Pot may increase risk for heart attacks

By Melissa Healy, Los Angeles Times

Over a five-year period, a government-mandated tracking system in France showed that physicians in that country treated 1,979 patients for serious health problems associated with the use of marijuana, and nearly 2 percent of those encounters were with patients suffering from cardiovascular problems, including heart attack, cardiac arrhythmia and stroke, and circulation problems in the arms and legs. In roughly a quarter of those cases, the study found, the patient died.

In the United States, when young and otherwise healthy patients show up in emergency departments with symptoms of heart attack, stroke, cardiomyopathy and cardiac arrhythmia, physicians have frequently noted in case reports that these unusual patients are regular marijuana users.

Such reporting is hardly the basis for declaring marijuana use an outright cause of cardiovascular disease. But last month, cardiologists writing in the Journal of the American Heart Association warned that “clinical evidence … suggests the potential for serious cardiovascular risks associated with marijuana use.” And with a growing movement to decriminalize marijuana use, they called for data-collection efforts capable of detecting and measuring marijuana’s cardiovascular impact among American users of cannibis setiva.

Read the whole story

Placer County finalizing Tahoe community plan

People have until June 23 to comment on the draft Tahoe Basin Community Plan policy document created by Placer County.

The document provides direction on future land use decisions for Placer County in the Lake Tahoe Basin Area. As a policy document, it provides for the legal basis for all zoning, subdivision, and related land use actions within the Tahoe Basin portion of Placer County.

The document may be accessed online.

There will be a town hall meeting June 4 at the Kings Beach Community Center at 6pm.

Naming Nev. cove after Twain dead in the water

By Martin Griffith, AP

RENO -– A state panel has effectively killed a bid to name a Lake Tahoe cove for Mark Twain, citing opposition from a tribe that says he held racist views on Native Americans.

The Nevada State Board on Geographic Names this week voted to indefinitely table the request after hearing opposition from the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California, whose ancestral homeland includes Lake Tahoe.

Supporters had sought to name a scenic cove on the lake’s

northeast shore for Samuel Clemens, Twain's real name.

But Darrel Cruz, head of the tribe's cultural resource department, said Twain was undeserving of the honor because of derogatory comments about the Washoe and other tribes in his writings.

Among other things, he cited Twain's opposition to the naming of the lake as Tahoe, which is derived from the Washoe word "da ow" for lake.

Cruz also objected to a Twain quote about Lake Tahoe: "People say that Tahoe means 'Silver Lake' – 'Limpid Water' – 'Falling Leaf.' Bosh! It means grasshopper soup, the favorite dish of the digger tribe – and of the Pi-utes as well."

Cruz said Washoes dislike being referred to as the "digger tribe," a derogatory term applied to some tribes in the West who dug roots for food. Other tribes ate grasshoppers.

"Samuel Clemens had racist views on the native people of this country and has captured those views in his literature," Cruz wrote in a letter to the board. "Therefore, we cannot support the notion of giving a place name in Lake Tahoe to Samuel Clemens."

But James Hulse, history professor emeritus at UNR said it's irrelevant whether Twain's writings were insulting to Native Americans.

The cove should be named for Twain because he praised Tahoe's beauty while visiting the lake in 1861-62, and he became one of America's most beloved authors after assuming his pen name as a Nevada newspaper reporter around the same time, Hulse said.

"In his early days, (Twain's) ironic-comic mode was insulting to everyone, including governors, legislators, mine bosses and journalistic colleagues," he told the board. "He learned and

overcame his prejudices far better than most of his contemporaries and successors."

Thomas Quirk, an English professor emeritus at the University of Missouri and leading Twain scholar, said the author eventually overcame his racism against blacks. But Quirk said he has found no evidence that he significantly changed his views on American Indians.

Twain did not embrace the idea of idolizing what he called the "noble red man," Quirk said, and poked fun at writer James Fenimore Cooper for doing so.

"When it comes to African Americans, he was ahead of his time substantially," he said. "When it comes to Native Americans, his record is not very good. If he were alive today, he would sing a different tune."

Board member Robert Stewart, who initiated the plan to name the cove for Clemens, said it's unlikely it would resurface.

He said he dropped his support of it, even though he learned about a later letter Twain wrote objecting to the treatment of tribes in Arizona and New Mexico.

"I have a great deal of respect for the Washoe Tribe. And if their cultural committee is unhappy with naming the cove for Mark Twain, I'm not going to fight them," Stewart said. "We need to show sensitivity to the tribe."

Stewart said he still believes the cove near Incline Village is where Twain camped and accidentally started a wildfire while preparing to cook dinner in September 1861. But David Antonucci, a civil engineer from Homewood, maintains Twain camped on the California side of the lake.

