

DISEASE MORTALITY RATES IN THE U.S.

129,480

DEATHS PER YEAR FROM

STROKE (CEREBRAL VASCULAR DISEASE)

138,080

DEATHS PER YEAR FROM

CHRONIC LOWER RESPIRATORY DISEASE

574,740

DEATHS PER YEAR FROM

CANCER

597,690

DEATHS PER YEAR FROM

HEART DISEASE

*ACCORDING TO WWW.CDC.GOV

Writer reflects on past work



Connor Stangler

Last night I dreamt I was talking to my alma mater — my “nourishing mother” — Truman State University. What follows is the rough transcript of our hypothetical conversation.

Truman: “Now that you’re graduating, I think it’s appropriate to say I really didn’t think your columns were very good.”

Me: “I think my readership would disagree.”

T: “Readership? What, your mother?”

Me: “AND father.”

T: “Even they would have to agree that for six semesters you did nothing but complain about me and write about the liberal arts. It seems like you spent every column talking about how insufficient, misguided, flawed and destructive I am. And if you weren’t groaning, moaning or airing your dirty laundry, you went on and on about the liberal arts.”

Me: “You are the liberal arts! You’re my nourishing mother. Painters and sculptors since the Roman days have portrayed you carrying a torch, surrounded by books, dedicated to the expansion of knowledge and defense of truth! What is more important than your philosophy? It’s been politically, culturally and intellectually under siege! As the nation increasingly turns to science, mathematics and utility, your cause has been tossed away like a useless relic. Just because your value can’t be proven by formula or equation or you don’t fit neatly on a supply and demand curve, you lose funding and support daily. And yet you reject your lowly foot soldiers!”

T: “This is exactly what I’m talking about! Someone mentions the liberal arts, and you’re suddenly Joan of Arc. You decry but secretly revel in your martyrdom. You think politics is burning the liberal arts at the stake, but you would also be the first to put a torch to the fire. One week you’re writing about my invaluable contributions to humanity and society, the next you’re saying I’m dangerous.”

Me: “I mean, you can be dangerous. You tend to promote intellectual tolerance and freedom that, in excess, only undermine the discriminating and critical eye that is central to true wisdom. Your answer to the tougher moral and philosophical questions too often is, ‘leave it to the choice of the individual.’ At the end, you avoid conclusion and finality and leave students adrift in an ocean of ambiguity.”

T: “You just seem ungrateful.”

Me: “I probably am. It probably won’t be until decades after graduation that I realize your true value.”

T: “Did you even enjoy your time with me?”

Me: “I did. You were the best school for me. You taught me, revealed my flaws, granted me incomparable opportunities, prepared me for a dynamic professional world and showed me the virtues of honest citizenship. You gave me friends, best friends, a soul mate, forgiving professors and understanding mentors. You forced me to be independent, question my values, subject my worldview to critical analysis and then rebuild it. You exposed me to different views, people, paths, faiths, dogmas and standards of success. In many ways, I didn’t survive your curriculum or lessons. I leave here unsure of my future, my passions, my identity and ultimate reality. I leave here even more confused about whether I can or should ever find what’s certain in life. I constantly second-guess my degree, and I have little hope I ever will serve other people to the best of my ability. In almost every important way, you defeated me.”

T: “That’s what I’m not supposed to tell you. My torch doesn’t illuminate truth. These books aren’t for certainty. For four years, I’m supposed to be a break from the certainty adulthood will ingrain in you. Don’t look to me for truth. You’ll find too much of that in the mundane and routine after me.”

Me: “That’s a hard message to sell to high school recruits.”

T: “Nah, we’re the Harvard of the Midwest.”

Connor Stangler is a senior history major from Columbia, Mo.

Health knowledge is vital



Robert Overmann

I was diagnosed with Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) when I was 12 years old. I also had stomach ulcers resulting from the untreated GERD and a hiatal hernia where the stomach and the esophagus meet. However, these conditions weren’t diagnosed without months of agony and thousands of dollars in doctors’ bills. If I had been more medically informed, I would have immediately realized my acid reflux as the primary symptom of the disorder.

A basic understanding of the health issues pertinent to you, as well as a basic medical vocabulary, is important knowledge — you might save yourself pain, money or even your own life. You must be your own health advocate and be able to competently communicate your questions, concerns and directives with medical professionals. Believe it or not, you are not immune to debilitating disease if you’re young — individuals of all ages must be aware of health concerns.

For instance, did you know testicular cancer most often affects men age 15 to 34, according to the Mayo Clinic? Yes, male Truman State students, you are within the age group at highest risk for this

disease. Do you know the warning signs of testicular cancer? Do you know how to check for those warning signs? If your doctor determines you don’t have testicular cancer but instead have epididymitis, do you understand this condition is a swelling of the epididymus? Do you know what an epididymus is?

There are plenty of resources available to help you become more informed about these issues. Keeping in touch with your physician, coupled with referencing reputable sources such as the Mayo Clinic or the National Institute of Health’s websites, are good ways of becoming more knowledgeable about your health.

As another example, for future mothers, do you know about the risks associated with toxoplasmosis? Toxoplasmosis, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, is a serious health risk for unborn children resulting from infection by the *Toxoplasma gondii* parasite. Though the immune systems of healthy individuals easily can fight off the infection, infected unborn children are at risk of being miscarried or stillborn. For this reason, pregnant mothers should avoid cat litter and cat feces, which can contain the parasite.

