale study conducted in Gothenburg, Sweden.

Investigators examined the potential causes of dementia in a population of 494 elderly persons, aged 85 years. Participants underwent a psychiatric interview, neuropsychologic and physical examination, laboratory tests, electrocardiography, chest radiography, computed tomography of the head, and cerebrospinal fluid analysis.

Dementia was diagnosed in 147 persons, 46.9% of whom had vascular dementia and 43.5%, Alzheimer's disease. Unlike the latter disease, vascular dementia can be treated and prevented; therefore, the outlook for these patients is good, conclude the researchers.

The January 21 issue of *The New England Journal of Medicine* features this study.

As a potential anticancer agent, raspberries may be the "pick of the crop."

Raspberries, particularly their leaves, contain more ellagic acid than other common foods. It's the ellagic acid, actually, that has been shown to prevent some cancers in

laboratory rats. Because of this link, the Washington Red Raspberry Commission is looking for ways to fund research that could be conducted on humans, says Commission Marketing Director Dan Petek. Specifically, researchers would need to determine if the ellagic acid does enter the human blood stream, and if so, if it prevents cancer.

The goal is to develop a "nutraceutical," or food with medicinal value, according to Petek.

"You're not pumping them with vitamins or anything else, but you may be helping them prevent cancer."