It's the second time the bid to name the cove for Twain failed. In 2011, the U.S. Board on Geographic Names rejected the request after the U.S. Forest Service said Twain's

influence on the Sierra Nevada lake was minimal and other historical figures were more deserving of the honor.

Supporters sought to honor him because there is no geographic feature in the state named for Twain, whose book “Roughing It” put Nevada on the map.

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4 Incline businesses accused of selling booze to kids

The Washoe County Sheriff’s Office cited four Incline Village businesses for selling alcohol to minors during an underage drinking laws enforcement program conducted the first two weekends of May.

There were 10 other businesses, mostly in Reno, that were also cited.

Deputies and an underage buyer conducted checks at more than 60 businesses located throughout Washoe County.

Businesses in Incline that were cited for selling to a minor:

Chevron, Tahoe Boulevard

Dimaggio’s at the Lake, Tahoe Boulevard

Rookie’s Sports Bar and Grill, Tahoe Boulevard

Incline Spirits and Cigars, Country Club Drive.

Businesses in Incline that were in compliance:

Circle K, Tahoe Boulevard

Incline Liquor, Tahoe Boulevard

7-Eleven, Tahoe Boulevard.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Study questions benefits of chocolate, red wine

By Sarah Klein, Huffington Post

Although long considered a veritable silver bullet when it comes to preventing health problems, a new study calls into question the superpowers of the antioxidant resveratrol.

According to the recent research, diets high in the compound – found in red wine, grapes and chocolate – showed no significant decrease in heart disease, cancer or death.

To examine the long-term impact of resveratrol, researchers looked to the longitudinal "Aging in the Chianti Region" study. They examined the compound's presence in urine samples from 783 healthy men and women, 65 years old or older, living in two Italian villages within the Chianti region. The researchers were confident that their measure would accurately reflect resveratrol from food and drink sources, since supplement use is unusual in this region, while regular red wine consumption is common.

Read the whole story

Parents rail against Common Core math

By Michael Rubinkam, AP

An Iowa woman jokingly calls it “Satan’s handiwork.” A California mom says she’s broken down in tears. A Pennsylvania parent says it “makes my blood boil.”

What could be so horrible? Grade-school math.

As schools around the U.S. implement national Common Core learning standards, parents trying to help their kids with math homework say that adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing has become as complicated as calculus.

They’re stumped by unfamiliar terms like “rectangular array” and “area model.” They wrestle with division that requires the use of squares, slashes and dots. They rage over impenetrable word problems.

Stacey Jacobson-Francis, 41, of Berkeley, said her daughter’s homework requires her to know four different ways to add.

“That is way too much to ask of a first-grader,” she said. “She can’t remember them all, and I don’t know them all, so we just do the best that we can.”

Simple arithmetic isn’t so simple anymore, leading to plenty of angst at home. Even celebrities aren’t immune: The comedian Louis C.K. took to Twitter recently to vent about his kids’ convoluted homework, writing that his daughters went from loving math to crying about it.

Adopted by 44 states, the Common Core is a set of English and

math standards that spell out what students should know and when. The standards for elementary math emphasize that kids should not only be able to solve arithmetic problems using the tried-and-true methods their parents learned, but understand how numbers relate to each other.

“Part of what we are trying to teach children is to become problem solvers and thinkers,” said Diane Briars, president of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. “We want students to understand what they’re doing, not just get the right answer.”

That’s a radically different approach than many parents are accustomed to.

Jennie Barnds, 40, of Davenport, Iowa, was puzzled by her fourth-grade daughter’s long division homework, a foreign amalgam of boxes, slashes and dots with nary a quotient or dividend in sight.

“If we are sitting there for 20 minutes trying to do a simple problem, how is an 8-, 9-, 10-year-old supposed to figure it out?” she said. “It’s incredibly frustrating for the student and the parent.”

Whether Common Core itself is responsible for the homework headaches is a contentious issue.

Some experts say Common Core promotes reform math, a teaching method that gained currency in the 1990s. Derided as “fuzzy” math by critics, reform math says kids should explore and understand concepts like place value before they become fluent in the standard way of doing arithmetic. Critics say it fails to stress basic computational skills, leaving students unprepared for higher math.

Stanford University mathematician James Milgram calls the reform math-inspired standards a “complete mess” – too advanced for younger students, not nearly rigorous enough in

the upper grades. And teachers, he contends, are largely ill-prepared to put the standards into practice.

“You are asking teachers to teach something that is incredibly complicated to kids who aren’t ready for it,” said Milgram, who voted against the standards as part of the committee that reviewed them. “If you don’t think craziness will result, then you’re being fundamentally naive.”

Common Core supporters insist the standards are developmentally appropriate and driven by research.