Globally, cardiovascular heart disease is the number one killer of individuals, according to the World Health Organization. Do you know the risk factors for cardiovascular heart disease? Are you familiar with techniques that can help you manage these risks?

For those of you who have been prescribed antibiotics for an infection, do you understand why antibiotics are effective against bacterial infections, but not viral infections? Knowing how to properly use antibiotics is key to managing your own health, and reduces the proliferation of antibiotic-resistant strains of pathogenic

bacteria, according to the Mayo Clinic. That’s right — being unknowledgeable about antibiotic misuse endangers others’ health. In fact, according to the American College of Physicians, about 50 percent of antibiotics are prescribed unnecessarily. Contrary to many patients’ beliefs, doctors sometimes make mistakes. For this reason, you must be knowledgeable enough about antibiotic misuse and unnecessary prescription to make decisions about your own health.

Of course, there is a nearly endless list of potential health risks we all face. But being knowledgeable about those that impact you or potentially could impact you most can prevent many maladies, expenses and inconveniences. Especially with the rising cost of medical care, prevention always is the best practice.

You are not invincible. You eventually will face a serious health concern that could claim your life. There is no sense in suffering unnecessarily or dying prematurely as a result of medical ignorance. You owe it to yourself, your family and your friends to be medically competent enough to recognize when you have a medical concern that needs addressing, as well as how to prevent or treat that concern.

Good health cannot be bought and many health issues, such as HIV/AIDS and many cancers, are incurable. For debilitating diseases that currently have no cure, only information can protect you from situations that increase your risk of developing such a health problem. My health is one of my most prized possessions, one that I faithfully will protect the best way I can — with knowledge.

Robert Overmann is a junior English and biology major from Cape Girardeau, Mo.

What do you think is the most useful foreign language course and why?

“Spanish, simply because it’s the most common language.”

Lisa Caligur
junior

“Latin, because it helps increase vocabulary and is the base for other Romance languages.”

Jacob Sells
senior

“I would say Spanish, because the Latino culture is becoming more prevalent in the U.S. and is close to us in the South.”

David Wilson
sophomore

“I took Spanish. We’re surrounded by Spanish-speaking countries and there is a large Spanish minority in the U.S.”

Leah Dobby
sophomore



AROUND THE QUAD

Citizens should critically examine the news



Mackenzie McDermott

Just hours after the deadly Boston bombing April 15, a NYpost.com headline read, “Authorities ID person of interest as Saudi national in marathon bombings, under guard at Boston hospital.” Washingtonpost.com posted a similar headline, “Police question Saudi national on Boston Marathon bombings.” The day after the bombing, Fox News aired a clip of an interview with the roommate of the alleged suspect.

This “Saudi national” never was a suspect, but a witness — an injured one, at that. There was similar inaccurate reporting last year when the Supreme Court

reviewed Obama’s Affordable Care Act. Fox News and CNN both prematurely tweeted that a portion of the bill had been shot down, when in fact the bill had been wholly upheld.

When news is reported too soon, it does not represent just the missteps of pundits. Biases and beliefs of news media do not remain those of the individuals who make incorrect statements. Instead, they enter the public sphere. When news is identified as fact rather than viewed as potentially fictitious, it is easy to forget to question its validity. Those of us who watch and read the news sometimes subscribe ourselves — however subconsciously — to the ideals and beliefs presented by the outlet we choose to watch. Because of this, news media must be digested with caution.

People make mistakes, pundits and reporters not excluded. There is no such thing as completely unbiased or entirely factual journalism. Words come from people. People have opinions and make errors, so there naturally will be some biases and inaccuracies, however slight. For this reason, it is impossible to form an opinion entirely your own or be completely informed about an issue if you are getting your information from only one or two sources. It is impor-

tant to watch, listen and read news from diverse sources for accurate information.

The Boston bombing isn’t the first time news outlets have reported news prematurely, nor will it be the last. To keep ourselves informed, we must look to the entire range of media options we have and analyze the information only after we have filtered it through a skeptical viewpoint. Take everything the news media — especially Internet and television — say with a grain of salt, because the 24-hour news cycle allows for plenty of mistakes due to hasty news coverage.

Allowing only one media outlet to inform you about what is occurring in your community, the country or even the world can skew your ideas about significant events like the Boston bombings. It also can leave you entirely misinformed, as it did for those reading only the New York Post or Washington Post during the hours immediately following the Boston bombing.

Inflammatory statements not only misinform, but perpetuate already under-toned prejudices. News outlets are pressured to break a story first, and that easily can lead to premature finger-pointing like the reports about the alleged “Saudi national” person of interest. Reading daily newspapers in addi-

tion to watching television news and reading from online sources also can keep you from being misinformed because printed news sources don’t have the same immediacy as online and television sources.

During times such as the tragedy in Boston when emotions are high and a strong feeling of camaraderie is fostered, it becomes easier to think with the crowd. Even so, you must separate the premature breaking news, which often follows events as significant as the Boston bombing and the Affordable Care Act, from reality. Make sure you watch and listen, but do so with a critical eye. Being ill-informed is worrisome, but so is being uninformed. News media is important and should not be taken lightly as a source of understanding and information. However, it also should not sway your beliefs or decide your truth. Next time you find yourself longing to be informed, flip the channel between a few news stations, open a few newspapers and turn on your thinking cap. It’s the only way to figure out what’s actually happening.

Mackenzie McDermott is a freshman English major from Springfield, Ill.