“For years there has been a raging debate in mathematics education about which is more important, procedural fluency or conceptual understanding. The obvious answer is ‘both’ and the standards give that answer,” said University of Arizona mathematician Bill McCallum, who co-wrote the math standards.

Common Core advocates acknowledge parents are frustrated, but blame the problems on botched implementation, insufficient training or poorly written math programs that predate Common Core.

They say schools also need to communicate better.

“The homework can appear ridiculous when it is taken out of context — that’s where the biggest problem lies,” said Steve O’Connor, a fifth-grade math teacher in Wells, N.Y. “Parents don’t have the context, nor have they been given the means to see the context.”

O’Connor has set up a website in an effort to reduce parents’ frustration over homework. Other school districts have held workshops for parents to learn alongside their children.

But many parents say they’ve been on their own, complaining that districts have foisted new math curricula with little explanation.

In Pennsylvania, which signed on to the national Common Core

in 2010 but developed its own version, Allison Lienhard said homework sessions with her 10-year-old have ended in tears.

“She gets frustrated because I can’t do it the way they are supposed to do it,” Lienhard said. “To me, math is numbers, it’s concrete, it’s black-and-white. I don’t understand why you need to bring this conceptual thing into math – at least not at this age.”

2-day wine event in El Dorado County

Rocks & Rhones Wine and Food Weekend is May 24-25.

Five Pleasant Valley wineries in El Dorado County will explain the area’s unique soils and winemaking techniques.

There will be food pairings, barrel tasting, wine specials and vineyard tours. Pleasant Valley is located just south of Placerville, halfway between Sacramento and South Lake Tahoe.

Participating wineries are: Auriga, Holly’s Hill, Miraflores, Narrow Gate and Sierra Vista.

Tickets may be bought online for $35 through May 23; $40 at the door; $20 designated driver. Includes logo glass. The event is 11am-4pm each day.

Hefty price for Tahoe dad to see kids' school records

By Perry Chiaramonte, Fox News

Nevada dad John Eppolito got a bad case of sticker shock when he asked state education officials to see the permanent records of his four children.

He was told it would cost $10,194.

A Lake Tahoe-area real estate agent by trade and a fierce opponent of Common Core, Eppolito was concerned about Nevada's recent decision to join a multi-state consortium that shares students' data. He wanted to know exactly what information had been compiled on his school-age kids. But state officials told him he would have to pay fees and the cost of programming and running a custom report.

"The problem is that I can't stop them from collecting the data," Eppolito told FoxNews.com. "I just wanted to know what it [collected data] was. It almost seems impossible. Certainly $10,000 is enough reason to prevent a parent from getting the data."

Nevada has spent an estimated $10 million in its 7-year-old System of Accountability Information in Nevada, known as SAIN. Data from county school systems is uploaded nightly to a state database, and, under the new arrangement, potentially shared with other counties and states. But Eppolito wonders why the state is collecting data that parents can't even view.

According to the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), parents have the right to review their kids' records. Small fees are allowed to be issued for records unless they in any way prevent them from obtaining them.

The Nevada Department of Education attempted to justify the hefty price tag for viewing copies of student records in a response to Eppolito.

Read the whole story

McClintock mailer called deceptive

By Christopher Cadelago, Sacramento Bee

Democrats in the sweeping 4th Congressional District are crying foul over a campaign mailer by Republican Rep. Tom McClintock they say deceptively boosts the prospects of one candidate so the three-term incumbent can avoid a tough re-election fight.

McClintock, whose challengers include upstart Republican Art Moore and independent Jeffrey Gerlach, is sending campaign mailers to Democratic voters that portray Gerlach as the lone alternative and describe him as a “liberal” who supports universal health care, gay marriage and amnesty for illegal immigrants. McClintock’s flier says he’s led the fight to repeal the health care law, strengthen traditional families and secure U.S. borders.

Democrat Jack Uppal, who lost to McClintock in 2012, said the incumbent is resorting to “dirty tricks” by diverting Democratic voters to Gerlach in the June 3 primary in order to dodge a head-to-head match-up with Moore in November. Under the state’s new primary system, the top-two finishers regardless of party advance to the general election. Moore’s campaign believes it remains in strong position to do so.

Read the whole story

Report: Calif. among worst in U.S. in school segregation

By Sharon Noguchi, San Jose Mercury News

As racial separation in education steadily grows, California now leads the nation in children going to school with their own kind, a UCLA study released last week contends.

On the 60th anniversary of the landmark U.S. Supreme Court Brown vs. Board of Education ruling intended to dismantle segregation, the report by UCLA's Civil Rights Project says that California students are more likely than ever to attend racially isolated schools.

The report analyzes data on all the state's school districts and a few charter schools. It shows segregation both at school and state levels has come to be widely accepted.

School districts contend that they are indeed battling for equity.

Read the whole story